



**STATEMENT OF THE HOLY SEE**

**to**

**INTERNATIONAL MINISTERIAL CONFERENCE  
ON NUCLEAR POWER IN THE 21<sup>ST</sup> CENTURY**

**DELIVERED BY**

**REV. MONSIGNOR SÉAMUS PATRICK HORGAN**

Washington D.C., USA  
26 October 2022

Madam President, Your Excellencies, Ladies and Gentlemen,

I have the honour to deliver this Statement in the name of His Excellency, Archbishop Paul Richard Gallagher, Secretary for the Holy See's Relations with States and International Organizations. I thank the United States and the International Atomic Energy Agency for organizing this timely ministerial conference on nuclear power in the 21<sup>st</sup> Century, building on the valuable work of the conferences in Paris (2005), Beijing (2009), St Petersburg (2013) and Abu Dhabi (2017).

Peaceful nuclear science and technology have many applications of immense benefit to humankind, including in cancer treatment, food production, managing scarce water resources and monitoring, and responding to environmental pollution. Developed countries have a responsibility to share these advances with developing countries, helping them to alleviate poverty and meet their development goals in a sustainable way that leaves no-one behind.

In his 2015 encyclical *Laudato Si'*, Pope Francis called for a global consensus on developing renewable, less polluting and more efficient forms of energy.<sup>1</sup>

In Assisi last month, the Pope repeated his call for a just, sustainable and inclusive world economy and said this was not a utopia. As he said, "Now is the time for new courage in abandoning fossil fuels to accelerate the development of zero- or positive-impact sources of energy".<sup>2</sup>

Many Countries, especially in the developing world, are already severely impacted by climate change. They need increasing and reliable sources of energy in order to grow their economies and lift their people out of poverty. Many States believe that nuclear power, as a low-carbon source of energy, can make an important contribution to economic growth, while helping to curb greenhouse gas emissions.

As with most forms of technology, nuclear power is not risk-free. The disasters at the Chernobyl and Fukushima nuclear power plants have had devastating effects on the environment and on the lives of hundreds of thousands of our fellow human beings. Their effects are still being felt today. These incidents remind us that maintaining the highest standards of nuclear safety is of paramount importance. It is also imperative that any truly wise energy policy should respect the natural environment and focus on alleviating the energy poverty of the most disadvantaged populations.<sup>3</sup> Additionally, it is essential that the needs of those people affected by the operation of nuclear power plants are fully taken into account before, after and during its construction. The Holy See greatly values the work of the IAEA in upholding the highest nuclear safety and security standards everywhere.

---

<sup>1</sup> Cf. Pope Francis, *Laudato Si'*, n. 26.

<sup>2</sup> Cf. Pope Francis, Address for the Event "Economy of Francesco", 24 September 2022.

<sup>3</sup> Cf. Pope Francis, *Laudato Si'*, n. 175; 191-194.

Furthermore, nuclear power could contribute to human well-being, but it must be used responsibly and in a way that enhances our stewardship of God's creation. This is why the Holy See attaches such great importance to efforts that ensure the safe and secure storage of long-lived nuclear and radioactive waste so that we do not leave a dangerous legacy to future generations. In particular, it is important to step up efforts and innovative approaches concerning the management and safe disposal of radioactive waste, especially long-lived high-level waste.

Madam President,

At this time of international tension and conflict, the IAEA's work to help curb the spread of nuclear weapons, to obviate the risks of disaster, and to prevent nuclear and other radioactive material from falling into the hands of terrorists and other criminals, is more important than ever.

In recent months, the world has witnessed nuclear facilities in Ukraine – including Europe's largest nuclear power plant at Zaporizhzhya – coming under repeated shelling. The possible consequences of a direct hit on a nuclear reactor for the people of Ukraine, and well beyond Ukraine's borders, are unthinkable. Pope Francis appealed in August for an end to the horror of war in Ukraine, adding: "I hope that concrete steps will be taken to put an end to the war and to avert the risk of a nuclear disaster in Zaporizhzhya."<sup>4</sup>

In this regard, the Holy See appreciates the efforts of IAEA Director General Rafael Mariano Grossi to bring about the establishment of a nuclear safety and security protection zone around the Zaporizhzhya plant.

Madam President,

All of us need to remember the fundamental obligations that every age has towards future generations. These include ensuring a decent quality of life for all the people of the world, with access to basic needs such as food and clean water, and to vital services such as healthcare, education and energy.

As Pope Francis has stated, our immense technological and scientific advances have not always been "accompanied by a development in human responsibility, values and conscience"<sup>5</sup>. This is true also in the area of nuclear science and technology.

In conclusion, Madam President, the Holy See reiterates its sincere gratitude to the IAEA and affirms its unwavering support for the Agency's many valuable contributions to the safe, secure and peaceful use of nuclear technology. We wish all participants a fruitful and productive conference.

Thank you.

---

<sup>4</sup> Cf. Pope Francis, Appeal at the end of the General Audience, 24 August 2022.

<sup>5</sup> Cf. Pope Francis, *Laudato Si'*, n. 104-105.