



**STATEMENT BY THE DELEGATION OF THE HOLY SEE
AT THE IAEA MINISTERIAL CONFERENCE
ON NUCLEAR POWER IN THE 21ST CENTURY**

ABU DHABI, UAE

30 October – 1 November 2017

Mister President, Excellencies, Ladies and Gentlemen,

I have the honour to deliver this Statement in the name of His Excellency Archbishop Paul R. Gallagher, Secretary for the Holy See's Relations with States. At the outset, allow me to express my gratitude to the Authorities of United Arab Emirates and of the International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA) for their organization of this most timely Conference dedicated to the issue of nuclear power in the 21st Century, building on the valuable work of the Conferences in Paris (2005), Beijing (2009) and Saint Petersburg (2013).

While the Holy See is a Founding Member of the International Atomic Energy Agency, it claims no technical expertise *per se* on nuclear energy or its use.¹ Therefore, my Delegation wishes to offer the following general considerations on “the contribution of atomic energy to peace, health and prosperity throughout the world”,² recognizing the inalienable right of States “to develop research, production and use of nuclear energy for peaceful purposes without discrimination”.³

Peaceful use of nuclear technologies and nuclear energy

This Ministerial Conference takes place at a time of heightened tensions regarding nuclear proliferation. In the face of these tensions, the Holy See is ever more hopeful that the commitment already cited “to develop research, production and the use of nuclear energy for peaceful purposes” will remain at the front of our attention and central to our actions to prevent further nuclear proliferation. At the same time, it must be recognised that nuclear security and non-proliferation depend upon safeguarding nuclear and radioactive materials from criminal or unauthorized uses. My Delegation is, therefore, greatly encouraged that nuclear safety, nuclear security and the peaceful use of nuclear power and nuclear technologies are high priorities for the IAEA.

¹ Cf. POPE FRANCIS, *Encyclical letter on care for our common home, Laudato si'*, n. 61.

² *Statute of the International Atomic Energy Agency*, art. II.

³ *Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons*, art. IV.1.

Nuclear power: meeting future energy demand, contributing to sustainable development and mitigating climate change

Pope Benedict XVI affirmed the Holy See's general commitment "to support the use of peaceful and safe nuclear technology for authentic development"⁴. At the same time, the Holy See firmly believes that nuclear power cannot be removed from larger – global – considerations. As Pope Francis has rightly stated, our immense technological and scientific advances and development have not always been "accompanied by a development in human responsibility, values and conscience"⁵.

Therefore, it is imperative that any truly wise energy policy should necessarily lead to the development of peoples – a development that is respectful both of the natural environment, as a good in itself, and as a good from which life and human health also depend, with a particular focus on alleviating the energy poverty of the most disadvantaged populations.⁶

Historically, energy resources are critical drivers of economic development. For this reason, my Delegation urges the adoption of policies that foster energy resources that are renewable, sustainable and less polluting of the earth and the health of people. If we are to address global climate change and meet the goals of the 2015 Paris Climate Agreement adequately and in a timely manner, clearly we need to adopt new and more benign and renewable energy resources. The world community increasingly recognizes that there is "an urgent need to develop [such] policies so that, in the next few years, the emission of carbon dioxide and other highly polluting gases can be drastically reduced, for example, substituting for fossil fuels and developing sources of renewable energy"⁷.

Currently, nuclear power is a component of the energy mix of a number of countries. Other countries also are now considering whether to make it a part of their future energy portfolios. For many, nuclear power is viewed as a viable energy resource that can contribute to their sustainable development and the common global efforts to mitigate climate change. However, in advancing such an agenda, continued efforts are needed to ensure not only the mere availability of safe and secure nuclear power, but also to advance science and technology related to this energy form. The Holy See is convinced that among the scientific and technological aspects related to nuclear power, the search for viable solutions for the safe and secure storage of long-lived nuclear waste should remain high on the agenda of the IAEA and all States who include nuclear power in their energy mix.

Nuclear power for integral human development

The myriad of positive consequences of nuclear technology must, however, be accompanied with the more fundamental recognition that any effort to see social advancement, any effort to promote the common good, must be based on a desire to ensure the integral development of every man and woman. As affirmed by the United Nations Declaration on the Right to Development of 1986: "The human person is the central subject of development"⁸.

⁴ POPE BENEDICT XVI, *Greeting to the faithful at the recitation of the Sunday Angelus*, 29 June 2007.

⁵ Cf. Pope Francis, *Laudato si'*, n. 104-105.

⁶ Cf. Pope Francis, *Laudato si'*, n. 175; 191-194.

⁷ POPE FRANCIS, *Laudato si'*, n. 26.

⁸ *United Nations Declaration on the Right to Development*, art. 2.1.

In fact, any type of development which does not respect and promote fundamental human rights – personal and social, cultural, economic and political, including the rights of nations and of peoples – cannot be deemed worthy of man.⁹ Far too often, political or financial gain or power and rapid and constant change are perceived to be goals in and of themselves, or projected as the source of peace, welfare and security. Such an interpretation is clearly flawed because while the human race has never “enjoyed such an abundance of wealth, resources and economic power, [...] yet a huge proportion of the worlds citizens are still tormented by hunger and poverty”.¹⁰

Meeting peoples and nations needs is a critical dimension of integral human development. The work of the IAEA utilizing nuclear technologies in the areas of human health, agriculture food safety, water management, environmental protection and other critical areas of development helps considerably in addressing poverty in many countries. These IAEA activities deserve continued priority as part of the peaceful use of nuclear technologies.

This ambitious and indispensable project, of seeking safe and secure nuclear technology and energy, involves all of us: inside and outside of the nuclear and energy sector, both in the public and private sector, and on both the governmental and non-governmental levels. In this way, a common commitment to a safer and more peaceful world will lead not only to a just distribution of the earth’s resources, but above all to the building of a “social and international order in which the rights and freedoms” of all human persons can be fully realized (*Universal Declaration of Human Rights*, Art. 28). Therefore, the Holy See welcomes a holistic and inclusive approach to the questions before us, wherein all stakeholders are included and work together. Anything else would simply be counter-productive.

Conclusion

In conclusion, my Delegation thanks once more the organizers of this Ministerial Conference on Nuclear Energy in the 21st Century, and extends its gratitude to all the participants for their valuable contributions to our discussions. Furthermore, I am pleased to assure all present of the Holy See’s continued engagement with our joint efforts to meet tomorrow’s energy demands, contribute to sustainable development that leaves no-one behind and centres on the dignity of every man and woman, and mitigate the impact that climate change continues to have on our planet.

Thank you for your kind attention.

⁹ Cf. POPE JOHN PAUL II, *Encyclical letter on the twentieth anniversary of Populorum Progressio, Sollicitudo rei socialis*, n. 33.

¹⁰ Second Vatican Council, *Pastoral constitution on the Church in the modern world, Gaudium et spes*, n. 4.