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FIRST PREPARATORY COMMITTEE FOR THE 2020 REVIEW
CONFERENCE OF THE PARTIES TO THE TREATY ON THE NON-
PROLIFERATION OF NUCLEAR WEAPONS

Vienna, 2-12 May 2017

Mr. Chairman,

The Holy See is pleased to participate at this First Preparatory Committee of
the 2020 Review Conference of the Parties to the Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of
Nuclear Weapons (NPT). Furthermore, my Delegation congratulates you, Mr.
Chairman on your appointment, and thanks you for your able stewardship of this
important gathering.

When the Holy See acceded to the NPT in 1971, it declared that it did so
“inspired by its constant desire, illuminated by the teaching of universal brotherhood
and of justice and peace between men and peoples contained in the Gospel message
to make its contribution to undertakings which, through disarmament as well as by
other means, promote security, mutual trust and peaceful co-operation in relations
between peoples”.

The presence of the Holy See at this Preparatory Committee seeks
the very same: to lend its moral authority to the efforts “to work for a world free of
nuclear weapons, in full application of the Non-Proliferation Treaty, in letter and
spirit, with the goal of a complete prohibition of these weapons”.

The foundation of the NPT was the recognition by States Parties that “the
devastation that would be visited upon all mankind by a nuclear war” would be so
great that “every effort to avert the danger of such a war” and “measures to safeguard
the security of peoples” were needed without delay. The Holy See cannot but lament
the fact that the potential devastation caused by the use of nuclear weapons so clearly
identified over 40 years ago has not been relegated to history. In other words, the
efforts of the international community to utilize the NPT to make the world safer
have not been sufficient.

The Holy See would, therefore, urge the States Parties to utilise the opportunity
granted us by the 10th NPT Review Conference and its Preparatory Committee

1 Declaration by the Holy See annexed to the instrument of accession to the Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear
meetings and to make concrete and consensus-based progress towards nuclear non-
proliferation, and towards the ultimate goal of abolishing all nuclear weapons. 
Although reaching consensus is seldom without challenges, this city of Vienna has 
shown time and time again, that serious dialogue, the will to compromise and the full 
range of the diplomatic toolbox may achieve also that which is characterized as 
impossible. All States Parties may be assured that the Holy See stands ready to 
engage constructively in this process.

The search for peace

Mr. Chairman,

Pope Francis, following in the footsteps of his venerable predecessors, has 
repeatedly called on the international community, not only to seek the end of war, 
conflict and strife, but to embrace forcefully and advance peace. The value of peace 
must be recognized as an ‘active virtue’, calling for the engagement and cooperation 
of each individual and society as a whole. As the Pope wrote in his latest World 
Peace Day Message, an “ethics of fraternity and peaceful coexistence between 
individuals and among peoples cannot be based on the logic of fear, violence and 
closed-mindedness, but [must be based] on responsibility, respect and sincere 
dialogue”. He accompanied these words with the following appeal: “I plead for 
disarmament and for the prohibition and abolition of nuclear weapons: nuclear 
deterrence and the threat of mutual assured destruction are incapable of grounding 
such an ethics”.3

Nuclear weapons provide a false sense of security, as do efforts to secure a 
negative peace through a balance of power. Nations have a right and an obligation to 
protect their own security, which is strongly linked to the promotion of collective 
security, the common good and peace. In this perspective, a positive conception of 
peace is required. Peace must be built on justice, on integral human development, on 
respect for fundamental human rights, on the protection of creation, on the 
participation of all in public life, on trust between peoples, on the support of 
institutions devoted to building peace, and on dialogue and solidarity.4 Ultimately, 
peace must be grounded in those human values that are present in all individuals, 
peoples, cultures, religions and philosophies.

The Holy See and nuclear disarmament

In this regard, the Holy See was also supportive of the negotiations held in 
March, to be continued in June/July, on a legally binding instrument to prohibit 
nuclear weapons. In his letter to Her Excellency Elayne Whyte Gómez, President of 
the UN conference on a nuclear ban, Pope Francis urged the international community 
to “go beyond nuclear deterrence… [and] to adopt forward-looking strategies to 
promote the goal of peace and stability and to avoid short-sighted approaches to the

3 Pope Francis, Message for the celebration of the 50th World Day of Peace, 1 January 2017, n. 5.
4 Cfr. Letter of Pope Francis to Her Excellency Elayne Whyte Gómez, President of the United Nations Conference to 
Negotiate a Legally Binding Instrument to Prohibit Nuclear Weapons, Leading Towards their Total Elimination. 23 
March 2017.
problems surrounding national and international security.” Growing interdependence requires a collective response based on mutual trust, a trust built through dialogue directed to the common good, not the protection of narrow interests. Such dialogue, as far as possible, should include both nuclear and non-nuclear states working together in international bodies such as this one, but should also include the private sector, religious communities, and civil society.

While having no illusions about the challenges involved in achieving a world free of nuclear weapons, the Holy See urges all parties to make progress in relation to the many international instruments and processes: not only the NPT, but also the CTBT, NEW START, the FMCT, as well as unilateral initiatives and other measures. But these steps are in themselves limited, especially in light of growing tensions, continuing proliferation, and the major modernization programs of some nuclear powers. It is, therefore vital that the nuclear-weapon State Parties renew arms control and disarmament processes, in conformity with Article VI of the NPT. In this regard, a very important sign would be to make real efforts towards facilitating the entry into force of the CTBT, which the Holy See considers as the best hope of stemming nuclear proliferation and which could be a key to progress on nuclear disarmament.

The Holy See views the situation on the Korean peninsula with concern and supports the continued efforts by the international community to revive negotiations over denuclearization and peace.

In conclusion, the Holy See reiterates its gratitude for the efforts already undertaken by the Parties to the Treaty on the non-proliferation of nuclear weapons in maintaining peace and of advancing multilateral and cooperative security. Moreover, it lends its voice in exhorting political authorities not to limit themselves to ensuring the security of their own citizens but also work actively for the global growth of peace, which humanity very much needs today.

Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

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5 Ibid.
6 Cfr. Ibid.