



HOLY SEE

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**Statement by H.E. Archbishop Celestino Migliore
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63rd session of the UN General Assembly

**First Committee:
“General and complete disarmament”**

New York, 7 October 2008

Mr Chairman,

Two months from now we will be celebrating the 60th anniversary of the *Universal Declaration of Human Rights*. This event invites us to a renewed commitment to disarmament, development and peace. All States are called upon to promote disarmament and non-proliferation as key elements for an international order in which the fundamental rights and freedoms of every person can be fully realized.

Peace and security are threatened by terrorism, and even more by widespread violence, neglect of human rights and underdevelopment. As the human person is the ultimate aim of all public policies, arms regulation, disarmament and non-proliferation must have an interdisciplinary or, more importantly, a human approach. Without considering the social, economical, psychological and ethical impact of armaments, policies on disarmament and non-proliferation become a game of armed truce between States.

Indeed, we realize a conflict emerging between security and military policies. The international community strives to fight nuclear terrorism with the adoption of stringent norms banning the production, possession and transfer of such arms; but, on the other hand, not a few States pursue the renewal or the acquisition of nuclear arsenals at the national level. Consequently a kind of conflict between security policies and development appears to emerge as well. States, and especially the major powers, aspire in the nuclear sector to a maximum national freedom, and at the same time to incisive forms of international and regional monitoring.

This explains also in large part the scarce interest in fully complying with the *Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons (NPT)* and reaching the necessary quorum for the entry into force of the *Comprehensive Nuclear-Test-Ban Treaty (CTBT)*.

This contradicts the spirit of the United Nations and is not the way to build a durable and lasting peace. Arms regulation, nuclear disarmament and non-proliferation are key elements for a global strategy in favour of human rights, development and international order.

Despite the negative trend of multilateralism, this past spring in Dublin, a group of 107 States, with the support of 20 Observer States, international organisations and a coalition of non-governmental organisations, adopted the *Convention on Cluster Munitions*, which will be opened for signing on 3 December 2008 in Oslo. As a member of the Core Group of the Oslo Process, the Holy See is particularly pleased with this achievement. This new Convention, besides filling a serious gap in humanitarian law, provides a strong and realistic solution to an ongoing problem, characterized not only by the indiscriminate use of cluster munitions, but also by the fact that they can rest undetonated on the ground for many years, and, once disturbed, can devastatingly affect the daily life of thousands of civilians around the globe.

The Oslo Process not only represents an important political and legal step forward but is also a warning signal. As a matter of fact, like the *Convention on Antipersonnel*

Mines, the *Convention on Cluster Munitions* has been negotiated and adopted outside the *Conference on Disarmament*. As emphasised by the 62nd General Assembly, multilateralism is “the core principle in resolving disarmament and non-proliferation concerns” (Resolution 62/27). The Holy See shares this view and supports the plan for a fourth Special Session of the General Assembly on disarmament which could foster multilateralism within international organisations and in particular the *Conference on Disarmament*.

On the other hand, the Holy See is concerned about the erosion of multilateralism in the area of arms regulation, disarmament and non-proliferation. The *Conference on Disarmament* has not had a programme of work for more than 10 years, and the lack of political will in the international community regarding these projects is disconcerting. It is well known that more progress can be made with an approach based on responsible, honest and coherent dialogue and cooperation of all the members of the international community than with individualized and contrasting approaches.

The adoption of the *Arms Trade Treaty* is uncertain. A greater transparency, given the enhanced complexity of the arms trade linked also to an increase of the exchange of so-called “dual-use” goods and technologies, would contribute to actual security and provide the premises for a future limitation of the arms trade. In this prospective it seems opportune to recall General Assembly Resolution 62/13 which refers to the “objective information on military matters, including transparency of military expenditures”, and Resolution 62/26 which speaks of “national legislation on transfer of arms, military equipment and dual-use goods and technologies”.

Finally, disarmament is becoming an increasingly complex issue, which brings us back to more general problems, such as the reform of this Organisation, the procedural and structural reform of the *Conference on Disarmament*, the tendency of overlapping the civil and military economies and the scarce coherence of the policies adopted in the strategic sectors.

In this context, the Holy See calls upon the international community for a greater sensitivity and more efforts in promoting the peaceful coexistence and survival of the entire human family, and believes that the best formula for success is cooperation and partnership between States, the United Nations, international organizations and civil society.

Thank you, Mr Chairman.