



STATEMENT OF THE HOLY SEE

**ON THE OCCASION OF THE TWENTIETH ANNIVERSARY OF THE
COMPREHENSIVE NUCLEAR-TEST-BAN TREATY**

AS DELIVERED BY

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Mr Chairperson, Mr Executive Secretary, Ladies and Gentlemen,

I am pleased to convey to you the greetings of His Holiness Pope Francis, who, in addressing the United Nations General Assembly on 25 September 2015, urged the international community “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.” Pope Francis added, “An ethics and a law based on the threat of mutual destruction – and possibly the destruction of all mankind – are self-contradictory and an affront to the entire framework of the United Nations, which would end up as ‘nations united by fear and distrust’.”

In order to respond adequately to the challenges of the twenty-first century, it is essential to replace fear and mistrust with an ethic of responsibility, and so foster a climate of trust which values multilateral dialogue through consistent and responsible cooperation between all the members of the international community. The norms embodied in the UN Charter, humanitarian law, arms control conventions, and other elements of international law represent an indispensable juridical embodiment of this global ethic of responsibility.

The Comprehensive Nuclear-Test-Ban Treaty is one of the cornerstones of the juridical architecture painstakingly put in place to control the global threat posed by nuclear weapons and to move progressively and urgently toward a world free of such weapons. The Holy See is very pleased to take part in this commemoration of the twentieth anniversary of the Treaty’s opening for signature.

As the Preamble of the Treaty makes clear, by constraining the development and improvement of nuclear weapons, the test ban “constitutes an effective measure of nuclear disarmament and nonproliferation in all its aspects.... [and] a meaningful step in the realization of a systematic process to achieve nuclear disarmament.” When the Holy See ratified the CTBT on 18 July 2001, it reiterated its longstanding view that a ban on nuclear tests (cf. CTBT, art. 1), and on the further development of nuclear weapons, disarmament and non-proliferation “are closely linked and must be achieved as quickly as possible under effective international control.” Specifically, entry into force of the CTBT is an essential complement to efforts that enforce and strengthen the Non-Proliferation Treaty (NPT), as well as the implementation of the CTBT Verification Regime. Nor should it be forgotten that the CTBT is an important instrument in protecting the environment from the reckless use of our unprecedented technological and scientific advances¹.

Mr Chairperson,

Regrettably, contrary to the purposes of the CTBT, States that now possess nuclear weapons are spending enormous sums on major new modernization programs that risk undermining non-proliferation and disarmament measures, as well as

¹ cf. Pope Francis, Encyclical Letter “*Laudato Si*” on care for our common home, no. 104.

international security and stability. The logic of fear, dominance and self-interest that drive these modernization efforts hearken back to the dark days of the Cold War.

Moreover, as Pope Francis said in his message to the Vienna Conference on 7 December 2014: “Spending on nuclear weapons squanders the wealth of nations. To prioritize such spending is a mistake and a misallocation of resources which would be far better invested in areas of integral human development, education, health and the fight against extreme poverty.” Billions are wasted each year to produce and develop new or improved nuclear weapons. How are these expenditures consistent with the purposes of the CTBT and NPT, and the goals of nuclear non-proliferation and nuclear disarmament?

Today, while commending those States which have decided to ratify the Treaty, my Delegation wishes to repeat its appeal to the remaining States whose ratification is necessary for the Treaty to enter into force, now is the time to demonstrate courageous leadership and a high sense of political responsibility at the service of the common good, and the promotion of a genuine culture of peace.

Two decades is too long a wait for the implementation of this critically-important Treaty. Taking the urgent steps necessary for the entry into force of the CTBT would be one of the best ways to strengthen the nuclear non-proliferation regime and to create the conditions for much more dramatic progress toward nuclear disarmament. Entry into force of this Treaty will put in place a vital piece of a global structure to support a nuclear weapons free world and to guarantee a cooperative security based on an ethic of responsibility.

We cannot simply set aside that undertaking because of the passage of time. On the contrary, the stability of the global nonproliferation regime – even without universal membership in that Treaty – may be put at risk if we cannot honor our commitments and establish an increasingly broad and deep matrix of legally binding agreements that reduce tensions between states and support ways of interacting internationally in security and peace. The CTBT is preeminently one of these agreements.

In concluding, I would like to reiterate the importance the Holy See places on the entry into force of the Comprehensive Nuclear-Test-Ban Treaty, and to assure you, Mr Chairperson, and the international community, of the Holy See’s “full moral support to the solemn act of ratification as an indispensable aspect of the concrete realization of a culture of life, peace and prosperity which can ensure a better tomorrow.”²

Thank you, Mr Chairperson.

² Intervention of H. E. Archbishop Paul Richard Gallagher, Secretary for Relations with States, IX Conference on Facilitating the Entry into Force of the Comprehensive Nuclear-Test Ban Treaty, New York, 29 September 2015.