



Statement by Archbishop Gabriele Caccia, Head of Delegation of the Holy See, during the general discussion of Main Committee II of the Tenth Review Conference of the of the Parties to the Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons

8 August 2022

Madam Chair,

The Holy See congratulates you on your election as Chair of Main Committee II of this Tenth Review Conference and takes this opportunity to offer some general considerations at the start of the committee's discussions.

Writing shortly after the Cuban Missile Crisis, Pope Saint John XXIII observed that "Everyone must sincerely co-operate in the effort to banish fear and the anxious expectation of war from men's minds."¹ To do this, he stressed the need to replace the "fundamental principles upon which peace is based" with "the realization that true and lasting peace among nations cannot consist in the possession of an equal supply of armaments but only in mutual trust."² In no area is such trust more vital than in the pursuit of non-proliferation and disarmament.

In this regard, the Holy See commends the work of the International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA), which for sixty-five years has applied safeguards that not only build mutual trust, but also warn the international community when a State Party's intentions diverge from obligations under Articles II and III of this treaty.

Since the entry into force of the NPT, the threat of nuclear proliferation has evolved, which has required reconsideration and adaption of the safeguards system. With this in mind, the Holy See calls upon all States Parties to adopt the IAEA Additional Protocol (AP). While voluntary, such adoption displays goodwill and builds further confidence that all portions of the nuclear fuel cycle remain devoted solely to peaceful purposes. The Holy See further calls upon all States Parties with an operative small quantities protocol (SQP) to either rescind it or amend it to the revised standard text.

¹ Pope Saint John XXIII, Encyclical Letter *Pacem in Terris*, 11 April 1963, 113.

² Pope Saint John XXIII, Encyclical Letter *Pacem in Terris*, 11 April 1963, 113.

Moreover, my delegation encourages all States Parties to consider other enhanced bilateral or multilateral verification arrangements. Such arrangements could lead to greater trust, especially in those regions where it is currently lacking, such as the Middle East.

In light of this, my delegation expresses its concern that Iran and the P5+1 have yet to agree on returning to the Joint Comprehensive Plan of Action (JCPOA), which demonstrated the value of transparency and verification in lowering a climate of fear, mistrust, and hostility. The Holy See sincerely hopes that the resumed dialogue in Vienna in a revival of the agreement that is “lasting and efficacious”.³

Madam Chair,

The exceptional growth of nuclear-weapon-free zones calls into question the false notion that nuclear weapons enhance national prestige, while providing an effective deterrent. As of today, 116 UN Member States are party to the various nuclear-weapon-free-zone treaties in existence.

The international community has rightly acknowledged the importance of such zones. The 1995 Review and Extension Conference noted in its outcome document that these “zones contribute to strengthening the international non-proliferation regime,” and that “the cooperation of all the nuclear-weapon states and their respect and support for the relevant protocols is necessary for the maximum effectiveness of such nuclear-weapon-free zones and the relevant protocols.” The 2010 Plan of Action further emphasized that non-nuclear-weapon States can further contribute to global non-proliferation efforts by establishing nuclear-weapon-free zones in regions where they do not yet exist and encouraged nuclear-weapon States to sign and ratify all relevant protocols and reconsider any related reservations.

Fundamentally, such zones reduce the areas of potential proliferation, allowing greater focus on actual proliferation threats. Moreover, these zones and their associated negative security assurances restrict the geographic scope of nuclear deterrence strategies. They also promote regional security by reducing nuclear risk and enhancing States’ non-proliferation obligations. Nuclear-weapon-free zones model a way forward toward a world free of nuclear weapons. Their success and endurance ought to provide concrete examples and hope for further work towards additional zones.

³ Pope Francis, Address at the Meeting with Members of the General Assembly of the United Nations Organization, 25 September 2015.

On the prospective Middle East zone free of nuclear weapons and other weapons of mass destruction, the Holy See takes note of and is encouraged by the commencement of negotiations towards its establishment in line with the 1995 Resolution on the Middle East, which was instrumental in securing the indefinite extension of this treaty by consensus.

Additionally, my delegation urges the international community to consider further geographic areas suitable for the establishment of additional zones “on the basis of arrangements freely arrived at among the States of the region”. In this regard, the Holy See calls for re-consideration of proposed zones in the Korean Peninsula, the Arctic, and among non-nuclear-weapon States in Europe.

Finally, future nuclear-weapon-free zone treaties, as well as ongoing diplomacy related to current nuclear-weapon-free zone treaties, ought to specify that the provisions of these treaties equally apply during peace and war time.

At this Tenth Review Conference, it is my delegation’s sincere wish that all States Parties agree on measures to further enhance nuclear safeguards and nuclear-weapon-free zones with a view to achieving “true and lasting peace among nations”.⁴

I thank you Madam Chair.

⁴ Pope Saint John XXIII, Encyclical Letter *Pacem in Terris*, 11 April 1963, 113.