



Statement of H.E. Archbishop Bernardito Auza
Apostolic Nuncio, Permanent Observer of the Holy See to the United Nations
at the **General Debate of the First Committee of the
United Nations General Assembly**

New York, 10 October 2017

Mr. Chair,

My Delegation congratulates you and your associates on chairing this session of the First Committee of the General Assembly, and pledges its full cooperation in advancing our work.

At the outset, I want to extend my delegation's heartfelt congratulations to the International Campaign to Abolish Nuclear Weapons (ICAN) and to the many civil society organizations associated with it, for being awarded this year's Nobel Peace Prize. My Delegation wish them every success in meeting the coming challenges.

The tremendous hopes for a better world generated by the end of the Cold War and by the liberation of many countries from totalitarian regimes have been dashed by the conflagration of numerous violent conflicts in many regions and countries in the world. They have been dimmed by the desperate situations of hundreds of millions of refugees, forced migrants and internally displaced persons. They have almost been snuffed out by extremely violent terrorist groups who act with utter disregard for every form of human decency.

The hopes for a more peaceful and secure world are severely threatened by the ever-increasing production of weapons and their great destructive firepower, including nuclear weapons and other weapons of mass destruction. The arms trade, both licit and illicit, keeps expanding. More and more countries have become arms manufacturers. The proliferation of arms, including weapons of mass destruction, among terrorist groups and other non-state actors has led to a most threatening situation.

These deeply disturbing trends increasingly threaten the existing architecture of arms control and non-proliferation, with the effect of rendering the ultimate objective of general and complete disarmament even more remote. They place greater obstacles and barriers to the achievement of peace and security, the full enjoyment of fundamental human rights, and an integral human development. These trends reveal that the chasm that separates commitments and action in the field of disarmament and arms control has been growing deeper and wider.

Mr. Chair,

The Holy See signed and ratified the Treaty on the Prohibition of Nuclear Weapons during the 20 September signing ceremony, because it believes that it is an important contribution in the overall effort toward complete nuclear non-proliferation and nuclear disarmament, and a step forward toward the fulfillment of the commitment of the States Party to the Treaty on Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons (NPT) “*to pursue negotiations in good faith on effective measures relating to cessation of the nuclear arms race at an early date and to nuclear disarmament.*” The Treaty is one more step toward the fulfillment of the prophecy of Isaiah: “They shall beat their swords into plowshares and their spears into pruning hooks; One nation shall not raise the sword against another, nor shall they train for war again” (Isaiah 2:4).

The adoption of the Treaty shows that an overwhelming majority of States and many other stakeholders want swifter progress toward a world free of the threat of nuclear destruction. But while the Treaty constitutes a landmark in the field of global security, much work remains to be done if it is truly to make a difference and achieve its full promise, particularly in engaging the nuclear-weapon-possessing States and States under extended nuclear deterrence, and in establishing a competent international authority to oversee the dismantling of nuclear weapon systems. We must continue to pursue these objectives, and move toward general and complete disarmament under strict and effective international control.

We must not ignore, however, the halting pace of progress under other treaties, and the work needed to advance the objectives of NPT Article VI. The Holy See notes with concern the lack of movement to maintain existing agreements such as the Treaty on Intermediate Nuclear Forces or to bring into force the Comprehensive Nuclear-Test-Ban Treaty (CTBT), with regard to which a Conference dedicated to attaining this objective has just taken place here on September 20. It is difficult to envision further steps or establish additional building blocks in the edifice of nuclear arms control when an existing agreement is under duress, and the required ratifications to bring laboriously negotiated Treaties are not being sought.

In the context of the continued nuclear testing by the Democratic People’s Republic of Korea, the Holy See reiterates its encouragement to those States whose ratifications are required for entry into force of the CTBT to act swiftly to ratify the Treaty, thereby making more credible and forceful all efforts to persuade North Korea to put an end to its nuclear arms program, and to convince it to ratify the CTBT. The disturbing developments on the Korean Peninsula demonstrate once again the importance of both the CTBT and the Treaty on the Prohibition of Nuclear Weapons, as well as all other efforts towards nuclear non-proliferation and nuclear disarmament.

In this regard, the Holy See welcomes the continued successful implementation of the New START Treaty between the Russian Federation and the United States of America, the recent

high-level bilateral meeting in Helsinki and expert-level consultations to deal with nuclear arms control. Likewise, the parties to the NPT are deeply engaged to ensure that the 2020 NPT Review Conference could achieve substantial results that eluded the 2015 NPT Review Conference. It is very much to be hoped that further steps toward nuclear disarmament will be acknowledged in the 2020 NPT Review Conference.

At the same time, the use of cluster munitions and toxic chemicals against civilian populations has not stopped in spite of the Convention on Cluster Munitions and the Chemical Weapons Convention; indeed, this has been on the rise in some areas, as the not infrequent attacks against civilian populations demonstrate. Moreover, the risks that these deadly weapons fall into the hands of terrorists and radical non-state actors are real and present. We must therefore uphold the obligations established by these Treaties, to ensure that civilians everywhere are protected from these weapons which have catastrophic humanitarian impact and consequences.

Mr. Chair,

Last year, both this Committee and the General Assembly adopted by consensus Resolution 71/62, on the relationship between disarmament and development. It is encouraging that this Committee has gone on record to stress *“the importance of the symbiotic relationship between disarmament and development and the important role of security in this connection, and concern at increasing global military expenditure, which could otherwise be spent on development needs.”*

The Resolution’s operative paragraphs are very much in line with the position of the Holy See, particularly with regard to devoting resources saved through disarmament and arms limitation agreements to economic and social development. In particular, Goal 16 of the Sustainable Development Goals underlines this “symbiotic relationship” between security and development. It aims to *“promote peaceful and inclusive societies for sustainable development, provide access to justice for all and build effective, accountable and inclusive institutions at all levels.”* This Committee has its work cut out for it in attaining this Goal.

Mr. Chair,

We live in momentous times. The Holy See thus fully supports the work of this Committee, and encourages it to be more determined than ever in working to achieve with ever-greater urgency and sense of purpose its ultimate objective of achieving a peaceful and stable world.

Thank you, Mr. Chair.