



**Statement by His Eminence Pietro Cardinal Parolin
Secretary of State of the Holy See
Head of the Delegation of the Holy See to the
Seventy-Fourth Session of the UN General Assembly**

General Assembly High-Level Plenary Meeting to commemorate and promote the
International Day for the Total Elimination of Nuclear Weapons
New York, September 26 2019

Mr. President,

The Holy See Mission welcomes the occasion of this High-Level Plenary Meeting to reiterate its full support for the total elimination of nuclear weapons. In view of the current absence of negotiations aimed at achieving even the most modest of steps toward this vital global security objective, security for each of us and for everyone in the global community of nations, this Plenary is particularly timely. It is of critical importance that global leaders, at the highest levels, speak out forcefully to urge those States that must take the next steps toward the elimination of nuclear weapons to initiate action now, not at some vague future date and not waiting for some “ideal” international peace and security situation to come about.

In November 2017, speaking at a symposium held in the Vatican, Pope Francis made clear the position of the Holy See on nuclear weapons, when he said, “the threat of their use, as well as their very possession, is to be firmly condemned. For they exist in the service of a mentality of fear that affects not only the parties in conflict but the entire human race. International relations cannot be held captive to military force, mutual intimidation, and the parading of stockpiles of arms. Weapons of mass destruction, particularly nuclear weapons, create nothing but a false sense of security. They cannot constitute the basis for peaceful coexistence between members of the human family, which must rather be inspired by an ethics of solidarity.”

The Holy See notes with regret, *inter alia*, the lapse of the Intermediate-Range Nuclear Forces Treaty, the failure to achieve entry into force of the Comprehensive Nuclear-Test-Ban Treaty, the inability of the Conference on Disarmament even to begin negotiations on a ban on the production of fissile material for nuclear weapons, the so-called “modernization” of nuclear weapons and delivery systems, and the instabilities at play in the implementation of the Joint Comprehensive Program of Action. All of these are worrying signs of the continued erosion of multilateralism and of the ruled-based order.

The Holy See acknowledges with satisfaction the increasing number of States who have ratified the Treaty on the Prohibition of Nuclear Weapons (TPNW), and encourages

those States who have already signed it to ratify it as soon as possible. Only by engaging in sincere, honest and effective dialogue, remains the hope that other States will build the trust needed to sign and ratify this instrument. We believe that the Treaty is an important step toward a nuclear-free world, and complements the Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons (NPT). The TPNW is a fruit of the efforts of many States and other stakeholders to promote greater awareness and deeper understanding of the serious humanitarian consequences and environmental disasters that would result from the use of nuclear weapons.

Mr. President,

One might be tempted to lose hope in face of the setbacks, the impasse or the very slow progress in the disarmament agenda, in particular in the area of nuclear disarmament. However, perseverance and determination should characterize our common efforts to move toward the elimination of nuclear weapons. We must make every effort to avoid dismantling the international architecture of arms control, especially in the field of weapons of mass destruction.

The Holy See encourages the relevant States to take timely action to extend the New START Treaty beyond its scheduled expiration in February 2020. It continues to hope that the same relevant States come back to the table to revive talks on the INF, even if the Treaty has lapsed. The Conference on Disarmament, the UN Disarmament Commission and all instances concerned must take concrete steps to preclude the weaponization of outer space with the attendant risks to systems vital to so many aspects of our life on Earth. The Middle East should not be put at further risk of destabilization in dealing with the Joint Comprehensive Plan of Action and other weapons-related challenges. My Delegation also urges restraint and concrete steps to deescalate the nuclear threats in the Korean Peninsula and the surrounding territories, with efforts toward its complete denuclearization. We must work tirelessly to restore any possibility of dialogue and to fight the trust-deficits, which unfortunately are characterize the current situation of disarmament, as well as in the building of our common and collective security.

Mr. President,

In November, His Holiness will visit Hiroshima and Nagasaki. He will not fail to make the strongest appeal possible for concerted steps towards the total elimination of nuclear weapons. We look forward to making a contribution at the Tenth Review Conference on the Treaty of Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons next year, which represents a very important opportunity for all its States Parties to work together for the aim of achieving the long term goal of a nuclear weapons free world and to rebuild dialogue and trust for our collective security.

Thank you, Mr. President.