

National Congress Pax Christi USA Chicago, 16 - 19 July 2009

Towards Global Zero of Nuclear Weapons Now. An Appeal to the USA: Make use of the momentum! Yes, you can!

Pax Christi, the International Catholic peace movement, with more than 100 member organisations active worldwide, has repeatedly and consistently called for disarmament of all weapons of mass destruction (WMD): nuclear, chemical and biological.¹ Over the years, Pax Christi USA has also taken the lead in campaigning within the Catholic Church for the total abolishment of nuclear weapons. Dave Robinson, the Executive Director, went to Japan in May 2009 and visited the symbolic cities of Hiroshima and Nagasaki, which have been bombed by US nuclear weapons at the end of World War II.

Nuclear arms are one of the most inhumane of all weapons. They are rightly called weapons of mass destruction and weapons of mass terror. Nuclear weapons are indiscriminate in their effects. They result in widespread and massive devastation, and cause long-lasting radioactive damage. Designed to terrify as well as destroy, these weapons can, in the hands of either states or terrorists, cause destruction on a vastly greater scale than any conventional weapons. They have the potential to kill thousands of people in a single attack, and their effects may persist in the environment and within human bodies, in some cases indefinitely. One powerful lesson I retained from the bombing of Hiroshima and Nagasaki is not only the killing of thousands of people and the destruction of the environment but the fact that, several years later (over 60 years), scientists acknowledge that some effects have been passed to a new generation (birth defects, for example).

As long as any state possesses such weapons others will persist in acquiring them. As long as such weapons remain in any state's arsenal, there is a risk that these weapons will be used one day, either by intention

¹ Pax Christi International - www.paxchristi.net - search for "disarmament."

or accident, whether by rogue states or terrorist organisations. Any use of these weapons would simply be catastrophic.

The concepts nuclear non-proliferation, nuclear disarmament, and the prohibition of nuclear tests are intimately interconnected and must be addressed as soon as possible with effective initiatives at the international level. The prevention of both nuclear proliferation and nuclear terrorism are high priorities for Pax Christi International. Nuclear weapons should be outlawed and the threat and the numbers of existing nuclear weapons should be reduced to zero.

Immoral to Use, to Threaten and to Possess

In April 2005, Pax Christi International issued a statement on the occasion of the 2005 Non Proliferation Treaty (NPT) Review Conference at the UN in New York.² In that statement, Pax Christi International reaffirmed its position that it is immoral for states and non-state actors, including terrorists, to use, threaten with, or possess nuclear weapons. At the same time, Pax Christi International reminded participants at the NPT meetings of their legal obligation to achieve complete and irreversible elimination of nuclear weapons and to honour the promises they made at the NPT Review Conference in 2000 to strengthen the Non Proliferation Treaty and regime.

As the International Court of Justice (ICJ) unanimously and categorically pointed out in its Advisory Opinion on *Legality of the Threat or Use of Nuclear Weapons* (8 July 1996), these weapons, incapable of being contained in space and time, have the potential to destroy all civilization and the entire ecosystem of the planet. No task can therefore be more urgent than the elimination of this possibility, which can only be achieved through the total elimination of nuclear weapons.

Over the past centuries, mankind has endeavoured to ban the development and use of weapons that fail to discriminate between civilians and combatants as well as weapons that cause cruel and

² 27 April 2005, read in English, French and Spanish DIS.22.EFS.05.

unnecessary suffering. The ICJ's Advisory Opinion maintains and affirms this tradition.

Challenges Ahead

More than a decade has passed since the ICJ so categorically formulated this obligation, and yet we see a continued readiness to develop nuclear weapons and maintain nuclear arsenals. We also see the proliferation of nuclear dangers all around us, which continuously increases the danger of a nuclear weapon being used by someone, somewhere. We see many broad sources of increasing danger including the easier accessibility of the technology for the construction of nuclear weapons due to modern communication methodologies. This nuclear danger is also related to several specific challenges:

- (1) North Korea recently terminated its cooperation with the international community and kicked out the international inspectors monitoring its nuclear activities. The North Korean nuclear test of 25 May 2009 is a source of profound concern.
- (2) Over 2000 nuclear weapons test explosions have been conducted so far by China, France, India, Pakistan, Russia, the United Kingdom, and the United States, each one contaminating the environment, threatening the peace and stimulating the nuclear arms race. There is no need for any further testing by any country.
- (3) Iran continues to enrich uranium. The USA has joined Russia and some European countries in negotiations with Iran, but an agreement will be hard to reach. On the 4th of June 2009 in Cairo, President Barack Obama stated: "This issue has been a source of tension between the United States and the Islamic Republic of Iran. [...] This is not simply about America's interests. It is about preventing a nuclear arms race in the Middle East that could lead this region and the world down a hugely dangerous path."
- (4) The government in Pakistan could collapse due to internal unrest. This would raise serious concerns about the command and control

of Pakistan's nuclear weapons and could threaten stability in the region and beyond. Similar scenarios could happen in other nuclear weapons states as well.

All of these dangers will only be overcome by a concerted and cooperative global effort to bring nuclear disarmament under strict and effective international control.

Hopeful Statements

Recent statements at the highest international and national levels raise universal hopes that the goal of total elimination is not illusory but is within reach. Among these is UN Secretary-General Ban Ki-moon's "Five Point Proposal for Progress on Disarmament," announced in October 2008³ and U.S. President Barack Obama's categorical statement in Prague on 5 April 2009, regarding "America's commitment to seek the peace and security of a world without nuclear weapons." "And as a nuclear power – as the only nuclear power to have used a nuclear weapon – the United States has a moral responsibility to act. We cannot succeed in this endeavour alone, but we can lead it."⁴

Ongoing modernisation of nuclear arsenals highlights the importance of and the need for good faith negotiations towards total nuclear disarmament. The 2010 Nuclear Non-Proliferation Treaty Review Conference offers an outstanding opportunity to pursue this objective.⁵

³ Ban Ki-moon, UN Secretary-General, Address to the East-West Institute: The United Nations and Security in a Nuclear-Weapon-Free World (Oct. 24, 2008), <http://www.un.org/News/Press/docs/2008/sgsm11881.doc.htm>.

⁴ Remarks by President Barack Obama, Hradcany Square, Prague, Czech Republic (Apr. 5, 2009), available at http://www.whitehouse.gov/the_press_office/Remarks-By-President-Barack-Obama-In-Prague-As-Delivered.

⁵ 26 April – 21 May 2010.

On 30 April 2009, the Co-Presidents of Pax Christi International, Msgr. Laurent Monsengwo and Marie Dennis, sent a letter to President Barack Obama stating that:

With your assumption of the office as the President of the United States of America and your recent speeches and actions, there has been a resurgence of hope for global security, sustainable international peace and human development among the peoples of the world. It is important that this opportunity is seized by all, leaders and world citizens, for genuine progress in these areas and to translate this hope into reality for all, in our global village on this planet. ⁶

In the letter a reference was made to the 13 steps which were agreed upon by the nuclear weapons states at the review conference of the Nuclear Non-Proliferation in 2000, held at the UN in New York during President Clinton's administration:

Since you said in your recent speech in April that the United States would "take concrete steps towards a world without nuclear weapons," we request that you take all necessary measures towards translating the agreed thirteen steps into reality to free our world from the threat of nuclear weapons. Considering that the next review conference of the NPT will be held in 2010, commitment and genuine progress towards those goals is of utmost importance. ⁷

If nuclear states demonstrate a genuine commitment to a complete and irreversible nuclear disarmament, and if a time table is drawn up to pursue and secure the goal, it could lead to the complete universalisation of the NPT as it would open the possibility for the last three remaining countries to join the treaty.

I refer again to President Obama in his speech in Cairo: "I understand those who protest that some countries have weapons that others do not.

⁶ *"Towards a World Free of Nuclear Weapons."* Letter of Pax Christi International addressed to President Barack Obama, 30 April 2009. Ref: 2009-0292-en-gl-SD.

⁷ *"Towards a World Free of Nuclear Weapons."* Letter of Pax Christi International addressed to President Barack Obama, 30 April 2009. Ref: 2009-0292-en-gl-SD.

No single nation should pick and choose which nations hold nuclear weapons. That is why I strongly reaffirmed America's commitment to seek a world in which no nations hold nuclear weapons . And any nation -including Iran -should have the right to access peaceful nuclear power if it complies with its responsibilities under the nuclear Non-Proliferation Treaty. That commitment is at the core of the treaty, and it must be kept for all who fully abide by it. And I am hopeful that all countries in the region can share in this goal.”⁸

On 6 July 2009, US President Barack Obama and Russian President Dmitry Medvedev have reached an outline agreement to cut back their nations' stockpiles of nuclear weapons.⁹ The planned START replacement treaty — the centrepiece summit agreement — calls for each side to reduce strategic warheads to a range of 1,500 to 1,675 , and strategic delivery vehicles to a range of 500 to 1,100. Current limits allow a maximum of 2,200 warheads and 1,600 launch vehicles. The new treaty, as conceived, would run for 10 years. Each side would have seven years to reach reduction goals with the final three years used for verification. The accord would replace the 1991 START I treaty, which expires in December 2009.

Conclusions of the 2009 NPT Prep-Com Meeting

Between 4 and 15 May 2009, the Third Preparatory Committee (Prep-Com) meeting for the 2010 Review Conference of the Non-proliferation Treaty (NPT) was held at the UN Headquarters in New York. The chief role of the Prep-Com meeting was to build the grounds for the upcoming Review Conference. This Prep-Com meeting, the last of three sessions before the 2010 NPT Review Conference, fulfilled this role more than satisfactorily. The delegates' unusually swift agreement on the agenda for the 2010 Review Conference was followed by other significant procedural

⁸ <http://english.aljazeera.net/news/middleeast/2009/06/20096410251287187.html>

⁹ See at <http://news.bbc.co.uk/2/hi/europe/8136918.stm> and <http://www.ekklesia.co.uk/node/9820>

decisions, including the adoption of the draft rules of procedure and the designation of main chairs and post holders for the conference.

However, what the Prep-Com did not accomplish was the adoption of the substantive recommendations for the 2010 Review Conference, in spite of numerous drafts circulating till the last minute of the meeting. This is a crucial task that the committee is formally requested to do, but no third Prep-Com has ever managed to reach such an agreement.

As the Prep-Com adopted only a strictly procedural final report, some diplomats have characterized the 2009 Prep-Com meeting as a *'procedural success but substantive failure'*. However such assessment could be easily misleading. By trying to adopt the recommendations at the costs of downgrading the text to the lowest common denominator, the Prep-Com could have opened the doors for substantial progress at the upcoming 2010 Review Conference.

Lesson learnt for the 2010 NPT Review Conference

A huge amount of work is still ahead to make the 2010 Review Conference successful. However there are at least two factors that give a cause for hope. The first is a new positive atmosphere present at the meeting thanks to the Obama administration's promising approach to disarmament. The second is the successful agreement over procedural issues during the Prep-Com. Even though it may seem to be a small accomplishment, it brings a great chance that the next year's conference will be able to open smoothly and focus on the substantial issues without the frustrating procedural delays that marked the last Review Conference in 2005.

The real challenge for the 2010 Review Conference, however, is not about what kind of document will be adopted, but what kind of agreements and commitments are undertaken, and whether the NPT parties – still profoundly divided in their negotiating positions in spite of the improved atmosphere – have the political will to ensure their implementation.

Call from United Nations

On 15 June 2009, the UN Secretary General commented on the Comprehensive Nuclear-Test-Ban Treaty (CTBT) with the following words: “The conclusion of the CTBT more than a decade ago was an important milestone in norm-setting and marked a significant achievement in the field of disarmament and non-proliferation. But for too long, it has not been brought into force. The price is high. There is no doubt that the longer the Treaty is delayed, the greater the risks and consequences that nuclear weapons will again be tested. By outlawing all nuclear tests, the CTBT in force would greatly contribute to global efforts to curb the proliferation of nuclear weapons while advancing nuclear disarmament.”¹⁰

And in the same statement, Ban Ki-moon referred again to North Korea and also to those who have not yet signed the Treaty:

The recent nuclear test by the Democratic People’s Republic of Korea has reminded the international community of the urgency of bringing the Treaty into force without further delay. . . Let me reiterate my strong appeal that all States that have not yet done so sign and ratify the Comprehensive Nuclear-Test-Ban Treaty as promptly as possible. I have publicly advocated the importance of the entry into force of the Treaty whenever possible, including in multilateral and bilateral settings. The international community should seize the current moment.¹¹

President Barack Obama supports the rapid enactment of the CTBT. The CTBT would prohibit nuclear tests, hindering countries from enhancing existing arsenals or developing warheads in the first place. The CTBT

¹⁰ Statement by the Secretary-General – On the urgency of the entry into force of the Comprehensive Nuclear-Test-Ban-Treaty, 15 June 2009, unoda-web@un.org

¹¹ Statement by the Secretary-General – On the urgency of the entry into force of the Comprehensive Nuclear-Test-Ban-Treaty, 15 June 2009, unoda-web@un.org

treaty should go through the US Senate. Getting to zero nuclear weapons will not be easy, but it is possible. Now, energy and activism is needed to convince Congress to support presidential initiatives to reduce the nuclear danger. Again turning to the words of the UN Secretary General upon the signing of the Treaty:

I particularly commend the new administration for its pledges to work toward U.S. ratification of the Treaty, which I believe would add greater impetus in this endeavour.¹²

There is now a historic opportunity to fulfil the promise of a nuclear-free world made in the 1968 Non-Proliferation Treaty (NPT). This is possible if government leaders clearly speak out NOW in no uncertain terms and if they take resolute steps in this direction.

Action Now

Pax Christi International urgently asks the USA government to take action right now by:¹³

1. Declaring officially that it supports the call for a world completely free of nuclear weapons by the year 2020.
2. Speaking out in favour of a Europe free of nuclear weapons by 2015.
3. Seeking support for this call from all European countries and NATO allies.
4. Urging, at the 2009 NATO summit, to end the political and military role of nuclear weapons in NATO's security policy.
5. Advocating that nuclear warheads are no longer kept on hair-trigger alert but are stored safely and apart from their delivery systems.

¹² Statement by the Secretary-General – On the urgency of the entry into force of the Comprehensive Nuclear-Test-Ban-Treaty, 15 June 2009, unoda-web@un.org

¹³ “*Appeal for a World Free of Nuclear Weapons*” Nuclear Disarmament Advocacy Package Pax Christi International, March 2009. Ref. 2009-0234-en-gl-SD.

6. Promoting that there is visible progress on the ratification and signing of the Comprehensive Nuclear Test Ban Treaty (CTBT) enters into force no later than the 2010 NPT Review Conference, as to allow for an entry into force as early as possible.
7. Discouraging any further modernisation of nuclear weapons and their delivery systems.
8. Promoting agreement on a treaty that forbids production of fissile materials for nuclear weapons in the 2010 NPT Review Conference.
9. Promoting supranational control of the entire fissile material cycle of nuclear materials, also as a way to prevent nuclear terrorism.
10. Refraining from deploying a missile defence shield in Europe.

Concrete steps need to be taken that enhance a basis of trust and security. The ending of the role of nuclear weapons in NATO security policy, and negotiating the return of US nuclear weapons currently stationed in NATO Member States provide a timely, feasible and eloquent way to not only strengthen the nuclear disarmament process itself, but for nuclear disarmament and common security to become organising principles for interstate relations.

To translate the vision for sustainable just peace and a world free of nuclear weapons into reality, the world community of nations and peoples need to work tirelessly to develop strong coherent national and international policies to further global human security based on international agreements with stringent compliance and verification measures. With the gradual development of sustainable alternative means to peace and security, the human and economic resources saved in research, development, and production of armaments can be transferred to genuine human development.

Role of the Churches

Both the Catholic Church and the World Council of Churches have regularly and consistently pleaded for complete nuclear disarmament.

On the occasion of the meeting of the PrepCom of the April 1998 NPT, the World Council of Churches and Pax Christi International issued a common statement: “***Act now for nuclear abolition.***” Konrad Kaiser, Secretary-General of the World Council of Churches and Cardinal Godfried Danneels, President of Pax Christi International, argued in this statement:

Nuclear weapons, whether used or threatened, are grossly evil and morally wrong. As an instrument of mass destruction, nuclear weapons slaughter the innocent and ravage the environment. ... When used as instrument of deterrence, nuclear weapons held innocent people hostage for political and military purposes. Therefore, the doctrine of nuclear deterrence is morally corrupt.¹⁴

No Victors, Only Victims

In January 2006, Pope Benedict XVI stated clearly “In a nuclear war there would be no victors, only victims.” He called on those countries in possession of nuclear weapons to “strive for a progressive and concerted nuclear disarmament.” Pax Christi International fully supports these efforts of both the WCC and the Holy See. It agrees that more could be done— even by our movement— to mobilise Churches and Religions by becoming actors and prophets for peace and disarmament.

The religions of the world need to proclaim that nuclear weapons and human security cannot co-exist. Definitive Catholic teaching on nuclear deterrence is found in Vatican II and subsequent statements by Pope John Paul II. Vatican Council II taught:

Any act of war aimed indiscriminately at the destruction of entire cities or of extensive areas along with their population is a crime

¹⁴ *Act now for Nuclear Abolition; Statement addressed to the nuclear Non-Proliferation Treaty (NPT) Preparatory Committee.* Godfried Cardinal Danneels, President of Pax Christi International and Rev. Dr Konrad Raiser, General Secretary World Council of Churches, March 1998. Ref. SD07E97.

against God and man himself. It merits unequivocal and unhesitating condemnation.¹⁵

The *Catechism of the Catholic Church*, published in 1992 on the thirtieth anniversary of the opening of the Vatican Council, affirmed the permanent validity of the moral law during armed conflict. It stated, “The mere fact that war has regrettably broken out does not mean that everything becomes licit between the warring parties.” It warns against modern warfare and the opportunity it provides to commit crimes against God and man through the use of atomic, biological, and chemical weapons. The *Catechism* also draws attention to the “rigorous consideration” that must be given to claims of legitimate defence, stating: “The use of arms must not produce evils and disorders graver than the evil to be eliminated. The power of modern means of destruction weighs very heavily in evaluating this condition.”

Deterrence must lead to Disarmament

Though they elaborated their concern that a universal public authority, certainly the United Nations, be put in place to outlaw war, the Council of Vatican II rather grudgingly accepted the strategy of nuclear deterrence. The accumulation of arms, they said, serves “as a deterrent to possible enemy attack.” Thus “peace of a sort” is maintained, though the balance resulting from the arms race threatens to lead to war, not eliminate it. Pope John Paul II refined the Catholic position on nuclear deterrence in a message to the U.N. Second Special Session on Disarmament in 1982:

In current conditions, “deterrence” based on balance, certainly not as an end in itself but as a step on the way towards a progressive disarmament, may still be judged morally acceptable. Nonetheless, in order to ensure peace, it is indispensable not to be satisfied with the minimum, which is always susceptible to the real danger of explosion.

¹⁵ Pastoral Constitution on the Church in the Modern World, No. 80.

In this statement, it is readily seen that deterrence, in order to be acceptable, must lead to disarmament measures. Consequently, deterrence as a single, permanent policy is not acceptable. The American Bishops' 1983 Pastoral Letter on War and Peace took up this theme. Though the bishops expressed a strong "no" to nuclear war, declaring that a nuclear response to a conventional attack is "morally unjustifiable," and were sceptical that any nuclear war could avoid the massive killing of civilians, the bishops gave a "strictly conditioned moral acceptance of nuclear deterrence."

In a five-year follow-up to their letter, the bishops set out criteria to be met in order to continue this morally justifiable basis for deterrence. For example, the Bishops said that, in order to be acceptable, nuclear deterrence could not be based on the direct targeting of urban populations. Also, the bishops opposed weapons combining size, accuracy and multiple warheads in a credible first-strike posture. A subsequent follow-up in 1993, "The Harvest of Justice Is Sown in Peace," repeated that "nuclear deterrence may be justified only as a step on the way toward progressive disarmament." The Bishops held that "security lies in the abolition of nuclear weapons and the strengthening of international law."

As the 1990s progressed, it became clear that U.S. policy was not moving towards nuclear disarmament. Even before the arrival of the Bush Administration in 2001, the U.S. rejected a no-first-use policy and adopted flexible targeted strategies to use nuclear weapons either pre-emptively or in response to chemical and biological weapon attacks. The Bush administration's Nuclear Posture Review explicated the maintenance of nuclear weapons for war-fighting strategies.

In 1998, seeing the institutionalization of nuclear deterrence taking place, 75 U.S. Catholic Bishops signed a statement criticizing the U.S. for moving beyond original nuclear deterrence policies "to which we grudgingly gave our moral approval in 1983." The bishops said they were painfully aware that many policymakers sincerely believe that possessing

nuclear weapons is vital for national security. "We are convinced, though, that it is not. Instead, they make the world a more dangerous place."

We cannot delay any longer. Nuclear deterrence as a national policy must be condemned as morally abhorrent because it is the excuse and justification for the continued possession and further development of these horrendous weapons.

In 1997, the Holy See's Permanent Representative at the United Nations, Archbishop Renato Martino, was moving in the same direction when he told the U.N. Committee on Disarmament:

Nuclear weapons are incompatible with the peace we seek for the 21st century. They cannot be justified. They deserve condemnation. The preservation of the Non-Proliferation Treaty demands an unequivocal commitment to their abolition. ...This is a moral challenge, a legal challenge and a political challenge. That multiple-based challenge must be met by the application of our humanity.

In his address the following year, Archbishop Martino said:

The most perilous of all the old Cold War assumptions carried into the new age is the belief that the strategy of nuclear deterrence is essential to a nation's security. Maintaining nuclear deterrence into the 21st century will not aid but impede peace. Nuclear deterrence prevents genuine nuclear disarmament. It maintains an unacceptable hegemony over non-nuclear development for the poorest half of the world's population. It is a fundamental obstacle to achieving a new age of global security.

The Holy See spokesman again called for "the abolition of nuclear weapons through a universal, non-discriminatory ban with inspection by a universal authority."

At the 2005 Non-Proliferation Treaty (NPT) Review Conference, the Holy See made it clear that nuclear deterrence, in the modern context, cannot claim any moral legitimacy. Archbishop Celestino Migliore, Permanent Representative of the Holy See at the U.N., stated:

When the Holy See expressed its limited acceptance of nuclear deterrence during the Cold War, it was with the clearly stated condition that deterrence was only a step on the way towards progressive nuclear disarmament. The Holy See has never countenanced nuclear deterrence as a permanent measure, nor does it today when it is evident that nuclear deterrence drives the development of ever newer nuclear arms, thus preventing genuine nuclear disarmament.

Archbishop Migliore warned that the new threat of global terrorism must not be allowed to undermine the precepts of international humanitarian law. In addition, “nuclear weapons, even so-called ‘low-yield’ weapons, endanger the processes of life and can lead to extended conflict.”

Nuclear weapons assault life on the planet, they assault the planet itself, and in so doing they assault the process of the continuing development of the planet. The preservation of the Non-Proliferation Treaty demands an unequivocal commitment to genuine nuclear disarmament.

In the eyes of Pax Christi International, the Catholic Church should state that “nuclear weapons are evil and immoral and must be eliminated as a precondition to obtaining peace.”

The only morally responsible approach is the elimination of all nuclear weapons. It is not morally permissible for some states to keep for themselves the right to maintain nuclear weapons while proscribing their acquisition by others. A two-class world, of nuclear haves and have nots is, in addition to being unsustainable, grossly immoral. We hope the US Conference of Catholic Bishops, who have demonstrated great leadership

in the past and have recently released a letter to Secretary of State Hillary Clinton affirming the commitment to a nuclear-free world, will soon state this unequivocally.

What you can do

1. Contact your senator and urge them to support U.S. ratification of the Comprehensive Test Ban Treaty.
2. Urge your senator to support the withdrawal of US tactical nuclear weapons from European NATO Member State airforce-basis.
3. Join the International Day of Peace, observed each year on 21 September, as a global call for ceasefire and non-violence. It is a time to reflect on the horror and cost of war and the benefits of peacefully resolving our disputes. This year, we will use this important day to ask Governments and citizens of the world to focus on the important issues of nuclear disarmament and non-proliferation.

Claudette Werleigh
Secretary General
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