

**DELEGATION OF THE HOLY SEE
INTERVENTION AT THE FIFTH CONFERENCE ON FACILITATING
OF THE ENTRY INTO FORCE OF THE CTBT**

Vienna, 18 September 2007

Mr President,

The Holy See resolutely promotes the widest possible accession to the CTBT and its ratification. Its coming into force and implementation are important for the life and peace of the human family. By adhering to the CTBT and ratifying it, the Holy See gave expression to its conviction “that in the sphere of nuclear weapons, the banning of tests and the further development of these weapons, disarmament and non-proliferation are closely linked and must be achieved as quickly as possible under effective international controls” (*Declaration attached to the Instrument of adhesion to the CTBT, 24 September 1996*). This conviction underlies the very mission of the Holy See, which aims at ensuring the common good of the human family through the “promotion of a culture of peace based upon the primacy of law and of respect for human rights” (*Declaration attached to the Instrument of ratification of the CTBT, 18 July 2001*).

The coming into force and the implementation of the CTBT are all the more urgently necessary when one considers the contemporary world, which is marked by the threat of terrorism and by the crisis in international relations and organizations. In this perspective, the measures adopted for combating nuclear terrorism and, more generally, the international and national instruments for preventing criminal organizations and non-state actors from possessing weapons of mass destruction are to be welcomed. Among these, the *International Convention for the Elimination of Acts of Nuclear Terrorism* of 2005 and *Resolution No. 1540 of the Security Council of the United Nations*, adopted in 2004, are worthy of particular mention.

At the same time, however, States must resume the process of nuclear disarmament. A renewed commitment of States to implementing the *Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons Treaty* of 1968 and declaring a general ban on nuclear tests therefore seems necessary. The climate of terrorism caused by criminal organizations is not eliminated by the fear which is linked to the threat of use of weapons of mass destruction by States. Both are an offence to the human family.

Mr President,

Nuclear tests are dictated by the desire to develop ever more sophisticated and dangerous weapons. They are therefore indicative of a “culture of conflict and death” which endangers not only peace but – given the particularly destructive nature of nuclear weapons – the very existence of the human family. Sometimes States justify nuclear tests by appeal to the requirements of security and the protection of peoples. This argument fails to convince. In fact, it leads to the proliferation of weapons which, given their destructive capacity, are able to eliminate the very people whom they claim to protect and defend.

Sometimes, States justify nuclear tests on the basis that they are seeking to develop “clean” or “intelligent” weapons, that is, nuclear weapons whose mechanical, thermic and radioactive effects are limited. This argument too fails to convince. In fact, all nuclear weapons have *indiscriminate* radioactive effects, which are harmful to the life and health of human beings and the environment. In addition, “it is a justifiable fear that the mere continuation of nuclear experiments for the purpose of waging war could have fatal consequences for life on earth” (John XXIII, *Pacem in Terris*, AAS 55 [1963]: 60).

The declaration of a general ban on nuclear tests is therefore a *duty* of the international community towards all peoples. Given the risks caused by nuclear tests and weapons, the time has come for a decisive option on the part of the international community for a “culture of life and peace” and for significant nuclear disarmament. To this end, the commitment of every human being and of all peoples, who are called to respect life and build peace in their own lives and to promote awareness among civil and military authorities, is indispensable. In addition, there is a need for greater awareness and responsible behaviour on the part of the scientific community, whose valuable expertise should be placed at the service of the human family and not aimed at satisfying the desire of any state or non-state actor for domination or destruction.

The declaration of a general ban on nuclear tests is also a duty of *present generations* towards *future* ones. The link between generations is due to the common origin of human beings and the unity of the human family. At the political and legal level, this link is implicit in the *United Nations Charter*. It is also explicitly stated in the *Declaration on the Responsibilities of Present Generations towards Future Generations*, adopted by UNESCO in 1997, according to which present generations commit themselves to defend the primary goods of future ones, including the life and peace of the human race and the planet.

Mr President,

On 29 July last, His Holiness Pope Benedict XVI made mention of the 50th anniversary of the coming into force of the Statute of the IAEA. As Pope Benedict XVI emphasized, “at the difficult crossroads at which humanity finds itself, the epochal changes which have occurred over the past fifty years demonstrate how ever relevant and urgent is the commitment to encourage non-proliferation of nuclear weapons, promote progressive and agreed nuclear disarmament, and support the use of peaceful and safe nuclear technology for genuine development, which is respectful of the environment and ever attentive to the most disadvantaged peoples” (*Angelus*, 29 July 2007).

Mr President,

The Holy See approves the application of nuclear technology to peaceful purposes. At the same time, it is opportune to emphasize that the safety and the very existence of peaceful nuclear programmes depend on two necessary conditions: the abandonment of hostile nuclear programmes and a general ban on nuclear tests. The international community is called to pursue these objectives as decisive steps towards the strengthening of a culture of life and peace and towards the achievement of the common good of the human family.

Thank you, Mr President.