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Intervention of the Secretary for Relations with States on the Tenth Conference for the entry into force of the Comprehensive Nuclear-Test-Ban Treaty

The following is the discourse pronounced by the Secretary for Relations with States, H.E. Msgr. Paul R. Gallagher, in New York yesterday at the Tenth Conference for the entry into force of the Comprehensive Nuclear-Test-Ban Treaty, during the General Assembly of the United Nations:

Address of Msgr. Paul R. Gallagher

Mr. President,

The Comprehensive Nuclear-Test-Ban Treaty is one of the cornerstones of the juridical structures painstakingly put in place to control the global threat posed by nuclear weapons and to move progressively toward a world free of nuclear weapons. The Holy See ratified and adheres to the CTBT as an expression of its longstanding conviction that a nuclear test ban, nuclear nonproliferation, and nuclear disarmament “are closely linked and must be achieved as quickly as possible under effective international control.”^[1]

The Holy See is, therefore, troubled by the continued lack of progress in achieving the entry into force of the Comprehensive Nuclear-Test-Ban Treaty. Two decades without the Treaty’s entry into force have been two decades lost in our common goal of a world without nuclear weapons. At the same time, the Holy See is pleased to take part in this Conference, joining other States who have ratified the CTBT in repeating our appeal to the remaining States whose ratification is necessary for the Treaty to enter into force. In ratifying this treaty, these States have an opportunity to demonstrate wisdom, courageous leadership, and a commitment to peace and the common good of all.

The entry into force of the CTBT is all the more urgent when one considers contemporary threats to peace, from the continuing challenges of nuclear proliferation to the major new modernization programs of some of the nuclear weapons states. Both nuclear proliferation and new modernization programs are contrary to the purposes of the CTBT, and, more importantly, they undermine international security. The rising tensions over

North Korea's growing nuclear program are of special urgency. The international community must respond by seeking to revive negotiations. The threat or use of military force have no place in countering proliferation, and the threat or use of nuclear weapons in countering nuclear proliferation are deplorable. We must put behind us the nuclear threats, fear, military superiority, ideology, and unilateralism that drive proliferation and modernization efforts and are so reminiscent of the logic of the Cold War.

Mr. President,

On this day, when the landmark Treaty on the Prohibition of Nuclear Weapons is opened for signature, I want to focus especially on CTBT as a critical complement to broader nuclear disarmament efforts. On September 25, 2015, Pope Francis urged the UN General Assembly "to work for a world free of nuclear weapons, in full application of the Non-Proliferation Treaty, in letter and spirit, with the goal of a complete prohibition of these weapons." Pope Francis added, "An ethics and a law based on the threat of mutual destruction – and possibly the destruction of all mankind – are self-contradictory and an affront to the entire framework of the United Nations, which would end up as 'nations united by fear and distrust.'" In his letter to Her Excellency Elayne Whyte Gómez, President of the UN conference on a nuclear ban, he urged the international community to "go beyond nuclear deterrence... [and] to adopt forward-looking strategies to promote the goal of peace and stability and to avoid short-sighted approaches to the problems surrounding national and international security." [2]

While having no illusions about the challenges involved in achieving a world free of nuclear weapons, the challenges posed by the *status quo ante* of growing tensions, continuing proliferation, and new modernization programs are far more daunting. Nuclear arms offer a false sense of security. The uneasy peace promised by nuclear deterrence has time and time again proved a tragic illusion. Nuclear weapons cannot create a stable and secure world. Peace and international stability cannot be founded on mutually assured destruction or on the threat of annihilation.

Mr. President,

The peace of a sort that is based on a balance of power, with threats and counter-threats, and ultimately fear, is an unstable and false peace. In order to respond adequately to the challenges of the twenty-first century, it is essential to replace a logic of fear and mistrust with an ethic of responsibility, and so foster a climate of trust which values multilateral dialogue through consistent and responsible cooperation between all the members of the international community. The norms embodied in the UN Charter, humanitarian law, arms control conventions, and other elements of international law represent an indispensable commitment to cooperative security and a juridical embodiment of this global ethic of responsibility.

Entry into force of the CTBT would be one important manifestation of a commitment to this ethic of responsibility. Two decades is too long to wait to demonstrate this commitment.

Thank you, Mr. President.

[1] Declaration of the Holy See attached to the Instrument of adhesion to the CTBT, 24 September 1996.

[2] Letter of Pope Francis to Her Excellency Elayne Whyte Gómez, President of the United Nations Conference to Negotiate a Legally Binding Instrument to Prohibit Nuclear Weapons, Leading Towards their Total Elimination. 23 March 2017.
