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INTERVENTO DELLA SANTA SEDE ALLA VII CONFERENZA DI ESAME DEL TRATTATO DI NON PROLIFERAZIONE DELLE ARMI NUCLEARI

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Ieri, 4 maggio, S.E. Mons. Celestino Migliore, Osservatore Permanente della Santa Sede presso le Nazioni Unite a New York, ha preso la parola nel corso della VII Conferenza di esame del Trattato di non proliferazione delle armi nucleari, in corso a New York.

Riportiamo di seguito il testo dell'intervento:

• INTERVENTO DI S.E. MONS. CELESTINO MIGLIORE

Mr President,

The Holy See adhered to the Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons on 25 February 1971, convinced that it was an important step forward in the creation of a system of general and complete disarmament under effective international control, something that would be possible only if it were completely observed both in detail and in its entirety.

After 35 years, the Treaty has become a cornerstone in the global security framework since it has, to some extent, helped slow the arms race. The fact that it has received an extremely high number of adhesions, with 188 States Parties, shows the importance it has for the international community. This is so by means of three pillars: preventing the spread and proliferation of nuclear arms, promoting cooperation in the peaceful use of nuclear energy, and pursuing the objective of nuclear disarmament which implicitly leads to general and complete disarmament. In essence, the NPT promised a world in which nuclear weapons would be eliminated and technological cooperation for development would be widespread.

A Review Conference of the NPT is therefore a time to measure the progress of the international community in achieving the goals of the Treaty. When the NPT was indefinitely extended in 1995, the nuclear weapons States joined all other parties to the Treaty in making three promises: a Comprehensive Test Ban Treaty would be achieved by 1996; negotiations on a treaty to ban the production of fissile material for nuclear weapons would

come to an "early conclusion"; and "systematic and progressive efforts globally" to eliminate nuclear weapons would be made. In 2000, all parties gave an "unequivocal undertaking" to the elimination of nuclear weapons through a programme of 13 Practical Steps. Nevertheless, the Preparatory Committee for the current Review Conference failed to achieve consensus on the documents to be adopted now, which leads to concern for the outcome of the Conference.

With regard to the 1970s, when the NPT entered into force, there took place at the same time profound social and geopolitical changes. An awareness began to grow of the close correlation and interdependence between national and international security, while new challenges sprang up, like transnational terrorism and the illegal spread of materials for making weapons of mass destruction. These are two phenomena which, among others, directly question the capacity of the NPT to respond to new international challenges. In this regard, the Holy See considers the General Assembly's adoption of the International Convention for the Suppression of Acts of Nuclear Terrorism as an important step forward. The time has come to underline again the importance of observing the NPT in detail and in its entirety.

Since the Treaty is the only multilateral legal instrument currently available, intended to bring about a nuclear weapons free world, it must not be allowed to be weakened. Humanity deserves no less than the full cooperation of all States on this grave matter. The Holy See makes an appeal that the difficult and complex issues of the Review Conference be addressed in an even-handed way. Measures taken at this Review Conference, even if they are small steps forward, must be framed by the overall goals of the Treaty. The Review Conference must not go backwards by forgetting past commitments; it must advance the effectiveness of the NPT.

The world is rightly concerned about the proliferation of nuclear weapons and attempts to redirect nuclear technologies and fuels away from their peaceful use and towards nuclear weapons instead. The non-proliferation side of the NPT must be strengthened through increasing the capacity of the International Atomic Energy Agency to detect any misuse of nuclear fuels. The compliance measures of the Treaty must also be strengthened.

But concentrating only on non-proliferation measures distorts the meaning of the Treaty. Compliance with its nuclear disarmament provisions is also required: non-proliferation and nuclear disarmament are interdependent and mutually reinforcing. The Holy See therefore calls upon the nuclear weapons States to take a role of courageous leadership and political responsibility in safeguarding the very integrity of the NPT and in creating a climate of trust, transparency and true cooperation, with a view to the concrete realisation of a culture of life and peace which will promote the integral development of the world's peoples. Thus, in an effort to put priorities and hierarchies of values in their proper place, a greater common effort must be made to mobilise resources towards moral, cultural and economic development so that humanity may turn its back on the arms race.

The time has gone for finding ways to a "balance in terror"; the time has come to re-examine the whole strategy of nuclear deterrence. 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.

The Holy See again emphasizes that the peace we seek in the 21st century cannot be attained by relying on nuclear weapons. The century opened with a burst of global terrorism, but this threat must not be allowed to undermine the precepts of international humanitarian law, which is founded on the key principles of limitation and proportionality. We must always remember that the use of arms must not produce evils and disorders graver than the evil to be eliminated. Nuclear weapons, even so-called "low yield" weapons, endanger the processes of life and can lead to extended nuclear 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.

Therefore, the Holy See looks to all States Parties to the NPT to uphold the integrity of the Treaty. All Parties should contribute to the success of the Review Conference in preserving and strengthening the credibility of the Treaty, so that it can be effective and lasting. In this way the culture of peace can be advanced and the culture of war diminished, for the enduring benefit of all humanity.

Thank you, Mr President.

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