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DICHIARAZIONE DEL PONTIFICIO CONSIGLIO DELLA GIUSTIZIA E DELLA PACE SUL COMMERCIO INTERNAZIONALE DELLE ARMI CONVENZIONALI

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I lavori del 1° Comitato dell'Assemblea Generale dell'ONU, in svolgimento a New York, prevedono la discussione della proposta di una Risoluzione sul "controllo internazionale delle importazioni, delle esportazioni e dei trasferimenti delle armi convenzionali", in cui si richiede l'istituzione di un gruppo di lavoro incaricato di studiare la fattibilità e la stesura di un Trattato sul commercio internazionale delle armi convenzionali.

Pubblichiamo di seguito una Dichiarazione con la quale il Pontificio Consiglio della Giustizia e della Pace, a nome della Santa Sede, esprime il sostegno a tale iniziativa:

• DICHIARAZIONE DEL PONTIFICIO CONSIGLIO DELLA GIUSTIZIA E DELLA PACE

1. Since the foundation of the United Nations, the international community has taken a number of basic legal and political steps in order to control nuclear proliferation, to prohibit other weapons of mass destruction and to place some limits on the use of arms with disproportional lethal effects. Nevertheless, the topic of complete and general disarmament, which year after year appears on the agenda of the General Assembly, has not met with substantial and generalized progress.

2. Conventional weapons, including light arms and those of small calibre, are an element of every international or civil conflict, as well as of every illegitimate use of force, and they constitute one of the most common instruments in most violations of human rights and disrespect for humanitarian law. The international system of non-proliferation and arms control, especially of those of mass destruction, has been one of the principal means which diplomacy has used to avoid conflicts on planetary scale, but it has not served to avoid regional, and even less, local conflicts. In fact, the many millions of victims in conflicts over the last 60 years have been caused by conventional, and especially, by light weapons. Moreover, the absence of effective monitoring systems on arms trade has a negative impact not only on peace processes, reconciliation and post-conflict reconstruction, but also on the stability of institutions and on sustainable development. Indiscriminate sale or transfer of conventional weapons is an inseparable part of problems connected with international terrorism, illegal trafficking of precious or strategic resources and the most abject manifestations of organized crime such as trafficking of

human beings or drugs.

3. Before such reality the Holy See acknowledges the many initiatives undertaken by the United Nations and by regional organisms and civil society to avoid the race in armaments, to promote mutual trust between States through cooperation, information exchange and transparency in possession and purchasing of arms. Nevertheless the Holy See urges the international community to assume its responsibility in establishing an obligatory legal framework aimed at regulating the trade of conventional weapons of any type, as well as of know-how and technology for their production. Therefore, the Holy See, as Observer at the General Assembly of the United Nations, wishes to express its full support for the proposal made by the Governments of Argentina, Australia, Costa Rica, Finland, Japan, Kenya and the United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland to establish a group of governmental experts, within the United Nations, to negotiate a legally binding instrument on the import, export and exchange of conventional weapons.

4. Weapons cannot be considered as any other good exchanged on the global, regional or national market. Their possession, production and trade have deep ethical and social implications and they must be regulated by paying due attention to specific principles of the moral and legal order. Among the principles there is the *principle of sufficiency*, which allows States to possess only the means necessary to guarantee the legitimate protection of their people (Holy See, Pontifical Council for Justice and Peace, *Compendium of the social doctrine of the Church*, 508). Therefore, the adoption of instruments and legally binding measures on trade control of conventional weapons on the global, regional and national level is essential and urgent (Pope John Paul II, *Message for the World Day of the Peace 1999*, No. 11). The Holy See is convinced that such a convention can be an important step towards a true global culture of peace, in which States, civil society and the military industry cooperate, with responsibility and solidarity, for a more peaceful and secure world. In that perspective, such legally binding instruments on conventional weapons trade will be a sign of a definite political will for peace and justice in the world. This is mission of the United Nations and the hope of the entire human family.

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President of the Pontifical Council for Justice and Peace

Bishop Giampaolo Crepaldi
Secretary

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