

**Message of His Eminence Miguel Ángel Cardinal Ayuso Guixot, MCCJ
President, Pontifical Council for Interreligious Dialogue**

To the Participants of the Webinar:

“Advancing Integral Disarmament in Times of Pandemic”

Hosted by the Dicastery for Promoting Integral Human Development DPIHD

in Collaboration with

the Strategic Concept for the Removal of Arms and Proliferation (SCRAP)

23 March 2021 – 15:00 -17:15 CET/ 9:00 -11:15 EST

Eminences, Excellencies, distinguished guests, dear friends,

I thank H. Em. Cardinal Turkson and the Dicastery for Promoting Integral Human Development, as well as The Strategic Concept for the Removal of Arms and Proliferation (SCRAP), for the opportunity to say a few words on the potential contributions of interreligious dialogue to the advancement of integral disarmament.

Interreligious dialogue is integral to efforts of disarmament because religion touches the heart of humanity. In dialogue, the authentic human values of our religions are revealed, including the common value and goal of peace. When we “lay down arms” in our personal and social relationships, we create the possibility of just structures and agreements that promote peace.

Pope Francis has noted on several occasions that the arms race is based on a culture of fear and suspicion. The antidote to armament, in fact, is a culture of dialogue that fosters mutual trust among individuals and groups, and prompts the common good.

Dialogue, and specifically interreligious dialogue, grants a transcendent perspective to this work, reminding us that the goal of disarmament or the cessation of conflict is not simply

material prosperity, but genuine human fraternity, freedom, and integral development, including spiritual development. I sincerely hope that religious leaders will take up the call for disarmament, by facilitating opportunities for dialogue and reconciliation, by educating youth about peace, and by encouraging their faithful people to raise voices for peace in the public arena.

As Pope Francis recently stated, "...We feel an ever greater need for peace, a peace that is not only the absence of war, but rather a life rich in meaning, rooted in and lived through personal fulfilment and fraternal sharing with others" (Address to Diplomatic Corps, 8 Feb 2021).

As we continue with this important work of proposing strategies to promote disarmament, may we keep in mind the cries of those children, women, and men affected by wars of all types. May the different interventions in this gathering promote concrete actions aimed at curbing armament, so that in the present context of the pandemic, the enormous resources wasted on arms race can be applied to alleviating the circumstances of human desperation that are often the root causes of conflict.

Allow my final wish for this webinar to be Pope Francis' appeal:

"May the clash of arms be silenced! May their spread be curbed, here and everywhere! [...] May there be an end to acts of violence and extremism, factions and intolerance!" (Apostolic Journey to Iraq, Meeting with Authorities, Civil Society and Diplomatic Corps, 5 March 2021).

I wish this webinar great success, and bountiful harvest!

From the Vatican, 23 March 2021