

**Message of Cardinal Turkson**  
***“Post-COVID Multilateral Cooperation,  
a Chance to Achieve a Nuclear-Weapons-Free World?”***  
**75<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the United Nations and the International Day against Nuclear Tests**

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Your Excellencies, Esteemed Professors,  
Prestigious Speakers, Dear Friends,

I would like to thank the *Centre for International Studies and Diplomacy* and the *Embassy of Kazakhstan in the United Kingdom* for inviting me to this prestigious event “Post-COVID Multilateral Cooperation – a chance to achieve a Nuclear-Weapons-Free World?”.

**I. A call against nuclear tests**

At first, I would like to support the call against nuclear tests. On 29<sup>th</sup> of August we celebrate the *International Day against Nuclear Tests* and the closure of the Semipalatinsk Nuclear Test site in 1991 is one of the most powerful symbol of the overall testimony process: maybe no country more than Kazakhstan has experienced the human, cultural and ecological devastation that derives from nuclear tests – whose victims are estimated to be more than 2.4 millions in the world. I would like to send my prayers to their families. Their testimony recalls us that, as Pope Francis underlines, «*nuclear weapons are a global problem, affecting all nations, and impacting future generations and the planet that is our home*». It is with this conviction that the *Holy See* ratified the *Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons* (NPT), the *Comprehensive Nuclear-Test-Ban Treaty* (CTBT) and, more recently, the *Treaty on the Prohibition of Nuclear Weapons* (TPNW). The *Holy See* firmly believes that these treaties are vital pieces in the nuclear disarmament architecture and complement one another toward achieving a world without nuclear weapons.

Kazakh history shows that **proliferation is not a one-way street**. As known, after hosting more than 1.400 Soviet strategic nuclear warheads on its territory, Kazakhstan has become a leading country in the field of nuclear disarmament and nonproliferation, whose greatest result is maybe the creation of the *Nuclear Weapon Free Zone* in Central Asia; this must be acknowledged and supported by political leaders, national and international institutions.

## II. A call against nuclear deterrence.

By echoing the strong position of Pope Francis against nuclear weapons, my second call would be against the so called “doctrine of deterrence”: how can we speak of peace even as we build terrifying new weapons of war?<sup>i</sup> As the Pope says: «*nuclear deterrence and the threat of mutually assured destruction cannot be the basis for an ethics of fraternity and peaceful coexistence*».<sup>ii</sup>

Pope Francis has also observed that, until recently, arms control policies were mainly handled by interstate diplomacy or by international accords. Today we are witnessing a growing awareness that each individual person, and all people collectively, are involved in arms control. Thus ‘**humanitarian disarmament**’ movement is born, which is spearheaded by civil society groups, with membership spanning the globe, and which is a people-centered approach to disarmament. On its part, our *Dicastery* intends to continue its dialogue on disarmament, setting it within the broader context of *integral peacebuilding*. The latter, according to St. Pope John XXIII, does not only refer to State armaments. Rather it calls on every person to disarm his or her own heart and to be a peacemaker everywhere<sup>iii</sup>. Integral disarmament takes us beyond the mentality of finding security only in armament and the readiness for war, and nurtures a culture of encounter for a *civilization of love*. It aims at the development of the whole person and for all peoples<sup>iv</sup>, that cares deeply about God’s creation in its totality<sup>v</sup>.

## III. A call for #FREEZE military production.

To achieve integral disarmament, it is however necessary to broke the whole **logic of deterrence**, being it nuclear or conventional. For this reason, I welcome the UN Security Council’s recent endorsement of a global cease-fire. But one thing is to call or endorse a cease-fire statement, another thing is to implement it. In order to do so, **we need to freeze weapons production and dealing**. Thus, the *Dicastery* would like to reaffirm its strong support in favor of the #FREEZE campaign. How can we face the health and climate crisis if our investment are directed towards military production?

The *Stockholm International Peace Research Institute* observes continued increases in military spending: 1.9 trillion US dollar only in 2019. It is the highest level since 1988, 7.2 per cent higher in real terms than in 2010. The curve of military spending, in the last ten years, has never stopped to work, while stability is decreasing. Even in the midst of the global health crisis, some decision-makers are urging an increase in military spending. Increased military investments do not only reflect the increase in tensions between nations but, by feeding the so called “**security dilemma**”, they generate and reinforce them.

## Conclusion: A call for peace!

Global issues require global solutions, as the *coronavirus* pandemic demonstrate. Pope Francis is calling for a “**globalization of solidarity**” based especially on multilateral

cooperation. For this reason, once again I welcome the decision of the *SOAS University* not only to commemorate the international day against nuclear tests, but also to celebrate the 75<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the *United Nations*. The *United Nations* constitute a space for dialogue and peaceful resolution of conflicts that is unprecedented in human history: they are the pillar of multilateralism.

However, the concept of globalization of solidarity not only refers to State level, but includes all individuals and responds to the desire of human beings to feel rooted with their communities in the whole humanity «to build bridges, keep dialogue open and continue to meet with one another».

We should still fight to give peace a chance, in the spirit of the UN founders, that in the aftermaths of WWII had the courage to find innovative solutions to secure our common future. We must now pursue their efforts, and with the help of the *United Nations*, campaign to give a chance to nuclear-weapons-free world.

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<sup>i</sup> Pope Francis, address at the Peace Memorial (Hiroshima), Apostolic Journey of His Holiness Pope Francis to Thailand And Japan (19-26 November 2019).

<sup>ii</sup> Message of His Holiness Pope Francis on the occasion of the Vienna conference on the humanitarian impact of nuclear weapons, 7 December 2014.

<sup>iii</sup> *Pacem in terris*, §113

<sup>iv</sup> *Populorum Progressio*, §14

<sup>v</sup> *Laudato Si'*, §§ 14, 42