

January 2017

To: President-elect Trump
Re: A message from Catholics in support of nuclear abolition

Now is the time to affirm not only the immorality of the use of nuclear weapons, but the immorality of their possession, thereby clearing the road to nuclear abolition.
("Nuclear Disarmament: Time for Abolition," The Holy See, December 8, 2014)

Dear President-elect Trump:

Nuclear weapons have plagued humanity for 70 years. Designed to terrify as well as to destroy, these weapons can, in the hands of either states or terrorists, cause indiscriminate harm to humans and the earth on a scale that is unthinkable and likely to persist for generations. The use of nuclear weapons has long been strictly prohibited by Catholic teaching. Two years ago, however, the Holy See added that "the very possession of nuclear weapons, even for purposes of deterrence, is morally problematic."

As leadership in organizations representing hundreds of thousands of Catholics in the United States, we are deeply troubled that the United States would, by implication or action, contribute to a renewed nuclear arms race. No moral justification exists for impeding the already painfully slow steps to nuclear abolition; undercutting existing nuclear arms control agreements; or encouraging the proliferation of nuclear weapons, including among so-called "friendly" countries.

We strongly oppose plans of the United States to modernize the nuclear weapons arsenal, investing billions to ensure that these deadly weapons remain ready for use. These funds and tremendous human talent are diverted from meeting true human security goals and from protecting the integrity of creation.

Continued reliance on nuclear weapons is an affront to human dignity and the sacredness of life. Yet, nuclear weapons are the only weapons of mass destruction not prohibited by an international convention, even though they have the greatest destructive capacity of all weapons.

We urge your Administration to surprise the world and actively support negotiations at the United Nations on a treaty that would not only make it illegal for nations to use or possess nuclear weapons, but would also help pave the way to their complete elimination, strengthening existing non-proliferation and disarmament efforts.

In his recent World Day of Peace message for 2017, His Holiness Pope Francis said, "An ethics of fraternity and peaceful coexistence between individuals and among peoples cannot be based on the logic of fear, violence and closed-mindedness, but on responsibility, respect and sincere dialogue. Hence, I plead for disarmament and for the prohibition and abolition of nuclear weapons: nuclear deterrence and the threat of mutual assured destruction are incapable of grounding such an ethics."

As you accept the heavy responsibility for U.S. nuclear weapons policy we urge you to remember, in the words of the Holy See, that "the commitment to disarm embedded in the Nuclear Non-Proliferation Treaty (NPT) and other international documents is more than a legal-political detail, it is a moral commitment on which the future of the world depends."

Sincerely,