Statement by H.E. Archbishop Bernardito Auza
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(102 jj): Humanitarian consequences of nuclear weapons and
(102 kk): Ethical imperatives for a nuclear-weapon-free world
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Mr. Chair,

As this is the first time the Holy See has taken the floor in this Committee this year, allow me to congratulate you on your election as chair, and to pledge our full cooperation in the vital work of the Committee.

A year has passed since the adoption of the Treaty on the Prohibition of Nuclear Weapons. The Holy See signed and ratified the Treaty during the 20 September 2017 signing ceremony, because the Treaty gives hope to this generation and to those still to be born that one day our world will be free from nuclear weapons, which, for more than seventy years, have daunted humanity’s aspirations for peace.

The Holy See believes the Treaty meets the challenge Pope Francis expressed in his Message to the negotiating conference, “to adopt forward-looking strategies to promote the goal of peace and stability and to avoid short-sighted approaches to the problems surrounding national and international security.”¹ The States signing the Treaty have rejected the fallacy that ‘might makes right’ and its pernicious modern corollary that some nations have the right to nuclear weapons while others do not. On the contrary, in adhering to the Treaty they affirmed that the achievement and maintenance of international peace and security consist in what supports the common good of all humanity.

Mr. Chair,

The strategies of deterrence on which some nations rely are deeply flawed. For a couple of decades some nuclear-armed States made significant cuts in nuclear weapons and delivery systems. Such reductions have halted, however, and in what some are calling a new cold war, the process risks going into reverse. Strategic doctrine, moreover, does not limit itself

¹ Pope Francis, Message to the United Nations Conference to negotiate a legally binding instrument to prohibit nuclear weapons, leading towards their total elimination, United Nations, New York, 27-31 March 2017.
to the deterrence aspects of nuclear weapons, but rather continues to embrace the possible use of these weapons for a variety of military goals, even against non-nuclear aggression. For these reasons, Pope Francis last November declared, "The threat of [the] use [of nuclear weapons], as well as their very possession, is to be firmly condemned." Abolition of nuclear weapons is an ethical imperative of the first order.

Following the Cuban Missile Crisis in October 1962, Pope John XXIII wrote that the world could not expect to abolish the nuclear arms race "unless the process is complete and thorough, unless it proceeds from inner conviction, unless, that is, everyone sincerely cooperates to banish the fear and anxious expectation of war with which [humanity is] oppressed." Pope John concluded, "The true and solid peace of nations consists not in equality of arms but in mutual trust alone." Abolition of nuclear weapons requires this profound change of perspective, indeed a *metanoia*, that is, a change of heart. Only with such a conversion of moral outlook will negotiation, disarmament, verification and the other necessary programmatic components of abolition yield the harvest of a non-nuclear peace: a world free of nuclear weapons. Disarmament implemented on the basis of a change of fundamental attitude, a movement from fear to trust, is what Pope Francis means by "integral disarmament." To build this new culture of peace, extensive investment in peace and disarmament education is needed.

Mr. Chair,

Even if it begins with an extensive preamble on humanitarian concerns and recommendations for victim assistance and environmental remediation, the Treaty on the Prohibition of Nuclear Weapons nonetheless stipulates few steps for disarmament. In particular, the "international authority" designated to negotiate and verify elimination of nuclear arsenals needs to be designed. Establishing the goal of nuclear abolition is not enough; the means to achieve it are also needed. Elimination of nuclear weapons requires the establishment of a global public authority endowed with a wideness of powers, structure and means to operate in an effective manner on a worldwide basis. The establishment of such an authority ought to be high on the agenda of the first Treaty Review Conference.

Within months of the adoption of the Treaty and in spite of the widespread support it enjoyed, the world was alarmed by the escalation of talk of nuclear war. With some relief, we have observed the reduction of the risk of war in the Korean peninsula, along with confidence-building measures and those expressions of friendship that always accompany the quest for denuclearization. At this point, the mutual engagement of the two Koreas shows some promise of developing into an integral process, in which disarmament is linked

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4 Ibid.
5 Treaty on the Prohibition of Nuclear Weapons, Article 4, passim.
to building up peaceful and mutually beneficial relations. By contrast, the effort to undo the Joint Comprehensive Plan of Action (JCPOA) with Iran is cause for concern. Although the Plan may not be to the full satisfaction of all interested parties and while more acceptable terms to all parties may be reached through continued negotiations, it can and should continue to serve to obtain assurances of the exclusively peaceful nature of the nuclear program of the State in question.

As we look ahead to the 2020 Nuclear Non-Proliferation Treaty Review Conference, there is an urgent need to address the problems presented by breakaway and undeclared nuclear States. Amid the chaos and destruction of the Middle East, prudence demands Member States revive the quest of a Middle East Nuclear Free Zone. Above all, the world expects the Nuclear Weapon States fully to implement their obligations under (NPT) Article VI for nuclear and general disarmament.

Mr. Chair,

In conclusion, the Preamble of the Treaty on the Prohibition of Nuclear Weapons states: "The establishment and maintenance of world peace and security are to be promoted with the least diversion for armaments of the world’s human and economic resources." Likewise, Sustainable Development Goal 16 aims to "promote peaceful and inclusive societies for sustainable development, provide access to justice for all and build effective, accountable and inclusive institutions at all levels."

The Holy See urges Governments to consider reallocating a sizable portion of the savings from disarmament for the development of their own citizens and of the world's poor. In addition, the Holy See would urge the "international authority" designated by the Treaty on the Prohibition of Nuclear Weapons to include among the terms of disarmament for new signatories the reallocation of funding from nuclear armaments to sustainable development as an element of disarmament planning.

"We need," Pope Francis has said, "to reject the culture of waste and to care for individuals and peoples laboring under painful disparities through patient efforts to favor processes of solidarity over selfish and contingent interests." As swords are beaten into ploughshares, the poor and the vulnerable can rightly expect that integral disarmament should yield fruit in integral development.

Finally, Mr. Chair, my Delegation believes that the document "Securing our Common Future: the Agenda for Disarmament" could provide important insights and recommendations for us as we address the full agenda of disarmament challenges.

Thank you, Mr. Chair.

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6 Treaty on the Prohibition of Nuclear Weapons, Preamble, para. 12.