Mr. Chair,

My Delegation wishes to congratulate you for your election and assures you and the members of the Bureau of the Holy See’s full cooperation and engagement in pursuing the Committee's vital work, which stretches far beyond the confines of these halls and our deliberations and connects with the deepest longings of the human heart for stability, international peace and security.¹

The United Nations General Assembly Observance to commemorate and promote the International Day for the Total Elimination of Nuclear Weapons, held on September 28, was the occasion to recall that the very first Resolution of the General Assembly was for control of atomic energy to ensure that its use be exclusively for peaceful purposes and to eliminate from national armaments atomic weapons and all other major weapons adaptable to mass destruction.² It clearly was the mindset of those delegates that came before us that “a world without nuclear weapons is possible and necessary.”³

Yet 75 years later, threats remain, tensions persist, and enormous stockpiles of nuclear weapons are being modernized rather than reduced. Making permanent the constraint on nuclear modernization provided by the Comprehensive Nuclear-Test-Ban Treaty would be a step in the right direction. My Delegation encourages the Annex 2 States to ratify the Treaty now; entry into force is long overdue.

Burgeoning signs of hope, however, must be also encouraged. Chief among these is the entry into force, last January, of the Treaty on the Prohibition of Nuclear Weapons, thereby

² Cf. A/RES/1 (1).
reaffirming loudly and clearly the illegality of these immoral weapons of war. The movement that led to the drafting of the Treaty is itself encouraging and surely represents “the aspiration of millions of men and women everywhere” 4 for a world free of nuclear weapons. The large number of States that voted in 2017 to adopt the Treaty, as well as the growing number of States that have ratified it is a positive indicator that one day nuclear weapons will at last be confined to the history books. The Holy See looks forward to the First Meeting of States Parties to take place in Vienna next Spring, for which preparations are now well underway. In like manner, the Holy See is ready to engage in the forthcoming Review Conference of the Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons (NPT) scheduled for January 2022. It is of utmost importance that States Parties to the NPT work together in good faith in view of a positive outcome and concrete steps towards the implementation of the Treaty in terms of disarmament and non-proliferation. Vast quantities of precious financial resources and human time, talent, and skill continue to be used to maintain and modernize nuclear weapons while urgent humanitarian and development needs of the human family remain unmet. Choices must be made, and these two intergovernmental conferences are key to advancing choices that promote international peace and security.

Mr. Chair,

Another reason for hope stems from the decision made by the United States and the Russian Federation to extend the “New START Treaty,” as well as to recommit to the judgment that “a nuclear war can never be won and should never be fought,” as President Ronald Reagan and General Secretary Mikhail Gorbachev affirmed. 5 Or, as the Secretary-General declared recently, “Nuclear Weapons are not self-defense; they are suicide.” 6 We need to go beyond the outdated policy of nuclear deterrence. As Pope Francis has said, “The international community is called upon 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.” 7 The adoption of a “no-first use policy” by each of the nuclear-weapon-possessing States would be another positive step towards breaking down a climate of mistrust and fear, which undermine any constructive multilateral approach to disarmament. This Committee must see itself as a ‘laboratory’ where such forward-looking strategies are formulated. “Political communities may legitimately differ from one another in terms of culture or economic development, but all are called to commit themselves to work ‘for the common cause’ for the good of all.” 8

6 Remarks of the Secretary-General, António Guterres at the Plenary Meeting of the General Assembly to Promote the International Day for the Total Elimination of Nuclear Weapons, 28 September 2021.
8 Pope Francis, Meeting for Peace, Hiroshima, 24 November 2019.
Mr. Chair,

A world free of nuclear weapons and the threat of their use will only be realized if we also commit to disarmament with regard to other weapons of mass destruction and to greater control over conventional arms. We must never forget that, every day, the lives of women, men and children are being taken by other weapons of war. Commitment to nuclear disarmament and non-proliferation must, according to the letter and spirit of Article VI of the Non-Proliferation Treaty, be accompanied by “negotiations in good faith ... on a treaty on general and complete disarmament under strict and effective international control.”

The Holy See welcomes progress being made on reducing the role of conventional weapons by agreements such as the Antipersonnel Landmines Convention and the Cluster Munitions Convention. The Holy See strongly supports the Program of Action on Small Arms and Light Weapons (PoA) and the International Tracing Instrument (ITI) because – to quote from the PoA itself – it believes these instruments “enhance respect for life and the dignity of the human person through the promotion of a culture of peace.”

Mr. Chair,

If we want to build a more just and secure society, then we must let weapons fall from our hands. When we yield to the logic of arms, we distance ourselves from the practice of dialogue and forget, to our detriment, that weapons monopolize financial resources, interrupt projects of solidarity and of useful labor, cause damage to the environment and warp the outlook of nations even before their use wounds a single person.⁹

The founders of the United Nations, at the end of the worst war the world had ever suffered, saw that armed conflict must be set aside as a means of resolving disputes between States and within States. Despite the continuation of terrible violence in various regions of the world, we have thus far been spared a global catastrophe of world war. At a time when we are facing such pressing needs as the pandemic and the damage caused to our common home, we must work together in good faith and take prompt steps to move away from reliance on force, especially nuclear weapons, in our relations with each other.

Thank you, Mr. Chair.

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