



The Holy See

**ADDRESS OF HIS HOLINESS POPE FRANCIS
TO PARTICIPANTS IN THE INTERNATIONAL SYMPOSIUM
"PROSPECTS FOR A WORLD FREE OF NUCLEAR WEAPONS AND FOR INTEGRAL
DISARMAMENT"**

*Clementine Hall
Friday, 10 November 2017*

[Multimedia]

Dear Friends,

I offer a cordial welcome to each of you and I express my deep gratitude for your presence here and your work in the service of the common good. I thank Cardinal Turkson for his greeting and introduction.

In this Symposium, you have met to discuss issues that are critical both in themselves and in the light of the complex political challenges of the current international scene, marked as it is by a climate of instability and conflict. A certain pessimism might make us think that “prospects for a world free from nuclear arms and for integral disarmament”, the theme of your meeting, appear increasingly remote. Indeed, the escalation of the arms race continues unabated and the price of modernizing and developing weaponry, not only nuclear weapons, represents a considerable expense for nations. As a result, the real priorities facing our human family, such as the fight against poverty, the promotion of peace, the undertaking of educational, ecological and healthcare projects, and the development of human rights, are relegated to second place (cf. [*Message to the Conference on the Humanitarian Impact of Nuclear Weapons, 7 December 2014*](#)).

Nor can we fail to be genuinely concerned by the catastrophic humanitarian and environmental effects of any employment of nuclear devices. If we also take into account the risk of an

accidental detonation as a result of error of any kind, the threat of their use, as well as their very possession, is to be firmly condemned. For they exist in the service of a mentality of fear that affects not only the parties in conflict but the entire human race. International relations cannot be held captive to military force, mutual intimidation, and the parading of stockpiles of arms.

Weapons of mass destruction, particularly nuclear weapons, create nothing but a false sense of security. They cannot constitute the basis for peaceful coexistence between members of the human family, which must rather be inspired by an ethics of solidarity (cf. [*Message to the United Nations Conference to Negotiate a Legally Binding Instrument to Prohibit Nuclear Weapons, 27 March 2017*](#)). Essential in this regard is the witness given by the *Hibakusha*, the survivors of the bombing of Hiroshima and Nagasaki, together with other victims of nuclear arms testing. May their prophetic voice serve as a warning, above all for coming generations!

Furthermore, weapons that result in the destruction of the human race are senseless even from a tactical standpoint. For that matter, while true science is always at the service of humanity, in our time we are increasingly troubled by the misuse of certain projects originally conceived for a good cause. Suffice it to note that nuclear technologies are now spreading, also through digital communications, and that the instruments of international law have not prevented new states from joining those already in possession of nuclear weapons. The resulting scenarios are deeply disturbing if we consider the challenges of contemporary geopolitics, like terrorism or asymmetric warfare.

At the same time, a healthy realism continues to shine a light of hope on our unruly world.

Recently, for example, in a historic vote at the United Nations, the majority of the members of the international community determined that nuclear weapons are not only immoral, but must also be considered an illegal means of warfare. This decision filled a significant juridical lacuna, inasmuch as chemical weapons, biological weapons, anti-human mines and cluster bombs are all expressly prohibited by international conventions. Even more important is the fact that it was mainly the result of a “humanitarian initiative” sponsored by a significant alliance between civil society, states, international organizations, churches, academies and groups of experts. The document that you, distinguished recipients of the Nobel Prize, have consigned to me is a part of this, and I express my gratitude and appreciation for it.

This year marks the fiftieth anniversary of the Encyclical Letter [*Populorum Progressio*](#) of Pope [*Paul VI*](#). That Encyclical, in developing the Christian concept of the person, set forth the notion of integral human development and proposed it as “the new name of peace”. In this memorable and still timely document, the Pope stated succinctly that “development cannot be restricted to economic growth alone. To be authentic, it must be integral; it must foster the development of each man and of the whole man” (No. 14).

We need, then, to reject the culture of waste and to care for individuals and peoples labouring under painful disparities through patient efforts to favour processes of solidarity over selfish and

contingent interests. This also entails integrating the individual and the social dimensions through the application of the principle of subsidiarity, encouraging the contribution of all, as individuals and as groups. Lastly, there is a need to promote human beings in the indissoluble unity of soul and body, of contemplation and action.

In this way, progress that is both effective and inclusive can achieve the utopia of a world free of deadly instruments of aggression, contrary to the criticism of those who consider idealistic any process of dismantling arsenals. The teaching of [John XXIII](#) remains ever valid. In pointing to the goal of an integral disarmament, he stated: “Unless this process of disarmament be thoroughgoing and complete, and reach men’s very souls, it is impossible to stop the arms race, or to reduce armaments, or – and this is the main thing – ultimately to abolish them entirely” (*[Pacem in Terris](#)*, 11 April 1963).

The Church does not tire of offering the world this wisdom and the actions it inspires, conscious that integral development is the beneficial path that the human family is called to travel. I encourage you to carry forward this activity with patience and constancy, in the trust that the Lord is ever at our side. May he bless each of you and your efforts in the service of justice and peace. Thank you.