

## **Key Points of Landmark Speech by Archbishop Francis Chullikatt**

Archbishop Francis Chullikatt, Apostolic Nuncio, is the Permanent Observer of the Holy See to the United Nations. Diplomatically, the Holy See acts and speaks on behalf of the entire Roman Catholic Church. On July 1, 2011, he gave a powerful speech in Kansas City, Missouri, site of a planned new facility to build the non-nuclear components of nuclear warheads. Entitled “The Nuclear Question: The Church’s Teachings and the Current State of Affairs,” it is online at <http://ncronline.org/news/peace/text-archbishop-francis-chullikat%E2%80%99s-speech-nuclear-disarmament>. This landmark document is the most far-reaching statement a representative of the Holy See has ever made on nuclear disarmament. It deserves the widest distribution. Among the many important points made by Archbishop Chullikatt are the following:

\*Viewed from a legal, political, security and most of all - moral - perspective, there is no justification today for the continued maintenance of nuclear weapons. This is the moment to begin addressing in a systematic way the legal, political and technical requisites for a nuclear-weapons-free world. For this reason, preparatory work should begin as soon as possible on a convention or framework agreement leading to the phased elimination of nuclear weapons.

\*It is becoming ever clearer that nuclear disarmament must be addressed from a comprehensive approach. ... Only the expression of a visible intent to construct a global legal basis for the systematic elimination of all nuclear weapons will suffice. It cannot be considered morally sufficient to draw down the stocks of superfluous nuclear weapons while modernizing nuclear arsenals and investing vast sums to ensure their future production and maintenance. This current course will ensure the perpetuation of these weapons indefinitely.

\*[T]he principle of good faith is vital within international law. Essentially, good faith means abiding by agreements in a manner true to their purposes and working sincerely and cooperatively through negotiations to attain agreed objectives. Therefore, the current modernization of nuclear forces and their technical infrastructure are contrary to such good faith because they make difficult or impossible a negotiated achievement of global nuclear disarmament.

\* The simple truth about the use of nuclear weapons is that, being weapons of mass destruction by their very nature, they cannot comply with fundamental rules of international humanitarian law forbidding the infliction of indiscriminate and disproportionate harm. Nor can their use meet the rigorous standards of the Just War principles’ moral assessment of the use of force. Both Just War principles and international humanitarian law prohibit the use of means of attack incapable of distinguishing between military objectives and civilians or civilian property.

\*The unlawfulness of the threat and use of nuclear weapons calls into serious question the lawfulness of the possession of nuclear weapons. The Nuclear Non-Proliferation Treaty prohibits acquisition of nuclear weapons by the vast majority of states. In conformity with the good faith principle, it cannot be lawful to continue indefinitely to possess weapons which are unlawful to use or threaten to use, or are already banned for most states, and are subject to an obligation of elimination. Countries must abide by agreements to “pursue negotiations ... on a treaty on general and complete disarmament under strict and effective international control” (NPT, Art. VI).

\*In 1996, fifteen years ago this very month, the International Court of Justice [stated]: "There exists an obligation to pursue in good faith and bring to a conclusion negotiations leading to nuclear disarmament in all its aspects under strict and effective international control". The Catholic Church embraced the Court's call for negotiations to eliminate nuclear weapons and, in 1997, in addressing the United Nation's First Committee, the Holy See Delegation put forth the Church's position in the strongest terms: "... If biological weapons, chemical weapons, and now landmines can be done away with, so too can nuclear weapons. ... With the valuable admonition offered in the Advisory Opinion of the International Court of Justice, the international community can now see how the legal and moral arguments against nuclear weapons intertwine with the strategic: since nuclear weapons can destroy all life on the planet, they imperil all that humanity has ever stood for, and indeed humanity itself. ... Nuclear weapons are incompatible with the peace we seek for the 21st century."

\*Some 40 nations possess the capacity to weaponize their civilian nuclear programs. Proliferation is a real and serious challenge. However, nonproliferation efforts will only be effective if they are universal. The nuclear-weapon states must abide by their obligations to negotiate the total elimination of their own arsenals if they are to have any authenticity in holding the non-nuclear-weapon states to their commitments not to pursue nuclear weapons or if they are to be effective in bringing those last few states who remain outside the NPT to the table of negotiations for the gradual elimination of their nuclear arsenals.

\*[T]he Holy See continues to call upon all non signatory States to ratify without delay the Comprehensive Nuclear Test Ban Treaty for its earliest entry into force. Its passage and entry into force remains a commitment made by the nuclear-weapon states at the 2000 Review Conference of the NPT that would most clearly signify their willingness to forgo the development of new nuclear weapons. The international community views the CTBT not as an end in itself but as a concrete signal by the nuclear-weapon states that they intend to fulfill their international commitments and take seriously the global demand to end the nuclear arms race and begin negotiations to eliminate these weapons.

\*With development needs across the globe far outpacing the resources being devoted to address them, the thought of pouring hundreds of billions of additional dollars into the world's nuclear arsenals is nothing short of sinful. It is the grossest misplacement of priorities and truly constitutes the very "theft from the poor" which the Second Vatican Council condemned so long ago.

\*Secrecy surrounding nuclear weapons programs has led to a failure to inform - if not an outright misleading of - workers and civilian populations living in close proximity to nuclear weapons facilities about the dangers their activities pose to human health. The Holy See cannot countenance this disregard for human life and the health of those most directly and immediately affected by the nuclear weapons enterprise. Provisions must be established to ensure transparency and appropriate safeguards support to workers as well as civilians living in proximity to these facilities to ensure their safety, even as we move expeditiously to a process for dismantling and destroying these unlawful weapons under international supervision.

\*The need to effectively and transparently address the toxic legacy posed by six decades of nuclear weapons production and maintenance is of the highest priority. The risks involved with even the peaceful use of nuclear technology illustrate the problem. Here I wish to underscore the Holy See's active role in confronting global environmental issues. His Holiness Benedict XVI has personally appealed for environmental justice in defense of creation.