



**STATEMENT OF THE HOLY SEE
TO THE INTERNATIONAL CONFERENCE ON NUCLEAR
SECURITY: SHAPING THE FUTURE 2024**

Vienna
21 May 2024

Co-Presidents,

At the outset, My Delegation would like to thank the International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA) for the organization of this Fourth International Conference on Nuclear Security: Shaping the Future (ICONS 2024). The Holy See appreciates the efforts made by the Co-Presidents to draft a common document and would like to align with the Co-Presidents' Joint Statement.

The promotion of nuclear security is of significant importance, particularly also in armed conflicts. This encompasses the prevention, detection and response to criminal or intentional unauthorized acts involving, or directed at, nuclear material, other radioactive material, associated facilities or associated activities.

The advancement of nuclear security contributes to the strengthening of the non-proliferation regime and the progress towards nuclear disarmament, thereby promoting peace and security as well as respect for our “common home which God has entrusted to us.”¹ Moreover, nuclear security, which is so closely linked to nuclear safety and a broader “safety culture,” promotes social and scientific development through the peaceful application of nuclear technologies to further advance sustainable development. This includes improvements in agriculture, water management, nutrition and food safety, infectious disease control, and efforts to fight cancer. Consequently, the crucial task of enhancing nuclear security must be carried out in conjunction with the broader endeavours aimed at promoting respect for fundamental human rights and the rule of law, as well as fostering socio-economic development, political participation, and cooperation and solidarity at the regional and international levels. In this context, it is important to ensure equal access to education and training, taking due account of gender equality, that is equality between women and men.

The efforts to ensure nuclear safety and security have been greatly enhanced thanks to the IAEA's strategies for strengthening capabilities and capacities in the areas of nuclear, radiation, transport and waste safety, as well as in emergency preparedness and response. The Holy See takes this opportunity to thank the Director General and the entire staff of the Agency for their work in this regard. These efforts must continue, as the promotion of nuclear security faces significant challenges, including the limited, inadequate and often stalled measures to prevent proliferation.

Co-Presidents,

The Holy See signed and ratified the Treaty on the Prohibition of Nuclear Weapons with the aim of moving beyond nuclear deterrence to a world completely free of nuclear weapons.²

It is worth repeating: from an ethical point of view, almost eighty years

¹ Pope Francis, Encyclical Letter *Laudato Si'*, 24 May 2015, No. 232.

² Cf. Statement of the Holy See to the 62nd General Conference of the International Atomic Energy Agency, 17 September 2018.

after Hiroshima and Nagasaki, we still have not realized what Pope John XXIII wrote in his Encyclical Letter *Pacem in Terris*: “nuclear weapons must be banned.”³ Not to forget what Pope Francis repeated: “the use of atomic energy for purposes of war is immoral, just as the possession of nuclear weapons is immoral⁴”.

Co-Presidents,

In light of the numerous security challenges currently facing the international community, compounded by the alarming spread of armed conflicts, it is imperative that the legal framework for nuclear disarmament be implemented without further delay. In order to reaffirm its relevance and value, States must recognize that certain issues, by virtue of their contribution to the common good, transcend narrow individual interests and agendas. The most pressing of these issues is the avoidance of a nuclear war. For our survival and well-being, for the sake of our children and future generations, we must build a world of solidarity, fraternity and justice in which the dignity and rights of all are guaranteed.

In conclusion, the Holy See reaffirms its sincere gratitude and its unwavering support for the IAEA’s many contributions to nuclear non-proliferation and disarmament, as well as to the safe, secure, and peaceful development and operation of nuclear technologies.

Thank you.

³ Pope John XXIII, Enc. Letter *Pacem in terris*, 11 April 1963, 112.

⁴ Pope Francis, Address of the Holy Father at the Meeting for Peace, Hiroshima 24 November 2019.