



**STATEMENT OF THE HOLY SEE**  
**TO THE 69<sup>th</sup> GENERAL CONFERENCE**  
**OF THE INTERNATIONAL ATOMIC ENERGY AGENCY**  
**DELIVERED BY**  
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Vienna  
15-19 September 2025

Mr. President,

I am pleased and honored to have this opportunity to convey the best wishes and cordial greetings of His Holiness Pope Leo XIV to you, and to all the distinguished delegates and participants at this 69<sup>th</sup> General Conference of the International Atomic Energy Agency.

Allow me to congratulate you and the members of the Board on your election. I would also like to express the appreciation of the Holy See to Director General Rafael Mariano Grossi and to the members of the Secretariat for their dedicated and tireless work, even in challenging conditions, for the benefit of the IAEA's mission and of its Member States.

The world is currently facing complex and multifaceted crisis: ongoing conflicts, geopolitical tensions, ecological instability, and persistent threats to peace and human dignity. Against this backdrop, the mission of the IAEA assumes renewed significance: ensuring the peaceful use of nuclear energy while preventing the proliferation of nuclear weapons is a moral imperative, and not merely a technical or political challenge. This is particularly evident in the current

era, when the incongruity of allocating valuable resources to developing and accumulating nuclear weapons is starkly contrasted with the fact that so many people on this planet are struggling to survive.

Furthermore, the ongoing increase in military spending, particularly on nuclear weapons, and the escalating rhetoric and threats surrounding it are of great concern. Indeed, such military threats constitute an affront to humanity as a whole, as a major nuclear confrontation would undoubtedly have an irreparable and devastating impact and result in unparalleled loss of human lives.

As this year marks the 80<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the dramatic detonation of two nuclear weapons, and as we remember the victims at Hiroshima and Nagasaki, now is the time to commemorate and reaffirm our commitment to the spirit and principles upon which the United Nations and its Agencies were founded. The Holy See, for its part, has always advocated for disarmament, particularly with regard to nuclear weapons, by also promoting rigorous and effective verification and international control. These weapons are indiscriminate, disproportionate, and fundamentally incompatible with humanitarian and ethical principles by their very nature. Furthermore, their possession and stockpiling can only further aggravate fears, provoke unjustified reactions and create unprecedented risks.

The Holy See supports the IAEA's seven indispensable pillars for nuclear safety, security and safeguards, and urges all Parties to uphold them fully. Facilitating and respecting IAEA's monitoring mission and verification activities is critical today in order to rebuild the mutual trust needed to resume dialogue, build peace and ensure security at a regional and global level. In this regard, the Holy See reaffirms its full support for the Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons (NPT) and the crucial role of the IAEA in verifying compliance with its obligations. The safeguards system remains a cornerstone of the non-proliferation regime.

Mr. President,

The Holy See is deeply concerned about the safety, security and safeguarding of nuclear facilities in ongoing conflict zones. In particular, the dreadful war in Ukraine, which is causing untold human suffering, highlights the extreme dangers of military operations near nuclear installations. Similarly, the crisis in the Middle East and the military targeting of nuclear facilities in the Islamic Republic of Iran has the potential to lead to further escalation, making the situation even more sensitive. This highlights the urgent need for all States involved to resume dialogue with a sense of shared responsibility. Once again, the Agency's dedicated and rigorous work is essential in order to rebuild international

trust and promote cooperation in such a challenging environment.

Mr. President,

True and lasting peace can only emerge from a culture of dialogue and cooperation. The situation faced by the international community requires, as Pope Leo XIV insists, “*a genuine willingness to engage in dialogue, inspired by the desire to communicate rather than clash. As a result, there is a need to give new life to multilateral diplomacy and to those international institutions conceived and designed primarily to remedy eventual disputes within the international community. Naturally, there must also be a resolve to halt the production of instruments of destruction and death.*”<sup>1</sup>

In this respect, the IAEA is arguably the epitome of multilateralism: nations coming together to share knowledge, establish norms, and foster a culture of cooperation, while entrusting the rigorous tasks of monitoring and verification to an independent and widely recognized Organization. In an increasingly fragmented world, this model is more important than ever, as no country, no matter how powerful, can ensure security or development alone.

Mr. President,

Cooperation is essential for building peace, including in non-military domains. In this regard, the Holy See strongly supports the IAEA’s efforts to utilise nuclear technology for peaceful purposes, particularly in the fields of medicine, climate change, agriculture, water management, and energy. The “*Atoms for Peace and Development*” initiative offers developing Nations real hope as they strive to achieve sustainable development.

The Holy See also commends the IAEA’s technical cooperation programs and initiatives such as ZODIAC (the *Zoonotic Disease Integrated Action*), which are aimed at helping to prevent future pandemics, and the *Rays of Hope* initiative, which seeks to ensure better cancer care in low- and middle-income countries. Such endeavours are tangible manifestations of global solidarity and promote integral human development.

Finally, as the world transitions towards cleaner energy sources, nuclear power also plays a crucial role in combatting climate change and decarbonizing economies. However, such use must always be guided by robust regulatory frameworks that are based on ethical principles: safety, transparency, intergenerational justice, and care of creation. Radioactive waste management, nuclear accident preparedness, and safe decommissioning must be treated with

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<sup>1</sup> Pope Leo XIV, Discourse to Diplomatic Corps Accredited to the Holy See, 16 May 2025.

the utmost seriousness, since the use of nuclear energy must ultimately uphold the God-given dignity of every man and woman, serve the common good and respect the integrity of creation.

Mr. President,

There is a real need for ethical education in science and diplomacy, particularly among leaders and professionals, who must be equipped with a clear moral compass and a commitment to serving the common good of humanity. Given the enormous power of nuclear technology, it is not enough to ask what we *can* do with atomic energy, but also what we *ought* to do with it.

The Holy See reaffirms its steadfast support for the IAEA's noble mandate<sup>2</sup> and its many contributions to nuclear non-proliferation, as well as to the safe, secure, and peaceful development and operation of nuclear science and technology. May this Agency continue to serve as a credible and vital guardian of our shared security, an instrument of cooperation in science and technology, and a beacon of responsible stewardship.

Thank you.

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<sup>2</sup> Cfr. Art. II of IAEA's Statute.