

The Holy See

Positions for the General Assembly Plenary

I. The Role of Science and Technology in the Context of International Security and Disarmament

His Holiness and the Catholic Church have long supported world peace through disarmament. While the Digital Age has brought many blessings to people across the globe, it has also fostered the development of deplorable devices and technologies that bring harm and suffering to unprecedented numbers of persons. Cell phones are being used to detonate improvised explosive devices (IEDs) and the internet allows for the sale of black-market goods as well as communication between terrorists. While some action has been taken by the United Nations (UN), the world still faces dire threats from nuclear war, hacktivists, and developing technology that this body must address.

The U.N. and the Holy See has a long history of dealing with this subject. It was first added to the General Assembly's (GA's) agenda in 1988, and has been passed on to every session since.¹ Prior to the open discussion in the General Assembly, the Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons (NPT) was adopted and took effect in 1970.² There are lauds and criticisms of the treaty, making judging its success difficult. One positive outcome is that "[m]ore countries have ratified the NPT than any other arms limitation and disarmament agreement, a testament to the Treaty's significance."³ Another is that it was predicted that by 1990 there would be 25-30 Member States with nuclear weapons, and yet today there are only eight confirmed States with weaponized nuclear materials.⁴ However, Article VI of the NPT calls for the disarming of nuclear stockpiles, and while the number of nuclear weapons has been reduced, there are still enough to destroy the entire planet many times over.⁵ Pope Francis sees this as a serious failing among world leaders and has made the continual disarmament of the world's thousands of nuclear weapons one of his top priorities.⁶ While nuclear disarmament is not the sole concern of the Vatican when it comes to international security, it is an issue that has dominated the second half of the 20th century and is in dire need of swifter resolution.

Today, the NPT is reviewed every five years and the GA continues to pass lackluster resolutions such as A/RES/61/55 that transfer the issue on to the next session.⁷ There has been little tangible action taken against preventing new technologies from being used as weapons. Current legislation, such as resolution A/RES/68/243, encourages Member States to make international agreements with regards to sharing information technologies, but the Holy See fears these measures also lack any substantial backing.⁸ New technologies, including those for protection, are being developed every day, and yet it can be argued that the average citizen in any State is in more danger now than at the beginning of the century.

During this upcoming conference, Member States, especially those with advanced technologies and nuclear weapons, need to create actionable legislation that will bring about real change. One example to build upon is the New START Treaty between the United States and Russia which went into effect on February 5th, 2011.⁹ The Holy See would like to see similar treaties made but with 1) a far greater reduction of arms on the part of the United States and Russia and 2) the inclusion of other Member States such as France, China, and the United Kingdom. We will work diligently to bring these various parties together so that honest, productive debate and action can take place.

¹ United Nations Office for Disarmament Affairs (U.N.O.D.A.), "The Role of Science and Technology in the context of International Security and Disarmament," <https://goo.gl/V8BHrC>.

² U.N.O.D.A., "Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons (NPT)," <https://goo.gl/GUDOMt>.

³ Ibidem.

⁴ Wikipedia, "Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons," <https://goo.gl/z8qJ6b>.

⁵ U.S. Department of State (D.S.): Diplomacy in Action, "Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons (NPT)," <https://goo.gl/sF7x39>.

⁶ Elizabeth Dias, "Pope Francis' Latest Mission: Stopping Nuclear Weapons," *Time*, April 10, 2015.

⁷ U.N.G.A, Resolution 61/55, "Role of science and technology in the context of international security and disarmament," December 6, 2006, <https://goo.gl/sGg1ln>.

⁸ U.N.G.A, Resolution 68/243, "Developments in the field of information and telecommunications in the context of international security," December 27, 2013, <https://goo.gl/Agj4hK>.

⁹ U.S.D.S: Diplomacy in Action, "New START," <https://goo.gl/AyZIF>.

II. The Inclusion of Women in the Post-Conflict Peacebuilding Process

The Holy See is deeply troubled by the lack of gender equality in this day and age. Women constitute roughly fifty percent of the world's population, and yet they are significantly underrepresented in local, national, and international governing bodies.¹⁰ H. E. Archbishop Bernardito Auza stated that “[w]omen are drivers of development and human flourishing in multiple fields: in the family and faith communities, in socio-cultural initiatives and humanitarian efforts, in education and health care, in mediation and preventive diplomacy, in peacekeeping and peacebuilding.”¹¹ If women are continually excluded from the peacebuilding process, then any solutions that are generated will be neither applicable to the entire population nor destined to establish long-term peace.

Women have a long history of chasing basic civil rights afforded to men by assumed superiority. The first country to allow women to vote was New Zealand in 1893.¹² For almost 19 centuries women had almost no voice in government save for those few who were born into royalty, and even then, often they were under the dominion of their male relatives. Possibly even more troubling than how long it took women to receive this right is that women in Saudi Arabia achieved suffrage in 2011, a mere five years ago.¹³ While most Member States now allow women to vote, it has taken far too long for this to become a reality. Without the voice of women in post-conflict elections, their concerns and needs can't be addressed by the elected. While suffrage is only one aspect of women's rights, it is an indicator of both historic and current progress.

Looking at the present, women are still significantly lacking equality when it comes to legislative representation. Keith Brannum *et al.* states that “only 19% of national-level parliamentarians and legislators are women.”¹⁴ There are many other similar statistics that support the basic idea that women do not have the means to contribute to the peacebuilding process which inherently weakens the system. Rapes, robberies, and assaults that occur to women both during and after a conflict too often go unanswered and leave women feeling excluded, ashamed, and powerless.

A modern flawed assumption is that women are not capable of making a substantial contribution to the peacebuilding process. Women think differently than men and can provide unique perspectives and solutions to many of the problems that lead men to both domestic and international violence. “[W]omen are essential because they bring a more comprehensive peace plan to the negotiating table by addressing societal needs rather than solely focusing on what will make the warring parties happy.”¹⁵ The Holy See believes that there are two main issues this body needs to address when it comes to including women: 1) enforcing laws and practices already in place in many Member States that protect women but are not followed, and 2) bringing such laws to the Member States that lack these securities.

With regard to issue one, on paper, the UN and numerous Member States have ensured equal pay, treatment, and governmental participation for women. However, there has been a lack of transition from words to action on the part of the citizens of said Member States. Areas where conflicts are waging on or ending cannot rely on the guidance of those who do not practice their own laws. As the parable goes in John 8:7, “[let] any one of you who is without sin be the first to throw a stone at her.” Member States' female populations, such as those in Afghanistan and Syria, need modernized nations to facilitate and demonstrate meaningful transition within their own systems of government, not hollow dictation from those who judge and condemn practices that can still be found in their local principalities. With that being said, area two requires that while Member States with protected women's rights make internal improvements, they also need to help bring those written protections to women that are not afforded them yet. Women will not be included in the peacebuilding process until they are equal in the eyes of the law. Once that step has been achieved, then equality can start to seep into the eyes of the society. The Holy See will be working with both developed and undeveloped Member States to create resolutions that address both these areas which will bring equality to women of all social and political backgrounds.

¹⁰ Keith Brannum, Jacob Howe, and Melissa Nelson, “ATL_GAPlen_2016,” Background Guide for Southern Regional Model United Nations (SRMUN) conference in Atlanta, Georgia, November 17-19, 2016.

¹¹ Bernardito Auza, “The Role of Women in Conflict Prevention and Resolution in Africa,” Speech, New York City, New York, March 28, 2016, <https://goo.gl/3nKOM9>.

¹² Infoplease, “Women's Suffrage,” <https://goo.gl/fXeq14>.

¹³ *Ibidem*.

¹⁴ Keith Brannum *et al.*, “ATL_GAPlen_2016,” Background Guide for SRMUN conference in Atlanta, Georgia, November 17-19, 2016.

¹⁵ Laurel Stone, “Can Women Make the World More Peaceful?” *The Guardian*, <http://bit.ly/2djzKq>.