



***“Perspectives for a world free from nuclear weapons and for integral disarmament”***  
(November 10-11, 2017)

The creation of the new Dicastery for Promoting Integral Human Development providentially coincided with the 50<sup>th</sup> Anniversary of the Encyclical Letter *Populorum Progressio* (March 26, 1967) that developed the Christian vision of the human person, introducing the concept of “integral human development”, and also considering ‘development’ as the new name for peace. In a globalized and hyper-technological society, to these two terms of the equation (development and peace), we must urgently add a third: disarmament! Indeed, authentic and lasting peace is inconceivable without the development of every person and of all peoples. Nor is a reduction of armaments conceivable if we do not first eliminate violence at its roots- that is, without humankind first being determined to seek peace, good and justice. Like all forms of evil, war originates in the human heart (cf. Mt 15:19; Mk 7:20-23). In this sense disarmament does not only refer to State armaments but involves every person who is called to disarm his own heart and be a peacemaker everywhere (cf. *Letter of His Holiness Benedict XVI to Cardinal Renato Raffaele Martino on the occasion of the International Seminar organized by the Pontifical Council for Justice and Peace on "Disarmament, development and peace. Prospects for integral disarmament"*, April 10, 2008).

With the Conference “*Perspectives for a world free from nuclear weapons and for integral disarmament*” the new Dicastery wishes to spread the mission of the Church in the service of the three above-mentioned areas: development, peace, disarmament.

This meeting of experts (representatives of civil society, States and International Organizations, as well as influential academics), will foster an in-depth debate on these issues, focusing on the theme of nuclear weapons, which are the only weapons of mass destruction not yet prohibited under international law in an extensive and universal manner.

In trying to fill this legal void and in the wake of the pressing issues proceeding from civil society, on October 27, 2016, the First Committee of the United Nations General Assembly approved L.41 resolution, requesting the convocation, in 2017, of an International Conference to negotiate a legally binding instrument to prohibit nuclear weapons: 123 States voted in favor of this resolution, 38 against and 16 abstained.

The above-mentioned Conference took place in two rounds of negotiation (March 27-31 and June 15 – July 7).

On July 7, 2017, the international community overwhelmingly (122 votes in favor, 1 abstention and only one contrary vote) rejected the use of nuclear weapons and affirmed that they are totally unacceptable.

Our conference will therefore also be an opportunity to reaffirm and develop the position of the Holy See on the subject, confirming the importance of ecumenical and interreligious dialogue; the Holy See, in fact, encourages the final and complete nuclear disarmament, based on the following considerations (cf. *Message of His Holiness Pope Francis to the United Nations Conference to negotiate a legally binding instrument to prohibit nuclear weapons, leading towards their total elimination*, New York, 27-31 March 2017):

- If we take into consideration the principal threats to peace and security with their many dimensions in this multipolar world of the twenty-first century as, for example, terrorism, asymmetrical conflicts, cybersecurity, environmental problems, poverty, not a few doubts arise regarding the inadequacy of nuclear deterrence as an effective response to such challenges.
- These concerns are even greater when we consider the catastrophic humanitarian and environmental consequences that would follow from any use of nuclear weapons, with devastating, indiscriminate and uncontrollable effects, over time and space.
- Similar cause for concern arises when examining the waste of resources spent on nuclear issues for military purposes, which could, instead be used for worthy priorities like the promotion of peace and integral human development, as well as the fight against poverty, and the implementation of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development.