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Three men in dark suits sit at a table with paper cranes on it below a painting of unidentifiabl

French President Emmanuel Macron, Japanese Prime Minister Fumio Kishida, and U.S. President Joe Biden, sign a guest book as they visit Peace Memorial Museum with other G7 leaders as part of the G7 leaders' summit in Hiroshima, Japan, May 19, 2023. (OSV News photo/Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Japan handout via Reuters)



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Global security cannot be guaranteed through stockpiling nuclear weapons but must be centered on an "equitable distribution of the world's goods," Pope Francis said.

In a message to G7 leaders gathered in Hiroshima, Japan, May 19-21, the pope wrote that the location of the international summit "forcefully proclaims the inadequacy of nuclear arms to respond effectively to today's great threats to peace and to ensure national and international security."

The pope recalled his 2019 visit to Hiroshima in which he said the use of nuclear weapons is "a crime not only against the dignity of human beings, but against any possible future for our common home."

Leaders from the world's wealthiest industrial nations, including U.S. President Joe Biden, participated in the G7 summit which this year focused heavily on China and on the war in Ukraine. Ukrainian President Volodymyr Zelenskyy participated as an invited guest and traveled to Japan as part of a diplomatic tour that also took him to Saudi Arabia and to Europe. He met with Francis at the Vatican May 13.

In his message dated May 19, the pope urged G7 leaders to consider "the catastrophic humanitarian and environmental impact" that would result from using nuclear weapons, as well as "the waste and poor allocation of human and economic resources involved in their development," adding that the mere possession of nuclear weapons creates a "climate of fear and suspicion" which compromise trust between nations.

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"In this context, nuclear arms and other weapons of mass destruction represent a multiplier of risk that offers only an illusion of peace," he wrote.

Francis said that particularly in the wake of the COVID-19 pandemic and with the persistence of armed conflicts, including "the devastating war now being fought on Ukrainian soil," international actors must develop a holistic view of global security that includes ensuring access to food and water, health care, energy sources and respect for the environment.

"An integral concept of security can serve to anchor multilateralism and international cooperation between government and nongovernment actors on the basis of the profound interconnection between these issues," he wrote, leading to "an approach of responsible multilateral cooperation."

In the summit's outcome document, the G7 leaders underscored their commitment to the 1968 Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons, in which nuclear powers including the United States and Russia agreed to pursue nuclear disarmament aimed at the ultimate elimination of their nuclear arsenals.