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Vatican rep tells UN dialogue only path to peace

by Catholic News Service

UNITED NATIONS -- The United Nations might not be perfect, but it has helped humanity move toward a world marked by dialogue, peace and development, the Vatican's foreign minister told the U.N. General Assembly.

Archbishop Dominique Mamberti, Vatican secretary for relations with states, said that for the United Nations and its various agencies to continue being effective, its actions and deliberations must make "constant reference to the dignity of all men and women," to the right to life of all people, including the terminally ill and the unborn, and to religious freedom.



Addressing the General Assembly Sept. 29, the archbishop said

bilateral and multilateral agreements to reduce nuclear weapons, cluster bombs and land mines are important steps toward ensuring a peaceful future for all people, but many countries' national military spending continues to pose a threat both to peace and to the nations' economic development.

"We must continue to do everything possible to achieve a world free of nuclear weapons. It is an objective that cannot be renounced, even if it is complex and difficult to reach, and the Holy See supports all efforts in this direction," he said.

While achievements in the field of disarmament and nonproliferation have been made, he said, the fact that "global military expenditures continue to be burdensome and even increasing" are reasons to worry.

The archbishop said dialogue and control measures acceptable to all parties are the only way to ensure nations have the right to develop nuclear energy without developing nuclear weapons.

"The Holy See encourages all parties involved in resolving various disputes in progress, especially concerning the Korean Peninsula and the Persian Gulf and adjacent areas, to deepen sincere dialogue for a harmonious balance in the rights of all nations involved," he said.

As signs of hope toward a world of peace, the archbishop pointed to "the decision to convene a conference before 2012 for a Middle East free of nuclear weapons and other weapons of mass destruction," and the recent U.S.-Russian agreement to reduce and limit strategic offensive weapons.

He also praised the work of U.N. peacekeeping forces around the globe.

"The significant increase in requests for intervention in recent years, first of all demonstrates an increased confidence" in the United Nations and its ability to work regionally, but it also highlights the increased need for the United Nations and other organizations dedicated to preventing conflict in the first place, he said.

Archbishop Mamberti also highlighted the United Nations' work in promoting environmental protection and working toward the adoption of measures to mitigate climate change.

The Vatican, he said, is hoping that governments will come to a legally binding agreement on reducing pollution, and that they also can work together to come up with "a development model based on a new energy system."

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"It's not just a matter of helping the world be less dependent on fossil fuels and increasing the focus on energy efficiency and alternative energy, but it also is a matter of changing behavior and irresponsible consumerism," he said, adding that "it is these behaviors, not population growth and improved living conditions in less developed countries" that place unsustainable pressure on resources and the environment.

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