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UN papal nuncio calls for total disarmament

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NCR Today

Archbishop Francis Chullikatt, the apostolic nuncio and Permanent Observer of the Holy See to the United Nations, has called for general and complete disarmament, according to a Vatican Radio report.

Chullikatt told the First Committee of the 68th session of the General Assembly that this moment in history offers the opportunity for the world to get rid of chemical and nuclear weapons. ?

Below is the full text of Chullikatt's speech.??

Mr Chairman,

The First Committee meets this year at a moment of extraordinary opportunity. In the past few weeks, we have seen vivid action taken in the long struggle to rid the world of chemical and nuclear weapons.

The recent UN Security Council's unanimous resolution on Syria's chemical weapons has historic importance. However, in that regard the Secretary General noted: "a red light for one form of weapons did not mean a green light for others". He therefore called for a complete stop to all violence and for all weapons to be silenced.

Another hopeful opportunity that has presented itself is the day-long unprecedented High-level Meeting on Nuclear Disarmament in the General Assembly on September 26. From nearly every corner of the world -- Europe, Africa, Asia, Latin America -- Heads of State and Government and other high officials called for action to begin comprehensive negotiations to ban all nuclear weapons. It was impressive to see such an outcry of concern at what is aptly called the "catastrophic humanitarian consequences" of the use of nuclear weapons.

The willingness of the world as a whole to move forward in a constructive manner to eliminate nuclear weapons has never been more evident. Yet a very small number of States stand in the way, trying to block progress and to find a comprehensive solution to the problem that goes on year after year in paralysis and obfuscation.

It was clear at the High-level Meeting on Nuclear Disarmament that States around the world want to see the implementation of the 2010 decision of the Non-Proliferation Treaty Review Conference to convene a meeting to develop a zone free of nuclear and other weapons of mass destruction in the Middle East.

The progress made in the Syrian conflict and the prospect of a political solution on the horizon set the stage for the holding of the Middle East conference. This process dates back to 1995 when the NPT Review and Extension Conference adopted a resolution to address all weapons of mass destruction in the Middle East. The failure of the international community to fulfill that promise has jeopardized the credibility of the NPT and the future of that region. With the 2015 NPT Review Conference quickly approaching, it is imperative that steps be taken to set a firm date for the holding of the conference.

It is sadly ironic that States vociferous in their condemnation of chemical weapons are silent on the continued possession of nuclear weapons. The international community must appeal and act with one voice to ban all weapons of mass destruction.

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The prospects for the cooperation of all States on a new agenda for peace have suddenly taken an upturn. This work requires the continued advocacy and cooperation of all. A better world awaits us if we reduce the excessively high military spending and if we set aside part of military expenditures for a world fund to relieve the needs of developing and least developed nations. This committee, dedicated to reducing armaments worldwide must always be conscious of the true needs for achieving sustainable international peace and security. We must end myopic militarism and concentrate on the long-range needs of the human family.

Mr Chairman,

As the Holy See stated at the recent High-level Meeting on Nuclear Disarmament, "[I]t is time to counter the logic of fear with the ethic of responsibility, fostering a climate of trust and sincere dialogue, capable of promoting a culture of peace, founded on the primacy of law and the common good, through a coherent and responsible cooperation between all members of the international community."

Our world has never been so interdependent and interconnected; now more than ever we cannot risk falling into a "globalization of indifference".

It is illusory to think that the security and peace of some can be assured without the security and peace of others. In an age like ours which is undergoing profound social and geopolitical shifts, awareness has been growing that national security interests are deeply linked to those related to international security, just as the human family moves gradually together and everywhere is becoming more conscious of its unity and interdependency.

Peace, security and stability cannot be gained strictly by military means, nor by increasing military spending, since these are multidimensional objectives which include aspects that are not linked only to the

political and military sphere, but also to those of human rights, the rule of law, economic and social conditions, and the protection of the environment. These are things which have as their principal purpose the promotion of a true, integral human development, where wisdom, reason and the force of law must prevail over violence, aggression and the law of force.

Peace is an edifice in continual construction which lays its foundations not so much in force as in trust, confidence-building, on respect for obligations assumed and on dialogue. Without these fundamental elements one places at risk not solely peace, but also the very existence of the human family. The field of disarmament and arms control constantly demands the use of our wisdom and good will.

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