



Less Nuclear Stocks and More Development



The existence of nuclear weapons poses serious security and safety threats to the countries possessing them and to the whole world. More than 20 years after the end of the cold war and the arms race, including in the nuclear field, it is time to have a comprehensive approach to national and international security architecture. Without such efforts the risk of a nuclear war, either by accident or by design, continues to be realistic, and even growing with new emerging nuclear powers, regionally and globally, and proliferation would be a consequence of not proceeding to concrete and effective nuclear disarmament aiming ultimately at the total elimination of nuclear weapons.

In the last few years military spending has been increasing and nuclear powers are modernizing or developing their stocks. At the same time, countries around the world are struggling to reduce poverty, to assure a better future to the young generation through education, professional training and decent jobs. The initiative would divert funding made available in national security budgets by such reductions for the alleviation of world poverty. It would thereby address the harm nuclear arms production does to the world's poor. The nuclear arms race is "an utterly treacherous trap for humanity and one which harms the poor to an intolerable degree" (*Gaudium et spes*, n. 81). Development, justice and respect for fundamental freedoms are the real foundation for national and international security.

In past decades we have witnessed some progress, unilaterally or bilaterally, in the area of nuclear stocks reduction. There is currently an impasse in efforts toward further agreed reductions. The continuing dangers of a nuclear weapons world cannot be ignored. Serious reductions in

nuclear arsenals can be crafted and achieved and will help lessen the dangers. At the same time large amounts of funds will be saved that can be used for education, health and development in general.

To make this happen we need to build confidence between different actors and we have to address the security concerns of all. All contentious issues should be put on the table: missile defense, conventional prompt global strike, conventional arms race and imbalance, militarization and weaponization of outer space, etc. The different actors, in particular the super powers, have to move from a declaratory stand to a more concrete plan of action with clear objectives and an agreed timetable. In the meanwhile, the safety and security of the stocks of all possessors should remain of the utmost priority.

Reduction in nuclear warheads should be looked at in a comprehensive manner beyond the number of deployed warheads. It has to include, inter alia: non-deployed war heads, military doctrine, level of alert, modernization, etc.

The conversation between the 2 big nuclear powers and the reductions already made are positive and necessary steps but not sufficient. This effort should include the other nuclear powers. Otherwise the exercise will reach its limits at some point. The multilateral avenue is unavoidable if the main objective is a secure and stable world without nuclear weapons.

Any move, formal or informal, bilaterally or multilaterally, to focus the attention on the nuclear weapons issue would also re-raise international awareness of the need to reduce nuclear arms and the risks of nuclear conflicts, and to sharpen the focus on issues of world poverty. This move could have a stabilizing effect in contemporary centers of strife. It would also have a restraining impact on the temptation of aspiring nations to “go nuclear” by creating local incentives to meet the needs of the poor rather than spending huge sums on nuclear weapons. It would also set the stage for participation in joint efforts by all nuclear powers both in the diversion of freed-up resources and the elimination of their nuclear weapons and eventual associated reductions in conventional weapons.

The Holy See has spoken fervently since the beginning of the nuclear era on the need to prevent further use of nuclear weapons at all costs. Other religious leaders have done the same. It is important to continue to bring committed experts, religious representatives, international organizations, NGOs and States to have an open debate with a common objective which is to relieve humanity, now and in the future, from the threat of nuclear weapons.

This workshop highlights the issues, particularly the ethical and humanitarian dimensions, and involves experts from the Holy See and the Russian Orthodox Church. Experts from other countries (US, Russia, Italy, Norway, etc.) and institutions (UN, Global Priorities, etc.) have been invited to take part. No government representatives will be invited at this stage and no conclusions

will be advanced except insofar as they identify issues that need resolution. All participants are invited in their own capacity. However, a key outcome of the Rome consultation might be that in this time of economic hardship and discord and cooling of relations between the nuclear superpowers, religious forces can exert considerable influence to identify and resolve pressing issues.