



**Statement by H.E. Archbishop Paul Richard Gallagher,  
Secretary for Relations with States and International  
Organizations and Head of the Delegation of the Holy See,  
at the Thirteenth Conference on Facilitating the Entry into Force  
of the Comprehensive Nuclear-Test-Ban Treaty (CTBT)  
22 September 2023**

Mesdames Co-Presidents,

The Holy See thanks Italy and South Africa for their work as Article XIV Coordinators and congratulates Norway and Panama on assuming this responsibility. I also wish to thank Mr. Robert Floyd for his challenging and encouraging statement.

Since the dawn of the nuclear age, States have detonated over two thousand nuclear explosive devices, subjecting countless persons to adverse health effects of ionizing radiation, and contaminating our common home. These terrible humanitarian and environmental consequences demonstrate that nuclear weapons “represent a multiplier of risk that offers only an illusion of peace”.<sup>1</sup>

After four decades of concerted efforts, the international community achieved agreement on such a ban, with effective verification meant to ensure that any nuclear explosive test runs the risk of being detected. Twenty-seven years after the Comprehensive Nuclear-Test-Ban Treaty (CTBT) opened for signatures, this great achievement remains only partially fulfilled.

Amid threats of nuclear use and the ongoing efforts to modernise nuclear weapons, achieving the entry into force of the CTBT becomes more vital than ever. In this regard, the Holy See welcomes the eight States that have ratified the treaty since the last session of this conference and calls upon all States that have not yet done so, especially the eight remaining Annex II States, to sign and ratify the treaty as a major utmost priority. In the

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<sup>1</sup> Pope Francis, Letter to the Bishop of Hiroshima on the Occasion of the G7 Summit, 19 May 2023.

meantime, the Holy See urges all States to continue adhering to the zero-yield moratorium on nuclear testing.

Mesdames Co-Presidents,

The CTBT makes up just one element of the wider disarmament and nonproliferation regime, centered on the Nuclear Non-Proliferation Treaty (NPT) and complemented by the Treaty on the Prohibition of Nuclear Weapons (TPNW). With this in mind, my delegation urges the CTBTO Preparatory Commission to explore all possible ways to build upon this complementarity by collaborating with TPNW States Parties on universalisation, verification and compiling historical data on past nuclear tests, including the human costs of such testing. Such collaboration can help lay the groundwork for a restorative approach to addressing the harms caused by nuclear explosive testing.

Thank you, Mesdames Co-Presidents.