

US Prelate Addresses Anti-Nuclear Weapon Summit

Underlines Church's Just War Teaching

PARIS, FEB. 4, 2010 (Zenit.org).- The archbishop of Baltimore, Maryland, is underlining Church's reasons for opposing nuclear war, and stressing the next steps for eliminating these weapons.

Archbishop Edwin O'Brien, a member of the U.S. bishops' conference Committee on International Justice and Peace, stated this Wednesday in Paris at the three-day Global Zero Summit.

The gathering, which ended today, brought together 200 international leaders to develop strategies to eliminate nuclear weapons.

The archbishop underlined the Church's moral teaching on nuclear weapons, based in its commitment to protect human life.

He noted that "as a Permanent Observer to the United Nations, the Holy See has ratified the Nuclear Non-Proliferation Treaty and actively participated in the treaty's review conferences over the past four decades."

The prelate affirmed that on a national level, the U.S. bishops have issued pastoral letters and public statement on the country's nuclear policy, and are continually involved in dialogue with public officials on this topic.

"The real risks inherent in nuclear war make the probability of success elusive," he said.

Drawing on the principles of just war teaching, Archbishop O'Brien stated, "Nuclear war-fighting is rejected in Church teaching because it cannot ensure noncombatant immunity and the likely destruction and lingering radiation would violate the principle of proportionality."

Mini-nukes

He continued: "Even the limited use of so-called 'mini-nukes' would likely lower the barrier to future uses and could lead to indiscriminate and disproportionate harm.

"And the continuing possession of nuclear weapons undermines non-proliferation efforts and contributes to the danger of loose nuclear materials falling into the hands of terrorists."

"Every nuclear weapons system and every nuclear weapons policy should be judged by the ultimate goal of protecting human life and dignity and the related goal of ridding the world of these weapons in mutually verifiable ways," the archbishop pointed out.

He called on each country to determine the next steps toward this goal, affirming that "the path to zero will be long and treacherous."

"For my own nation," the prelate said, "this requires the successful negotiation and ratification of a START follow-on treaty with the Russian Federation, the ratification of the Comprehensive Test Ban Treaty, and the adoption of a nuclear posture that rejects the first

use of nuclear weapons or their use against non-nuclear threats."

He continued: "It will not be easy. Nuclear weapons can be dismantled, but both the human knowledge and the technical capability to build weapons cannot be erased."

Archbishop O'Brien concluded, "But humanity must walk this path with both care and courage in order to build a future free of the nuclear threat."

The Global Zero initiative was launched in December 2008 to promote the elimination of nuclear weapons. This week's summit was planned to lead up to the Global Summit on Nuclear Security in April, called by U.S. President Barack Obama, and the Nuclear Non-Proliferation Treaty Review Conference the following month.