

Vatican Assails "Culture of Conflict"  
Urges Ratification of Nuclear Test Ban Treaty

VIENNA, Austria, OCT. 5, 2007 (Zenit.org).- The race to develop more and more sophisticated nuclear weapons is indicative of a "culture of conflict and death," which endangers peace, according to Vatican.

Monsignor Michael Banach, the Holy See's permanent observer at the U.N. Industrial Development Organization, said this in an address to the Fifth Conference on Facilitating of the Entry into Force of the Comprehensive Nuclear Test Ban Treaty (CTBT). The meeting took place Sept. 17-18 in Vienna.

The 1996 treaty has been ratified by 140 countries, but 10 more must follow suit to transform the CTBT from an informal moratorium into a binding document. Among the 10 countries that have nuclear weapons and haven't signed the treaty are the United States and China.

Once it takes effect, the CTBT would not only ban nuclear weapons testing, but would also launch a monitoring system to ensure its implementation.

The Holy See representative said that the treaty's ratification and implementation "are important for the life and peace of the human family."

Monsignor Banach added that by signing the treaty the Holy See is expressing its conviction "that in the sphere of nuclear weapons, the banning of tests and the further development of these weapons, disarmament and nonproliferation are closely linked and must be achieved as quickly as possible under effective international controls."

"This conviction," he continued, "underlies the very mission of the Holy See, which aims at ensuring the common good of the human family through the promotion of a culture of peace based upon the primacy of law and of respect for human rights."

"The coming into force and the implementation of the CTBT are all the more urgently necessary when one considers the contemporary world, which is marked by the threat of terrorism and by the crisis in international relations and organizations," the monsignor said.

#### Destruction

Monsignor Banach said that "nuclear tests are dictated by the desire to develop ever more sophisticated and dangerous weapons. They are therefore indicative of a 'culture of conflict and death' which endangers not only peace but -- given the particularly destructive nature of nuclear weapons -- the very existence of the human family."

The Vatican representative rejected the argument that countries need to develop nuclear weapons for their own safety and security: "This argument fails to convince. In fact, it leads to the proliferation of weapons which, given their destructive capacity, are able to eliminate the very people whom they claim to protect and defend."

He also rejected the argument that nations are seeking to develop "clean" or "intelligent" weapons: "This argument too fails to convince. In fact, all nuclear weapons have indiscriminate radioactive effects, which are harmful to the life and health of human beings and the environment."

"The declaration of a general ban on nuclear tests is therefore a duty of the international community toward all peoples," said Monsignor Banach. "Given the risks caused by nuclear tests and weapons, the time has come for a decisive option on the part of the international community for a 'culture of life and peace' and for significant nuclear disarmament."

He added that the Holy See approves the use of nuclear technology for peaceful purposes, as long as two conditions exist: "the abandonment of hostile nuclear programs and a general ban on nuclear tests."

The representative continued, "The international community is called to pursue these objectives as decisive steps toward the strengthening of a culture of life and peace and toward the achievement of the common good of the human family."