

Peace group hails Obama nuke disarmament call

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Pax Christi USA, the Catholic peace organization, has hailed President Obama's nuclear disarmament call.

"This is an exciting moment, a new moment in the long struggle to bring fundamental change to U.S. nuclear weapons policies and an important first step," said Dave Robinson, Executive Director of Pax Christi USA, the national Catholic peace movement.

"As people of faith, we are particularly heartened by the President's admission that as the only nation to use nuclear weapons we bear a special moral burden. As we move forward, Pax Christi USA is dedicated to ensuring that this moral commitment is translated into concrete changes in Pentagon strategies and spending priorities."

"President Obama's commitments to seek Senate ratification of the Comprehensive Test Ban Treaty, negotiate an end to the production of nuclear materials for weapons, and negotiate deep cuts in the Russian and U.S. arsenals offer real hope that we have turned the corner on the dangerous and destabilizing policies of the past 8 years," said Robinson.

"Now we all need to support this commitment and convince the U.S. Senate to support the Treaty. In addition, we urge the Administration to seek the proposed immediate, deep cuts in the U.S. and Russian arsenals within a specified framework that binds both nations to engage the international community in establishing a timetable for global, verifiable elimination of all nations' nuclear weapons."

President Obama's speech echoed positions consistently taken by the Vatican. In October 2008, Archbishop Dominique Mamberti, Holy See Secretary for Relations with States, told the General Conference of the International Atomic Energy Agency that "global security must not rely on nuclear weapons. The Holy See considers the Comprehensive Nuclear Test Ban Treaty an important tool to achieve this aim."

Last month, in a major address at the University of Great Falls, Montana, Bishop Gabino Zavala, President of Pax Christi USA called for many of the steps outlined today by President Obama: "So I stand here today with great hope that a very new moment for dramatic and fundamental changes in U.S. nuclear weapons policies is within our reach.

In addition to the Comprehensive Test Ban Treaty, long-sought goals of taking deployed nuclear weapons off hair-trigger alert status, negotiating a fissile materials cut-off treaty, and amending the Moscow Treaty to make its proposed cuts in U.S. and Russian nuclear arsenals real and irreversible are all within reach of the new Administration and Senate. Each of these important and achievable steps will build the momentum needed to move further toward an international treaty to outlaw nuclear weapons once and for all."

Pax Christi USA's national campaign, "A New Moment for Nuclear Disarmament," works to engage Catholics and all people of faith and conscience to educate, engage and mobilize their communities to support fundamental changes in U.S. nuclear weapons policies and the establishment of a global verifiable treaty to

outlaw all nuclear weapons.

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