NATIONAL CATHOLIC REPORTER
Published on *National Catholic Reporter* (http://ncronline.org)

Vatican: Disarm nukes, question all military force

Joshua J. McElwee | Sep. 18, 2013 NCR Today

A Vatican official on Monday renewed the Catholic church's decades-long call for global disarmament of nuclear weapons, telling a yearly assembly of world leaders they must reject "the temptation to face new situations with old systems."

Archbishop Dominique Mamberti, who holds a post that effectively makes him the Vatican's foreign minister, told the conference of the International Atomic Energy Agency that the Vatican "shares the thoughts and sentiments of most men and women of good will who aspire to a total elimination of nuclear weapons."

Speaking in Vienna to 159 delegates to the IAEA from nations around the world, Mamberti also exhorted nations to look skeptically at the use of any sort of military force, not just nuclear weapons.

"At the difficult crossroads at which humanity finds itself -- a crossroads characterized by an increasingly strict interdependence on the economic, political, social and environmental level -- one should ask: does the use of force represent a sustainable solution in time?" Mamberti asked.

"It seems, in fact, only to increase mutual distrust and to refer to a distorted sense of priorities that commits significant resources in a short-sighted way," he continued. "The temptation to face new situations with old systems must be rejected.

"We must redefine the priorities and hierarchies of values by which to mobilize resources towards objectives of moral, cultural and economic development, since development, solidarity and justice are nothing other than the real name for peace, for a lasting peace in time and space."

Mamberti, a native Moroccan, is the Vatican's Secretary for Relations with States, which places him in charge of the Holy See's relations with foreign countries. Pope Benedict XVI appointed him to the post in 2006, following his work at Vatican embassies around the world and at the Holy See's office at the U.N. in New York.

The IAEA, which reports to the U.N. General Assembly and Security Council, is an independent agency established in the 1950s to promote so-called peaceful uses of nuclear power.

While the archbishop's call for nuclear disarmament echoes many made by similar Vatican diplomats over the years, it may be seen as striking in its directness and questioning of all uses of military force.

Quoting from both the current pope, Francis, and Pope John XXIII, Mamberti said frankly that "global security must not rely on nuclear weapons." Citing at length from John XXIII's 1963 encyclical letter *Pacem in Terris*, he said "nuclear weapons must be banned."

"Even though written 50 years ago, these words seem to reflect the beginning of the 21st century," Mamberti said. "We should ask ourselves whether we really live in a more secure and safer world today compared with that of a few decades ago."

Mamberti also said the world needs to "reinvigorate" dismantling of nuclear weapons and that such dismantlement is "essential ... from a humanitarian point of view."

The archbishop also said the Holy See has "deep concern about the recent tragic developments in the Middle East" and calls for a "Middle East zone free of nuclear weapons and all other weapons of mass destruction."

Commenting on worries that Iran is developing a nuclear weapons program, the archbishop said the Vatican is "firmly convinced" that the situation "can and must be overcome through diplomatic channels, making use of all the means that diplomacy has at its disposal, and considers it necessary to overcome the various obstacles which objectively impede mutual trust."

Mamberti's comments were made available by the Vatican's semiofficial newspaper, *L'Osservatore Romano*,? and were published online in English at news.va [1]. The full remarks can be read here [2].

[Joshua J. McElwee is *NCR* national correspondent. His email address is jmcelwee@ncronline.org [3]. Follow him on Twitter: @joshjmac [4]]

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