**Initiatives and Campaigns – Parliamentarians, Religious Leaders and Civil Society**

Pax Christi, a global Catholic peace movement with 120 member organizations on 5 continents, was founded at the end of the Second World War to support efforts at reconciliation between the French and the Germans after decades of bitter fighting. As people around the world struggled to rebuild their lives and relationships, a monstrous legacy of that war – nuclear weapons - became increasingly visible and Pax Christi with many others began the long struggle to eliminate them.

For most of these 70 years, any discussion about the humanitarian consequences of the use of nuclear weapons was subordinated to the debate about national security and deterrence. Yet it is precisely there – before the disastrous human and ecological effects of nuclear weapons production and potential use, whether by intent or accident, that Pax Christi and most faith communities engage.

Let me say a few words this afternoon from the Catholic perspective – although all of the work that we do is with people of many faith traditions and with all people of good will committed to abolishing nuclear weapons.

First, who are we? From which perspective do we approach this challenge?

* We are part of a local Church - from Hiroshima and (especially) Nagasaki and the Marshall Islands; from communities where uranium miners and downwinders live; from impoverished communities, who, as Pope Francis said, “Pay the price” when resources are squandered on nuclear weapons. (Dec 7, 2014)
* We are part of a Church with a long track record of working for nuclear disarmament. In December 2014, the Holy See’s statement to the Vienna Conference revoked moral justification for nuclear deterrence and therefore for the design, development or possession of nuclear weapons. At the United Nations last year, Pope Francis said, “An ethics and a law based on the threat of mutual destruction – and possibly the destruction of all mankind – are self-contradictory and an affront to the entire framework of the United Nations, which would end up as “nations united by fear and distrust”. There is urgent need to work for a world free of nuclear weapons, in full application of the Non-Proliferation Treaty, in letter and spirit, with the goal of a complete prohibition of these weapons.”
* We are part of a global Church that brings to the effort for nuclear disarmament some important resources:
* A values based way of life that is rooted in respect for the dignity of every person and the integrity of the natural world; the values we cherish are well articulated and very useful in the political arena/the public square
* Broad, even global, networks of members or followers. In the Catholic tradition this network includes parish and diocesan structures that span many of the nuclear weapons states, hundreds of religious communities most of which work internationally, and international Catholic movements and organizations like Pax Christi International
* Educational institutions and resources – colleges and universities, high schools, grade schools, seminaries – as well as networks of these institutions (Jesuit universities, Franciscan universities, Catholic universities etc.) – and formal or informal educational opportunities in local congregations
* Communities of prayer and study – every week around the world we, like other people of faith, gather for a time of prayer that includes a message, a sermon, a homily about living our faith in the world today
* Communication – we have capacity for publishing, broadcasting and social media
* Access to every sector of our societies – from national political decision-makers to media personalities to scholars to business leaders to opinion-makers to local leaders.

The recently reframed discussion around nuclear weapons, the humanitarian initiative, is a real sign of hope that citizens of the world – all of us who will be irrevocably harmed in any nuclear weapons exchange – are taking back the nuclear disarmament initiative. This, exemplified in last week’s recommendation from the Open Ended Working Group to begin in 2017 negotiations toward a nuclear ban treaty, is a tremendous sign of hope. And it is an effort that we, as a Catholic peace movement fully support.

The humanitarian impact debate forces states to do some soul-searching about the role for nuclear weapons in their national security strategies, whether or not they now possess nuclear weapons. That, I think points directly to the questions that we as faith communities are asking: *What kind of people are we of the 21st century? What values shape our political priorities; how do we represent them on the global stage; and what do they say about our concern for future generations?*

Nuclear weapons are in essence inhumane and unethical. Only an ethic rooted in solidarity and peaceful coexistence is a worthy project for the future of humanity. Pax Christi International fully supports the position of the Holy See stated so clearly at the Humanitarian Consequences conference in Vienna in December 2014:

*“World leaders must be reminded that the commitment to disarm embedded in the NPT and other international documents is more than a legal-political detail, it is a moral commitment on which the future of the world depends…Responsibility for the abolition of nuclear weapons is an essential component of the global common good.”*  (Pope Francis, 7 December 2014)

As an international Catholic peace movement we will continue to highlight the ethical imperative for a nuclear-weapons-free world. We recall the noble principles of the Charter of the United Nations, which enjoin the international community, individually and collectively, to spare no effort in promoting a world where all peoples may enjoy freedom from want, freedom from fear, and the freedom to live in dignity. Yes, a nuclear-weapons-free world is a global public good of the highest order serving both national and international security interests.

To that end, in coalition with ICAN and many other international, regional and national organizations, Pax Christi International will (1) support the process recommended by the Open Ended Working Group; (2) work for a WMDFZ in the Middle East; (3) oppose modernization of nuclear arsenals; (4) promote Don’t Bank on the Bomb.

1. We will support the recommendation of the Open Ended Working Group to the UN General Assembly to convene “a conference in 2017 open to all states, international organizations, and civil society, to negotiate a legally binding instrument to prohibit nuclear weapons leading towards their total elimination.” We will engage in that process to the greatest extent possible.  Our representative at the OEWG noted that the results of the OEWG process - the clear action, the broad support and the definite timeline – represent “a milestone in the humanitarian approach to nuclear disarmament.”

Thanks to our geographic spread, the ecumenical advocacy in which Pax Christi actively participates, will engage states on all sides of the issue: states for a ban, states against a ban, and states in the middle. Our goals are to:

* Help bring governments which rely on nuclear weapons to accept consensus and not vote “No”, or to move from “No” to “Abstain”, or move from “Abstain” to “Yes”.
* Encourage more of the nuclear-free states to join the debate and demonstrate the majority support, which is the ban’s best asset.

1. We will work for the creation of a weapons of mass destruction-free zone (WMDFZ) in the Middle East, including the 21 state-members of the Arab League plus Iran and Israel. We believe that Turkey should also be included in a WMDFZ in the Middle East. This would require the withdrawal of NATO’s tactical nuclear weapons from Turkish territory – a move we fully support. In fact, member organisations of Pax Christi International in Belgium, the Netherlands, Germany and Italy have campaigned for decades to get US nuclear weapons out of Europe.
2. We will oppose modernization of nuclear arsenals, especially in Europe and the United States. We fully agree with Pope Francis that *“the production, maintenance and deployment of nuclear weapons continue to siphon off resources that otherwise might have been made available for the amelioration of poverty and socio-economic development for the poor. The prolongation of the nuclear establishment continues to perpetuate patterns of impoverishment both domestically and internationally.” (Time for Abolition, December 2014)*
3. And we will promote the growing international campaign, *Don’t Bank on the Bomb*, which was initiated by our Dutch member organization, PAX, to engage the public in an effective nonviolent campaign to undercut bank participation in the production or refurbishing of nuclear weapons.

Between July 8th (20th anniversary of the World Court case against nuclear weapons) and October 2nd (International Day for Nonviolence, Gandhi’s birthday), as part of Chain Reaction 2016, Pax Christi International and its member organisations are sponsoring a series of nonviolent actions at nuclear-weapons and nuclear-disarmament related sites and political offices around the world to demonstrate that people want peace and nuclear abolition.

The example of Kazakhstan, that dismantled and destroyed Soviet weapons systems and facilities left on its territory following the break up of the Soviet Union and that, in its first decade of independence, signed major international nonproliferation treaties, gives hope to the world that the abolition of nuclear weapons is possible.

Again, to quote Pope Francis: “*to achieve nuclear abolition, we need to resist succumbing to the limits set by political realism… The fear that drives the reluctance to disarm must be replaced by a spirit of solidarity that binds humanity to achieve the global common good of which peace is the fullest expression.” (Time for Abolition December 2014)*

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