



Committee on International Justice and Peace

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October 30, 2014

Dr. Ernest Moniz
Secretary of Energy
1000 Independence Ave., SW
Washington, DC 20585

Dear Secretary Moniz:

As Chair of the Committee on International Justice and Peace of the United States Conference of Catholic Bishops, I write to express concern over the expanding U.S. budget for nuclear weapons. In a December 2013 Report, the Congressional Budget Office estimated that \$355 billion will be spent on nuclear forces over the next decade. Much of this increase in nuclear spending is attributable to efforts to modernize nuclear forces.

In 1963, the Catholic Church embraced the goal of a mutual, verifiable global ban on nuclear weapons. Pope Francis reiterated this goal earlier this year: “I make my own the appeal of my predecessors for the non-proliferation of arms and for disarmament of all parties, beginning with nuclear and chemical weapon disarmament.” We believe this critical goal can be achieved by responsibly replacing nuclear deterrence with concrete measures of disarmament based on dialogue and multilateral negotiations. Such a shift will create a world that is truly free from the nuclear threat.

The current U.S. plan to maintain and upgrade its nuclear arsenal undermines the quest for nuclear disarmament. As the Holy See said to the United Nations earlier this year: “[Nuclear deterrence] is used to justify the modernization of existing stockpiles of nuclear weapons, thus obstructing genuine nuclear disarmament.” The seeming indefinite reliance of the United States on a policy of nuclear deterrence, especially one that includes significant new investments in nuclear weapons, undermines President Obama’s stated goal of a world free of nuclear weapons.

Excessive spending on nuclear weapons also undermines long-term initiatives to promote human security. The projected expenditure of \$35.5 billion per year for nuclear weapons contrasts with the President’s proposed 2015 budget of about \$20 billion for poverty-focused international assistance, as identified by our Conference and Catholic Relief Services.

As the Second Vatican Council declared half a century ago: “While extravagant sums are being spent for the furnishing of ever new weapons, an adequate remedy cannot be provided for the multiple miseries afflicting the whole modern world.... The arms race is an utterly treacherous trap for humanity, and one which ensnares the poor to an intolerable degree.” “Rather than being eliminated thereby, the causes of war are in danger of being gradually aggravated.”

Allocating money to modernize nuclear forces does not help achieve the goal of a world without nuclear weapons, nor to address the underlying causes of war. I encourage you to pursue other options, including non-proliferation efforts and diplomacy, to promote U.S. and global security.

Sincerely yours,

Most Reverent Richard E. Pates, Bishop of Des Moines
Chairman, Committee on International Justice and Peace
United States Conference of Catholic Bishops

cc: Secretary Chuck Hagel, Dept. of Defense; Ambassador Susan E. Rice, National Security Advisor