



Office of the President

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Cardinal Francis George, OMI
Archbishop of Chicago
President

April 8, 2010

President Barack Obama
The White House
1600 Pennsylvania Avenue NW
Washington, DC 20500

Dear Mr. President:

The United States Conference of Catholic Bishops (USCCB) welcomes the signing of the new Strategic Arms Reduction Treaty (START) between the United States and the Russian Federation. We will urge members of the U.S. Senate to come together across party lines to ratify the new START Treaty.

For decades the Holy See and the USCCB have worked for a world without nuclear weapons. Our 1983 pastoral letter, *The Challenge of Peace*, made a “definitive and decisive” moral judgment to say “no” to nuclear war. In 1993 in *The Harvest of Justice is Sown in Peace*, we argued: “The eventual elimination of nuclear weapons is more than a moral ideal; it should be a policy goal.”

We acknowledge that the path to a world free of nuclear weapons will be long and difficult. It will involve many steps:

- verifiably reducing nuclear arsenals as the new START Treaty continues to do;
- ratifying and bringing into force the Comprehensive Test Ban Treaty;
- reducing our nation’s reliance on nuclear weapons for security as the new Nuclear Posture Review begins to do;
- securing nuclear materials from terrorists which will be discussed at next week’s Nuclear Security Summit;
- adopting a Fissile Material Cut-Off Treaty to prohibit production of weapons-grade material;
- strengthening the International Atomic Energy Agency to monitor nonproliferation efforts and ensure access to peaceful uses of nuclear power; and
- other actions that take humanity in the direction of a nuclear-weapons-free world.

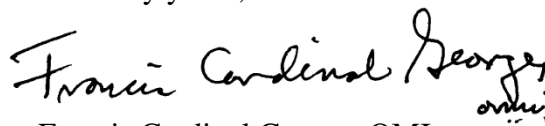
We are pastors and teachers, not technical experts. We cannot map out the precise route to the goal of eliminating nuclear weapons, but we can offer moral direction and encouragement. The horribly destructive capacity of nuclear arms makes them disproportionate and indiscriminate weapons that endanger human life and dignity like no other armaments. Their use as a weapon of war is rejected in Church teaching based on just war norms. Although we cannot anticipate every step on the path humanity must walk, we can point with moral clarity to a destination that moves beyond deterrence to a world free of the nuclear threat.

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We share the vision of our Holy Father, Pope Benedict XVI. In his January address to diplomats the Pope said, "...I firmly hope that, during the Nuclear Non-Proliferation Treaty Review Conference to be held this May in New York, concrete decisions will be made towards progressive disarmament, with a view to freeing our planet from nuclear arms."

Based on a moral imperative to rid the world of nuclear weapons, the Conference of Bishops will be a steadfast supporter of strong and bipartisan action on the new START Treaty as an important and essential step toward a nuclear-weapons-free future.

Sincerely yours,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Francis Cardinal George" with a small flourish at the end.

Francis Cardinal George, OMI
Archbishop of Chicago
President