



## *Committee on International Justice and Peace*

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February 14, 2017

The Honorable Rex Tillerson  
Secretary of State  
2201 C Street  
Washington, D.C. 20520

Dear Secretary Tillerson:

As Chairman of the Committee on International Justice and Peace, I write on an urgent issue for the safety and security of our nation and the world, nuclear disarmament.

Most Americans assume that the nuclear threat receded with the end of the Cold War. Unfortunately, nothing could be further from the truth. In a multi-polar world rife with risks of nuclear proliferation and even nuclear terrorism, it is imperative that we move systematically and relentlessly toward nuclear disarmament and the securing of nuclear materials.

The United States and other nuclear-weapons-possessing states bear a particular responsibility for nuclear disarmament. Since the United States and Russia possess some ninety percent of the world's nuclear warheads, it is particularly important that they continue to build on the New START Treaty and its robust verification measures in further reducing the numbers of weapons.

Since 1963, the Catholic Church at its highest levels has sought a worldwide ban on nuclear weapons, a goal shared by President Ronald Reagan who famously said, "We seek the elimination one day of nuclear weapons from the face of the Earth."

We urge bold and concrete commitments to accelerate verifiable nuclear disarmament, including: taking weapons off "launch on warning" status to prevent a catastrophic accident; deeper cuts in nuclear arsenals; ratification of the Comprehensive Test Ban Treaty to bring it into force; serious negotiations on a fissile material cut-off treaty and other prudent measures. We also oppose the investment of hundreds of billions of dollars in modernizing nuclear weapons systems that ultimately we must work to dismantle, especially since scientists question the necessity of this initiative.

Pope Francis in his remarks at the United Nations on September 25, 2015, reaffirmed the "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."

Please be assured of our prayers as you work for a world without nuclear weapons.

Sincerely yours,

Most Reverend Oscar Cantú  
Bishop of Las Cruces  
Chairman, International Justice and Peace  
United States Conference of Catholic Bishops