



NEWS

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CATHOLIC BISHOPS, EVANGELICALS CALL FOR RATIFICATION OF NEW START TREATY

WASHINGTON—Representatives of the United States Conference of Catholic Bishops (USCCB) and the National Association of Evangelicals (NAE) called for the ratification of the New START Treaty in a December 7 media conference call.

Both Bishop Howard J. Hubbard of Albany, chairman of the USCCB Committee on International Justice and Peace, and Leith Anderson, president of NAE, applied the moral teachings of their faith traditions to concerns related to the treaty, which was signed by President Obama and Russian President Dmitry Medvedev on April 8.

“Nuclear war is rejected in Church teaching because nuclear weapons cannot insure noncombatant immunity and their awesome destructive power and lingering radiation cannot be meaningfully proportionate,” said Bishop Hubbard. He cited the teachings of the Second Vatican Council and Pope Benedict XVI’s 2006 World Day of Peace message, in which the pope said, “In a nuclear war there would be no victors, only victims.”

Anderson said, “In the long and tragic history of human warfare the nuclear weapon occupies a singular position due to the scope and scale of its terrible and indiscriminate power to destroy human life. Evangelicals strongly believe in the sanctity of life.”

Anderson cited the history of NAE in speaking out on the dangers of nuclear weapons and supporting nuclear arms reduction. He cited the broad military support for the New START Treaty and urged bipartisan cooperation for its ratification.

“Ratification of the New START Treaty will give the U.S. new rights to inspect Russian nuclear weapons facilities, reducing our military’s need for costly ‘worst case’ contingency planning—a concern

which grows with each passing month that the treaty is not ratified,” Anderson said. “The treaty will reduce by 30 percent the number of Russian nuclear warheads which threaten our nation, while honoring our commitments under the Nuclear Non-proliferation Treaty.”

Bishop Hubbard noted, “Timely ratification of the New START Treaty is critical because verification ensures transparency and transparency builds trust. Trust is essential for reducing the threats of misunderstandings and accidents that could be catastrophic for human life if they led to a nuclear exchange. The earlier START Treaty verification and monitoring requirements expired one year ago. Without a new treaty there are no inspections or verification regimens in place, a disturbing and potentially dangerous situation our nation has not faced in decades.”

Bishop Hubbard cited the support of the former president of the USCCB, Cardinal Francis George of Chicago, as well as the bishops’ new president, Archbishop Timothy Dolan of New York, for ratification of the treaty. He also said the treaty has global importance.

“Strong and timely ratification of the new treaty will communicate our nation’s moral commitment to continue down a road that reduces the nuclear threat,” Bishop Hubbard said. “It will encourage other nations to adhere to their responsibilities under the Nuclear Non-Proliferation Treaty. The new treaty will make our nation and world safer by reducing nuclear weapons in a verifiable way. For the safety of our nation and world, we urge the Senate to take up the New START Treaty without delay.”

Keywords: United States Conference of Catholic Bishops, USCCB, Bishop Howard Hubbard, Leith Anderson, National Association of Evangelicals, NAE

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Press Conference Remarks on New START Treaty

by Most Reverend Howard J. Hubbard, Chairman

Committee on International Justice and Peace, United States Conference of Catholic Bishops
December 7, 2010

I am grateful to the Two Futures Project for hosting this call. On behalf of the United States Conference of Catholic Bishops, it is my pleasure to participate in this press conference with the National Association of Evangelicals on an issue of great consequence for the peace and security of our nation and world. It is significant that we unite across the boundaries of our faith communities to embrace a transcendent concern for human life. Nuclear weapons represent a grave threat to the human family.

Let me start by exploring three questions:

1. Why does the Catholic Church address nuclear non-proliferation and disarmament?
2. Why do the United States Conference of Catholic Bishops and the Holy See support ratification of the New START Treaty? and
3. Why is it important for the Senate to ratify the Treaty without delay?

First, why does the Catholic Church address nuclear non-proliferation and disarmament?

The Catholic Church has a long history of applying its moral teaching to the issue of nuclear weapons. The foundation of this teaching is rooted in the belief that each person is “created in the image of God”¹ and human life and dignity must be respected. One particular expression of this teaching is found in traditional just war norms which place strict moral limits on recourse to armed force and how force can be used.

The just war principles of discrimination and proportionality are especially relevant. No act of war should fail to discriminate between combatants and innocent civilians. In addition, the use of force must be proportionate; the evils it produces must not outweigh the good to be achieved.

Nuclear war is rejected in Church teaching because nuclear weapons cannot insure noncombatant immunity and their awesome destructive power and lingering radiation cannot be meaningfully proportionate. Pope Benedict XVI has asserted, “In a nuclear war there would be no victors, only victims.”²

Forty-five years ago today, the Second Vatican Council declared, “The horror and perversity of war is immensely magnified by the addition of scientific weapons. For acts of war involving these weapons can inflict massive and indiscriminate destruction, thus going far beyond the bounds of legitimate defense.” The Council solemnly affirmed: “Any act of war aimed indiscriminately at the destruction of entire cities or extensive areas along with their population is a crime against God and man himself. It merits unequivocal and unhesitating condemnation.”³

¹ Genesis 1:26-27.

² Pope Benedict XVI, World Day of Peace Message, January 1, 2006.

³ Vatican Council II, *Gaudium et Spes*, No. 80, 1965.

Second, why do the United States Conference of Catholic Bishops and the Holy See support ratification of the New START Treaty?

Both United States Conference of Catholic Bishops and the Holy See welcomed the signing of the new Strategic Arms Reduction Treaty between the United States and the Russian Federation because it is a modest step toward a world with greater respect for human life. The New START Treaty reduces deployed strategic warheads, limits the number of delivery vehicles, and institutes new verification requirements.

Consistent with Catholic teaching, the Holy See and the U.S. bishops have long supported reducing nuclear armaments, preventing their spread to other nations, and securing nuclear materials from terrorists. For decades the Catholic Church has promoted the interrelated policy goals of nuclear disarmament and non-proliferation. Our Conference understands this is an ideal that will take years to reach, but it is a task which our nation must take up with renewed moral energy. As the world's leading nuclear powers, the United States and the Russian Federation have the moral responsibility to lead by example.

The New START Treaty is important for international efforts to address nonproliferation. The “grand bargain” of the Nuclear Non-Proliferation Treaty was that states with nuclear weapons would work on disarmament, states without nuclear weapons would not acquire them, and all states would have access to peaceful uses of nuclear energy. As a sign of the Catholic Church's support for nuclear non-proliferation and disarmament, the Holy See acceded to the Nuclear Non-Proliferation Treaty.

Ratification of the New START Treaty by the United States and the Russian Federation will demonstrate that the two preeminent nuclear powers are serious about their nuclear disarmament obligations. This commitment will encourage adherence to the Nuclear Non-Proliferation Treaty by other nations. It will also enhance international cooperation which is essential for securing nuclear weapons and materials, and deterring other countries from developing their own arsenals. With fewer nuclear weapons in the world, the likelihood of one falling into terrorist hands is significantly reduced.

As bishops, we are pastors and teachers, not technical experts, but our International Committee has benefited from the wise counsel of lay experts. We are encouraged that military personnel and former national leaders have come together across party lines to support the New START Treaty. Leaders from both parties, diplomats, and military experts support ratification. Although we are not technical experts, we can offer moral direction and encouragement. The safety of our nation and world demands that we move toward nuclear disarmament and non-proliferation; the New START Treaty advances down that road.

Third, why is it important for the Senate to ratify the Treaty without delay?

Timely ratification of the New START Treaty is critical because verification ensures transparency and transparency builds trust. Trust is essential for reducing the threats of misunderstandings and accidents that could be catastrophic for human life if they led to a nuclear exchange. The earlier START Treaty verification and monitoring requirements expired one year

ago. Without a new treaty there are no inspections or verification regimens in place, a disturbing and potentially dangerous situation our nation has not faced in decades.

Archbishop Timothy Dolan, the President of our Conference, recently said, “I renew and reemphasize the position taken by my predecessor, Cardinal Francis George, that the United States Conference of Catholic Bishops is ‘a steadfast supporter of strong and bipartisan action on the new START Treaty.’”

The Senate must be equally steadfast in its support of the New START Treaty. Their action will send a clear moral message to other nations. Strong and timely ratification of the new Treaty will communicate our nation’s moral commitment to continue down a road that reduces the nuclear threat. It will encourage other nations to adhere to their responsibilities under the Nuclear Non-Proliferation Treaty. The new Treaty will make our nation and world safer by reducing nuclear weapons in a verifiable way. For the safety of our nation and world, we urge the Senate to take up the New START Treaty without delay.