



**STATEMENT BY THE DELEGATION OF THE HOLY SEE
AT THE IAEA MINISTERIAL CONFERENCE
ON NUCLEAR SECURITY
21 JUNE 2011**

Mister Chairman, Excellencies, Ladies and Gentlemen,

1. I have the honour to deliver this Statement in the name of His Excellency Archbishop Dominique Mamberti, Secretary for the Holy See's Relations with States.

At the outset, allow me to express my gratitude to the Authorities of the International Atomic Energy Agency for their organization of what is developing into a most fascinating and most timely Conference.

2. From the eleventh of March of this year, Japan is facing, in the words of the Prime Minister Naoto Kan, "the biggest tragedy since the Second World War." A few days later, in his weekly Sunday meeting with the faithful gathered in St. Peter's Square, Pope Benedict XVI said: "The images of the tragic earthquake and the consequent tsunami in Japan have left us all deeply shocked. I would like to renew my spiritual closeness to the beloved peoples of that country who are facing the consequences of such a disaster with dignity and courage. I pray for the victims and their relatives, and for all who are suffering because of these appalling events. I encourage everyone who is working with praiseworthy promptness to bring them aid.... May the bereaved and injured be comforted and may the rescue workers be strengthened in their efforts to assist the courageous Japanese people." Allow me to assure the noble Japanese people of these continued sentiments of prayerful solidarity of the Catholic Church.

3. The participants in this Conference might be interested in knowing that the Holy See is a Founding Member of the International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA). The constantly increasing world-wide demand for energy requires a serious reflection on the role of nuclear energy, as well as on the importance of nuclear safety. The reflections that follow are offered as the Holy See's contribution, based on its specific nature, to the discussions on nuclear safety in the 21st Century.

The nuclear crisis in Fukushima is a global problem. It reveals that the world is exposed to real and systemic risks, and not just hypothetical ones, with incalculable costs and the necessity of developing an international political coordination the likes of which have never been seen. In this context, the relevant authorities in the Fukushima nuclear crisis are called maximum transparency and to proceed in strict cooperation with the IAEA.

At the same time, the nuclear crisis in Fukushima raises many basic questions which need to be addressed. Is it legitimate to construct or to maintain operational nuclear reactors on territories that are exposed to serious seismic risks? Does nuclear fission technology, or the construction of new atomic power plants, or the continued operation of existing ones exclude human error in its phases of design, normal and emergency operation?

To all these questions, there must be added those concerning political will, technical capacity and necessary finances in order to proceed to the dismantling of many old nuclear reactors. What will become of the radioactive material? What and who will be sacrificed? Is the problem of what to do with radioactive waste simply being dumped on future generations? Furthermore, a zero nuclear risk on the world level is impossible, considering that there are still nuclear arms and active nuclear power plants that need to be managed.

4. There have been recent calls to develop new standards of safety and security, as well as for an international monitoring of all existing nuclear plants. For the Holy See, this seems to be the crucial political problem. Are States willing to adopt new safety and security standards? If so, who will monitor them? However, one fact remains: without transparency, safety and security cannot be pursued with absolute diligence.

It is true that energy security and nuclear security require the adoption of appropriate technical and legal measures. Nevertheless, these alone can never be the only response to that which is, above all, a matter pertaining to human nature. Threats to security come from attitudes and actions hostile to human nature. It is, therefore, on the human level that one must act – on the cultural and ethical level. If, in the short term, technical and legal measures are necessary for the protection of nuclear material and sites, as well as for the prevention of acts of nuclear terrorism, whose possible devastating effects are truly difficult to imagine, then, in the long-term, prevention measures are also called for, measures that penetrate to the deepest cultural and social roots. What is absolutely necessary are programs of formation for the diffusion of a “culture of safety and security” both in the nuclear sector and in the public conscience in general. A special role must be reserved for codes of conduct for human

resources which, in the nuclear sector, must always be conscious of the possible effects of their activity. Security depends upon the State, but above all on the sense of responsibility of each person.

Mister Chairman,

5. I am well aware that I have posed many questions, but have offered few answers. But these questions must be faced in any discussion on nuclear energy and safety, for they are questions which touch upon the urgent need for human beings to protect the environment from pollution, from the loss of biodiversity, and from the effects of climate change linked to greenhouse emissions. And let's not forget the long-term effects of all this on food security.

As a result of the nuclear crisis in Fukushima, one point emerges with ever greater clarity. A shared and co-responsible management of nuclear research and safety and security, of energy and water supplies and of the environmental protection of the planet call for one or more international authorities with true and effective powers.

The nuclear sector can represent a great opportunity for the future. This explains the "nuclear renaissance" at the world level. This renaissance seems to offer horizons of development and prosperity. At the same time, it could be reduced to an illusion without a "cultural and moral renaissance." Unfortunately, simple material well-being does not eliminate the risks connected to the cultural and moral poverty of men and women, as well as to conflicts linked to cultural and moral misery. For this reason, energy policies are to be viewed in the perspective of the "integral development of the human being" (*Declaration on the Right to Development* of 1986, PP 5), which includes not only material development, but, above all, the cultural and moral development of each and every person and of all peoples. All are involved in this ambitious and indispensable project, both inside and outside of the nuclear and energy sector, both in the public and private sector, and both on a governmental and non-governmental level. In this way, a common commitment to security and peace will lead not only to a just distribution of the earth's resources, but above all to the building of a "social and international order in which the rights and freedoms" of all human persons can be fully realized (*Universal Declaration of Human Rights*, Art. 28).

Allow me to conclude by stating that for the above-mentioned reasons, in the future the Delegation of the Holy See will also continue to observe the deliberations of this important Conference with great interest.

Thank you for your kind attention and thank you, Mr. Chairman.