



**Statement by H.E. Archbishop Gabriele Caccia
Apostolic Nuncio and Permanent Observer of the Holy See at the
General Debate of the First Committee of the 80th Session of the
United Nations General Assembly**

New York, 17 October 2025

Mr. Chair,

My Delegation would like to congratulate you and the members of the Bureau on your election and to assure you of its constructive engagement throughout the work of this session.

Mr. Chair,

Eighty years have now passed since the devastation of Hiroshima and Nagasaki, the end of the Second World War and the foundation of the United Nations. However, we must acknowledge that the spirit of diplomacy and multilateralism, which was so carefully forged to protect humanity from the scourge of war, is being increasingly overshadowed by the perilous resurgence of force and fear as ways to resolve disputes.

The consequences of this trend are evident: dialogue is being weakened, the economic ties that sustain cooperation and integral human development are becoming increasingly fragile, and the cries of those in need and in vulnerable situations, especially children, are coming from too many places around the world, shamefully reproaching humanity's conscience.

As Pope Leo XIV says: “How can we continue to betray the desire of the world's peoples for peace with propaganda about weapons buildup, as if military supremacy will resolve problems instead of fueling even greater hatred and desire for revenge? People are beginning to realize the amount of money that ends up in the pockets of merchants of death; money that could be used to build new hospitals and schools is instead being used to destroy those that already exist!”¹

¹ Pope Leo XIV, Address to Participants in the Plenary Session of the “Reunion of Aid Agencies for the Oriental Churches” (ROACO), 26 June 2025.

There is an urgent need to recommit to disarmament, to overcome divisions, and to make full use of every established forum for this purpose, beginning with the First Committee itself, in order to renew an authentic and constructive dialogue.

Mr. Chair,

My Delegation expresses its profound concern at the renewed rhetoric that raises the specter of the threatening power of nuclear weapons, as well as at the redoubled efforts to expand arsenals. Even more troubling is the emergence of a new arms race marked by the integration of artificial intelligence into military systems with enormous destructive potential and the extension of competition into domains such as outer space and missile defense. These developments pose an unprecedented danger to humanity.

It is imperative to move beyond the illusory logic of nuclear deterrence and embrace the path of dialogue and comprehensive disarmament instead. Moral responsibility demands a firm rejection of the proliferation and accumulation of nuclear weapons, the catastrophic humanitarian consequences of their use would have no geographical or generational boundaries.

In this regard, the Holy See calls on all nuclear-armed States to fulfill their obligations under Article VI of the Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons (NPT) by engaging in good faith negotiations, particularly in view of the forthcoming Review Conference. The Holy See commends the verification work undertaken by the International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA) and the Comprehensive Nuclear-Test-Ban Treaty Organization (CTBTO). At the same time, the Holy See strongly encourages States to ratify the NPT, the CTBT, as well as the Treaty on the Prohibition of Nuclear Weapons (TPNW), which offer a tangible and optimistic path towards liberating humanity from the threat of nuclear weapons, while promoting peace for future generations.

Mr. Chair,

While the threat posed by weapons of mass destruction remains a cause of profound alarm, the challenges arising from the widespread use and proliferation of conventional weapons are equally grave. Tragically, countless innocent people continue to endure the devastating consequences

of explosive weapons, which are increasingly being used indiscriminately in populated areas, as well as the ongoing menace of landmines, which continue to maim and kill long after conflicts have ended.

Equally troubling is the illicit proliferation and misuse of small arms and light weapons, which has become one of the most pressing security concerns worldwide. These weapons are produced, sold, and trafficked through illicit channels, fueling instability across regions and exacting a heavy toll. Tens of thousands of lives are lost each year, with fragile communities bearing the brunt of violence. Criminals, terrorists, and armed groups prey on the weakest members of society, particularly women, children, and the elderly.

Furthermore, the application of artificial intelligence to conventional arms, particularly through the development of lethal autonomous weapons systems, poses such a grave challenge that it must awaken the ethical awareness of the entire international community. These weapons, which operate without meaningful human control, transgress every legal, security, humanitarian and, above all, ethical boundary. For this reason, the Holy See strongly urges all Member States to support the Secretary-General's call to conclude a legally binding instrument prohibiting such weapons by 2026, in order to prevent their development and use before they cast an even darker shadow on the future.

Mr. Chair,

While progress towards achieving the Sustainable Development Goals is faltering, it is unacceptable that military expenditure reached 2.7 trillion dollars in 2024. However, there is still time to change this course. What is needed is a fundamental change in perspective: moving away from reliance on arms and building peace through dialogue, based on a human-centered approach that is firmly grounded in dignity and the full respect of human rights, and committed to integral human development.

Thank you, Mr. Chair.