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**Dioceses' Statement in Support of the Second Meeting of State Parties
To the Treaty on the Prohibition of Nuclear Weapons**

**Delivery by John C. Wester, Archbishop of Santa Fe, at the United Nations
December 1, 2023**

My greetings to the State Parties to the Treaty on the Prohibition of Nuclear Weapons. I come here representing the Catholic Archdioceses of Nagasaki, Seattle and Santa Fe and the Diocese of Hiroshima. We are so grateful for your perseverance and dedication. We draw inspiration from you and our colleagues at the International Campaign to Abolish Nuclear Weapons.

I begin by noting that pursuant to Action 38 of the Vienna Action Plan, on complementarity, States Parties have resolved to “continue to work together on outreach projects in order to raise awareness, not only among Governments, but also with civil society, academia, parliamentarians and the general public, including youth organizations. In large part, this is meant to highlight the complementarity between the Treaty on the Prohibition of Nuclear Weapons and the existing disarmament and non-proliferation regime, including nuclear-weapon-free zone treaties. We Catholic leaders believe that States, while meeting their obligations on complementarity, would find it productive to work more closely with institutions of all faiths in order to fulfill their obligations under all related treaty architecture. This very much includes the NonProliferation Treaty as well.

With respect to our own institutions of faith, in Nagasaki, Japan, on the 78th anniversary of its atomic bombing, we Catholic leaders formally created an enduring partnership to work on nuclear disarmament. Together, our four dioceses include the birthplace of nuclear weapons (the Archdiocese of Santa Fe), the most deployed nuclear weapons in the United States (the Archdiocese of Seattle), and the only two cities that to date have suffered horrendous atomic attacks (the Diocese of Hiroshima and the Archdiocese of Nagasaki). Because of these direct connections to nuclear weapons issues, we are compelled to express our strong support of the Second Meeting of the State Parties to the Treaty on the Prohibition of Nuclear Weapons.

In July 2017, the Vatican was the [first nation-state](#) to sign this Treaty, which bans nuclear weapons just like other long-accepted treaties have banned other weapons of mass destruction, including chemical and biological weapons. The Treaty on the Prohibition of Nuclear Weapons has now been signed by 93 countries and ratified by 69.

We note and observe the nuclear weapons powers have never honored their long-held obligations under the 1970 Non-Proliferation Treaty to enter into serious negotiations regarding global nuclear disarmament. In May 2023, we called upon the Group of Seven leaders meeting in Hiroshima to honor these promises and persuade others to do so. However, our message of hope fell upon deaf ears, and we received no response.

In contrast, the [entry into force](#) of the ban treaty in January 2021 was a great step toward the light of peace and brought hope to those who seek a world free from the threat of nuclear weapons. The nuclear-armed states have a moral obligation to hear the voices of the majority of the world and to listen to those who are threatened by annihilation at the whim of any one of the nine leaders of the nuclear weapons states. Russia's nuclear saber rattling over Ukraine has made this very clear, while the ongoing crisis in the Middle East has further escalated the risks. Meanwhile, the nuclear weapons powers are engaged in massive "modernization" programs designed to keep nuclear weapons forever.

The international legal force of the Treaty on the Prohibition of Nuclear Weapons is limited to those states that have formally joined the Treaty. But its moral power does not recognize boundaries between nations nor lines on a map—the moral power of this Treaty is global and universal. The TPNW is another historic step on the journey toward hope, toward the light, toward a world free of nuclear weapons.

In 2019, at the Hiroshima Peace Memorial Park, Pope Francis declared, "The possessing of nuclear weapons is immoral." He also said at the hypocenter of the atomic bombing in Nagasaki, "We must never grow weary of working to support the principal international legal instruments of nuclear disarmament and non- proliferation, including the Treaty on the Prohibition of Nuclear Weapons."

It is the duty of our dioceses to support this Treaty while working toward universal, verifiable nuclear disarmament. We lend our voices in strong support of the Second Meeting of State Parties to the Treaty on the Prohibition of Nuclear Weapons.

Moreover, we specifically call upon world leaders to demonstrate measurable progress toward nuclear disarmament by the 80th anniversary of the atomic bombings. We know the serious negative consequences for humanity are ever-increasing. August 2025 will be an appropriate time to hold world leaders accountable for progress made on long-delayed, promised nuclear disarmament.

Please know of our continued prayers for peace, for healing and for action. And again, thank you so much for your perseverance and dedication to eliminating nuclear weapons, the most serious existential threat to humankind.

Most Reverend John C. Wester Archbishop of Santa Fe, USA

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