



The Holy See

**ADDRESS OF HIS HOLINESS JOHN PAUL II
TO THE PARTICIPANTS IN THE INTERNATIONAL SYMPOSIUM "CONVERSION OF NUCLEAR
WARHEADS
FOR PEACEFUL PURPOSES"**

*Hall of Popes
Monday, 15 June 1992*

Ladies and Gentlemen,¹ I am pleased to welcome the participants in the International Symposium "*Conversion of Nuclear Warheads for Peaceful Purposes*". My special thanks go to Monsignor Elio Sgreccia for his kind words spoken on your behalf. The topic which you will be discussing in these days gives a concrete and practical form to the message of hope which the Church has proclaimed down through the centuries in echoing the words of the Prophet Isaiah as he announced the messianic era: "They shall beat their swords into ploughshares, and their spears into pruning hooks" (Is. 2:4).² As we know all too well, in the last fifty years mankind has become truly capable of self-destruction. By means of the arms race there has been at work a certain "logic of power" which required constant preparation for a possible conflict of massive proportions, and which led to the building up of immense arsenals of conventional and nuclear weapons. In making an appeal to overcome this perilous situation the fathers of the Second Vatican Council, quoting the Encyclical of Pope John XXIII, "[Pacem in Terris](#)", stated the following: "Peace must be born of mutual trust between nations rather than imposed on them through fear of one another's weapons. Hence everyone must labour to put an end at last to the arms race, and to make a true beginning of disarmament, not indeed a unilateral disarmament, but one proceeding at an equal pace according to agreement, and backed up by authentic and workable safeguards" ([Gaudium et Spes](#), 82). Since the time of the Council, especially since the historic events of 1989, the world picture has altered greatly, increasing mankind's hope for a truly effective disarmament. The possibility of eliminating the threat posed by the arms race gives rise to the prospect of transforming weapons into means of producing the goods required for life and for a development worthy of the human person.³ The specific aim of your meeting is to investigate the ways in which the resources to be recovered through disarmament and through the conversion of nuclear arms can be used for the economic and social progress not only of the countries which once manufactured them, but also for the developing nations. Transferring to these countries the

enormous resources derived from such conversion constitutes a new effort at collaboration and solidarity between peoples and nations (Cf. John Paul II, *Centesimus Annus*, 29). By using your scientific knowledge and skills to help *reclaim for the cause of peace* resources which were once devoted to the means of war, you truly contribute to the good of mankind. Today more than ever science should dedicate its efforts to the authentic progress of man and must work to diminish the threats which arise from the harmful use of its discoveries. Science is an essential element of human development, because that which the scientist discovers in his search to understand the universe is part of the fuller truth about creation and the place of the human person in it. Hence, the need for the scientific community to watch over the right use of the results of its research in the service of humanity.⁴ I express to you my esteem for the worthy goals of your Symposium, and I offer my prayerful best wishes that your study and cooperation will help to foster peace and improve the conditions of life for millions of our brothers and sisters in need. May the Spirit who guided the Prophet Isaiah direct you, and may the Redeemer of Mankind crown your work with success. God bless you all.

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