

Outlawing Nuclear Weapons as the Start of Nuclear Disarmament

A position paper of the German Commission for
Justice and Peace

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Foreword

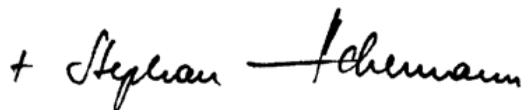
Nuclear (dis)armament marks a central component of the debates of the 20th and 21st Centuries concerning the ethics of peace. Especially in Germany, fear of the immense destructive power of nuclear weapons was always present, as the divided Germany was a potential area of deployment during the Cold War. But the questions concerning the necessity of such weapons systems, as well as their ethical and legal evaluation, are not only of concern to people in Germany, but also throughout the world.

The Catholic Church has therefore repeatedly addressed the nuclear threat. In their Pastoral Letter entitled “Gerechter Friede” (“Just peace”), dating from 2000, the German bishops for instance emphasise the position within the peace theology at that time, namely “that the strategy of nuclear deterrence was ethically tolerable only as a temporary response bound to the obligation ‘to strive with their whole strength towards finding alternatives to the threat of mass destruction’”. (Gerechter Friede 2)

The German Commission for Justice and Peace has subjected this position to a critical review, against the background of contemporary political developments and recent papal statements. It has reached the conclusion that conditional consent to the possession of nuclear weapons is no longer ethically justifiable. The commitment to a peaceful world, rather, demands comprehensive international outlawing of nuclear weapons and joint disarmament.

I am grateful to the German Commission for Justice and Peace for having taken up such an unambiguous ethical position; in particular, I would like to thank the members of the “Just Peace” working group who drafted this position paper.

I hope that the reflections which it has presented will provide a convincing impetus for the international debate, and will support the various peace efforts.

A handwritten signature in black ink, reading "Stephan Ackermann". The signature is written in a cursive style with a small cross at the beginning.

Bishop Dr. Stephan Ackermann

Chairman of the German Commission for Justice and Peace

I.

1. After the major demonstrations that took place against NATO's so-called Double-Track Decision in 1979, and the passionate debates on nuclear deterrence which were held until the end of the East-West conflict, public opinion became increasingly calmer with regard to this issue, and finally fell virtually silent. It was not until North Korea recommenced nuclear testing from 2006 onwards, President Trump's cancellation of the nuclear deal with Iran in 2018, and the announcement by Presidents Trump and Putin that the INF Treaty would be cancelled, that nuclear weapons were put back on military and political agendas. Having said that, the situation on the international stage has changed dramatically in several respects since the Cold War. Although on the one hand Russia, as the successor state to the Soviet Union, and the USA on the other, still have by far the largest number of nuclear weapons, with a share of over 90%, the number of nuclear powers has grown from six to nine states (India, Pakistan and North Korea), and this despite the Nuclear Non-Proliferation Treaty. The bipolar world is beginning to develop into a multipolar world in economic, political and military terms, despite the continuing dominance of the superpower USA. This process is however accompanied by a growing drive towards polarisation. The effort to regulate international politics through multilateral agreements is increasingly giving way to efforts to assert national interests, not by seeking to arrive at an equitable compromise, but through pressure, coercion or even force. The art of diplomacy, which ties threads of conversation and maintains a network of contacts in front of or behind the scenes, is impaired by carefully-planned, costly orchestrations of power and grandeur, interspersed with threatening gestures and grandiose promises. People insult one another, accuse one another and demonstrate firmness, seeking confrontation instead of consensus. Violations of rules and treaties are increasing, multilateral agreements are being replaced by bilateral deals, disinformation and fake news confuse the public and policy-makers. Trust forming the basis for peaceful international relations is rapidly losing its value. The world is more complex; political processes are more difficult to control; crises have become more probable and more risky. The balance of power in the world is shifting dramatically, without merging to form a new world order, because general norms and rules are either increasingly being sacrificed to national interests, or their universal validity is being contested. In this situation, it must give cause for concern if statesmen use nuclear weapons as a threat in order to achieve political goals.

2. The immediate reason for this statement is the current nuclear situation: The INF Treaty, the most successful disarmament agreement in history, has been cancelled by the Presidents of the USA and Russia; the NEW START Treaty could also meet a similar fate if it is not renewed in 2021, and even the indefinitely-valid Non-Proliferation Treaty seems to be in jeopardy. The USA dropped the ABM Treaty a long time ago (2002). In October 2016, President Putin suspended by law the Plutonium Management and Disposition Agreement that he and President Clinton had concluded in 2000, and which was renewed in 2010. This means that the cornerstones of the architecture of nuclear disarmament and arms control are threatened with demolition, and the path is finally cleared for a new arms race which – under the guise of “modernisation” – has already begun anyway. According to the American Government Accountability Office, the planned measures will cost the USA alone more than a trillion dollars, meaning that roughly 30 billion dollars per year are to be spent over a period of 30 years. In addition, the development of new types of weapons systems is being driven forward in a large number of countries, also at considerable expense, and military planners are once again striving to also incorporate space into the battlefield on which tomorrow’s wars will be waged. The conflicts over the Iranian and North Korean nuclear programmes provide the most recent examples of the continuing explosive nature of the proliferation problem. The Non-Proliferation Treaty was designed to halt the proliferation of nuclear weapons, and it has certainly served its purpose as a whole. But there are the exceptions mentioned above (India, Pakistan and North Korea), and apart from that, the nuclear powers have largely ignored the commitment that they entered into in Article 6 of the Treaty, namely to engage in nuclear disarmament and to do everything in their power to abolish nuclear weapons altogether. The Non-Proliferation Treaty thus consolidates a disparity of power between the small group of nuclear powers and the much larger group of states which do not have nuclear weapons. This inequality creates a permanent incentive to acquire nuclear weapons, especially since their importance lies not only in the military sphere, but is also politically symbolic. Even the disarmament measures of the past, welcome as they are in themselves, do nothing to change the nuclear imbalance. For example, although the INF Treaty has considerably defused the situation in Europe, the nuclear deterrence system has remained in place thanks to air- and sea-based missiles. All ongoing or announced modernisation measures are avowedly aimed at maintaining nuclear deterrence and, in the event of its failure, making nuclear war feasible, limitable and winnable. The parties proclaim their intention to move on past deterrence,

but this is not reflected in concrete steps in the spheres of politics, diplomacy and armaments. NATO proclaims that nuclear deterrence will remain an integral part of its strategy as long as nuclear weapons exist. It is therefore increasingly difficult to lend credence to the assurances of the nuclear powers, and this persistent and progressive lack of credibility is tempting some states to seek to gain access to their exclusive club, cost what it may. Having said that, the majority of non-nuclear states are applying increasing pressure towards prohibiting them. The United Nations have now launched such a ban treaty (Treaty on the Prohibition of Nuclear Weapons), and the number of signatory states is increasing. The Vatican was one of the first among them, since the Holy See strongly supported this project from the beginning, whilst the nuclear powers have vehemently rejected it or simply ignored it. Although Germany has signed the Non-Proliferation Treaty, it has secured the possibility of acquiring nuclear weapons within the framework of a European nuclear force by means of an additional note. The Federal Republic of Germany, in common with the other NATO states, has not yet signed the ban treaty. Germany is firmly integrated into the system of nuclear deterrence through so-called nuclear participation, and in the event of a war, the Bundeswehr – the armed forces of Germany – would participate in the deployment of American nuclear warheads that are stationed on German soil.

II.

3. The Catholic Church, through Her doctrinal bodies, Her social ethicists as well as Her numerous institutions and organisations, has addressed the existence of nuclear weapons and the strategy of nuclear deterrence with varying intensity, but continuously. For quite some time, the various reactions were massively influenced by the two World Wars, and of course by the atomic bombs that fell on Hiroshima and Nagasaki. The common overarching concern of the peace policy demanded by Catholics consists throughout of replacing the institution of war with the establishment and expansion of international institutions, and thus with non-violent ways of resolving conflicts, or with ways that involve relatively little violence. The international order is to be supported by the United Nations, the International Court of Justice and the arbitration tribunals, as well as by international law and international treaties, and to enable the peoples to live together in peace. However, as long as the preconditions for reliably avoiding war are lacking or insufficient, the Church's official peace doctrine admits that states have a limited right of self-defence. She however categorically rules out the use of wea-

apons of mass destruction, even in self-defence. Since nuclear weapons have so far been regarded as such, the strict ban on deployment logically also included them. The right of defence therefore by no means permits all means and measures, given that the principle that the end does not justify the means also applies to legitimate defence. In particular, the principle of proportionality and of the protection of the civilian population/non-combatants must be respected whenever weapons are used. It was and is however conceivable in principle that types of weapons and forms of deployment might be involved to which this prohibition does not necessarily apply. Therefore the Magisterium of the Catholic Church, counter to the conviction held by many Catholics, declared the strategy of nuclear deterrence to be justifiable and acceptable under certain conditions, because and provided that it serves exclusively to prevent war – this was the argumentation put forward by the American and German Bishops' Conferences. The most important condition for this provisional approval was and is the recognisably serious will of the governments to replace this precarious concept of peacekeeping, which is neither promising nor acceptable in the long term, with less risky alternatives. Quite apart from the objective of preventing war and achieving complete disarmament, nuclear deterrence should be unequivocally condemned according to the Catholic doctrine on peace. The doctrinal statements on this subject leave no room for doubt that peace assured by nuclear weapons cannot be a secure peace, so that this very peace calls on us to do all we can to establish a world order that makes it possible to dispense with nuclear weapons.

The nuclear deterrence strategy was regarded as acceptable for a limited period of time, and only subject to the most stringent reservations, above all because it is burdened with the moral dilemma of having to credibly threaten to use nuclear weapons on a massive scale if need be, something which cannot be responsibly justified under any circumstances. Deterrence theorists have countered that, strictly speaking, this credibility is not needed: The deterrent effect is said to only require that the opponent be left in the dark as to what will actually happen when push comes to shove. In order to create this uncertainty, however, the objective ability to wage nuclear war must be present. In this sense, the deterrent effect, besides its technical requirements, is said to be based on a grandiose bluff. That does not sound particularly convincing, and is reminiscent of a sophisticated evasive manoeuvre. The arguments put forward by those in favour of deterrence give greater cause for concern who argue that nuclear war would by no means absolutely have to be waged on an apocalyptical scale. It is therefore said that the use of nuclear weapons cannot be classified as morally reprehensible per se. The controversy about this is still ongoing in the Roman Catholic Church, albeit sceptic-

ticism or rejection is clearly predominant. Two problems in particular are decisive for the formation of judgements: on the one hand the problem of halting escalation, and on the other the problem of limiting the impact. The Holy See as well as the Pope personally have recently intensified the debate by calling, in accordance with traditional doctrine and in view of the changed situation, for all nuclear weapons to be unconditionally morally condemned, and for them to be banned under international law. This decision places the members of the Catholic Church under an obligation to examine it conscientiously. The German Commission for Justice and Peace faces up to the task of critical reflection by first of all briefly recalling the Church's dogmatic tradition with regard to the ethical evaluation of nuclear weapons, in order to then substantiate its own position against this background.

4. In the early-1980s heyday of the debate on nuclear arms internationally as well as in Germany, statements were forthcoming from a whole series of national Bishops' Conferences. From their respective contextual perspectives, they repeated and confirmed the position of the Second Vatican Council, which had rigorously rejected the use of "scientific weapons", i.e. chemical, biological and nuclear weapons of war, and called for a fundamental reversal in security policy. The US Bishops' Conference dealt most extensively and thoroughly with the various aspects of the nuclear deterrence doctrine. Their Pastoral Letter entitled "The Challenge of Peace" (1983) can still be read as a basic course for its responsible use. Their concerns and objections to nuclear deterrence were serious, but ultimately led to a general consensus of conditional tolerance. The German Bishops' Conference had to clarify its position in the light of widespread protests and of mass demonstrations against nuclear weapons, and in its Pastoral Letter entitled "Gerechtigkeit schafft Frieden" (1983 – Justice creates Peace), it also came to the conclusion that deterrence can be morally defended as a strategy to prevent war, provided that the time which it serves to buy – as it were – is used on the political stage to overcome the "balance of terror".

The German Commission for Justice and Peace published a statement in 2008 detailing and discussing the problems of that time. Its contribution did not deviate substantially from the general school of thought, but it specified once again the criteria that had to be observed in order to be able to maintain this approval. A good ten years later, the recent developments that have been outlined suggest that the convictions which the Pope put forward at that time should be realigned.

III.

5. In our view, there are several reasons in favour of unconditionally outlawing nuclear weapons in a manner that results in a complete ban on nuclear weapons under international law. True, this fundamental rejection cannot be imperatively deduced from a single reason. It is in fact based on a convergence argumentation in which a synopsis of several reasons leads to a conviction that we consider to be reasonable. The ethical principle of proportionality and the protection of the civilian population play a vital role here.

5.1 The insurmountable instability of the deterrence system: The current crisis in disarmament policy shows once again the instability that is inherent in nuclear deterrence. The dispute over missile defence systems which could engender a feeling of invulnerability is inextricably linked to the dispute over missiles capable of overcoming any defence. Although the concept of nuclear deterrence precludes any pursuit of superiority in terms of offensive or defensive capabilities, the nuclear powers invest vast sums of money in pursuit of a technical advantage. The continued efforts of the USA to build up a reliable defensive shield using missiles or lasers are mirrored by Russia's efforts to develop superfast missiles that cannot be intercepted by any defensive system. In fact, this dynamic of nuclear armament does not reveal the existence of technical and military inequalities as its primary driving force, but a deep-rooted distrust that regards itself as being constantly confirmed, and which stubbornly urges remedies through more, better and superior weapons. The fear of a possible enemy is thus assuaged by the fear of total destruction, including one's own annihilation. No stable condition can develop on this basis; the Damocles sword of nuclear war must be constantly sharpened, and the arms race must continue without interruption.

Deterrence has not brought peace in history, but has at best given us a breathing space, during which attempts were however made time and again to undermine and circumvent it. What is therefore needed at present are not new, modern weapons, but we desperately need confidence-building measures, talks and negotiations. In view of the danger of a further turn about the axis of the arms spiral, what Pope Paul VI already said to the United Nations in 1978 remains no less valid: *"The problem of disarmament is substantially a problem of mutual trust. It would therefore be largely useless to seek possible solutions of the technical aspects of disarmament if one were to fail to cure at its source the situation that serves as fertile soil for the proliferation of armaments. [...] If one wishes [...] to*

make substantial progress along the road to disarmament, it is therefore essential to find means of replacing "the balance of terror" by "the balance of trust"."

5.2 The irreversible inconsistency of the deterrence strategy: The strategy of nuclear deterrence inevitably leads to a moral dilemma, and is just as inevitably entangled in an internal contradiction. Any deterrence policy is characterised by the contradiction of its being intended to prevent war by preparing the war that no one actually wants to wage. In this sense, nuclear weapons have often been referred to as the first weapons in history that must never be used. The destruction and annihilation overkill risked as part of the credo of "massive retaliation" was intended to prevent precisely that by standing any cost-benefit calculation on its head. Deterrence and self-deterrence went hand in hand. This coupling was loosened for the first time by the doctrine of flexible response, which was based on the idea of being able to steer the course of a nuclear conflict. It is now being put into concrete terms with the idea that it is possible to limit a nuclear war and to win it. However, this process cancels out the strategy of nuclear deterrence. For what could deter a nuclear power that was able to emerge as the winner from a nuclear exchange of blows from launching a nuclear attack? The threat of the extinction of mankind cannot be topped. If the policy of deterrence lowers this threshold, nuclear war becomes conceivable again, and the entire construction of the deterrence system collapses in on itself. The paradox of wishing to prevent the failure of deterrence through deterrence itself means, in the end, having to simultaneously hold on at the same time to the capacity and the willingness to destroy everything, on the one hand, and to the idea of a nuclear war that can be waged and won, on the other. Both of these things amount to the morally-intolerable consequence of ultimately having to do what no one may do. This curse from which all weapons of mass destruction suffer was clearly recognised by the Second Vatican Council: *"The unique hazard of modern warfare consists in this: it provides those who possess modern scientific weapons with a kind of occasion for perpetrating just such abominations; moreover, through a certain inexorable chain of events, it can catapult men into the most atrocious decisions."*

5.3 The illusion of steering the impact: One of the most fundamental principles of the Church's peace ethics, and of international humanitarian law, demands that the distinction between combatants and non-combatants be respected in warfare and in the use of weapons, and that the latter be spared. This means that they must not be deliberately and directly attacked and killed. It is inherent to the very

concept of a weapon of mass destruction that this difference, which is highly significant both ethically and under international law, should be ignored. The ethical prohibition of the use of weapons of mass destruction therefore applies without exception, according to the doctrine of the Church. Consequently, planning a nuclear war would only be ethically justifiable if there were nuclear weapons that could not be classified as weapons of mass destruction. This condition lies behind the interest repeatedly expressed in recent times in “miniaturising” nuclear weapons, as well as in making them more accurate in terms of targeting. Both together, it is said, would make it possible to limit their deployment to military targets and reduce their consequences to an ethically-justifiable level.

Having said that, the idea of downsizing nuclear weapons is anything but new. During the Cold War, the Western Allies had nuclear grenades, atomic mines, portable atom bombs and short-range missiles with nuclear warheads, some of which had explosive power that was many times greater than that of the Hiroshima and Nagasaki atom bombs. The planned deployment of these battlefield weapons in war would have turned Europe, and Germany in particular, into a contaminated nuclear wasteland. The Eastern deployment plan, which became known after 1989, provided for early massive nuclear strikes to bomb open a clear path to enable the rapid advance of the Warsaw Pact’s troops towards the West. The crux of this recollection is the realisation that, even if the impact of individual nuclear weapons or of specific types of weapon can be strictly limited, their use in the event of war has devastating consequences as a whole. Even the ‘small’ nuclear weapons currently being planned are generally hardly less powerful than the atomic bombs that fell on Hiroshima and Nagasaki. De facto, therefore, the use of nuclear weapons precludes the protection of the civilian population, even if it is not a direct target. With their fundamental scepticism, the American bishops refer to the admission on the part of government representatives that, even if only military targets were destroyed, the catastrophically large number of victims would be only slightly smaller than would be the case if major cities were to be attacked directly. If the USA’s new nuclear planning envisages also attacking enemy centres of cyberwarfare by nuclear means, then it is difficult to imagine how this could be done without killing civilians. The current and future density of the world’s population and the rapidly-increasing degree of urbanisation in the world are predictably driving up the human ‘costs’ of conventional wars enormously, and they would certainly become unjustifiably high were nuclear weapons to be used.

However, the radiation damage that can be expected affects not only civilians at local level, but presumably also far-distant sections of the population, as well as

future generations who are not involved in the conflict in any way. Experience with the bombings in Japan, with nuclear weapons tests, reactor accidents or the use of depleted uranium bombs also suggests that the promise of being able to limit the impact of nuclear weapons in terms of the principle of discrimination can be regarded as an illusion. In contrast to the illusionary expectations fed by the menacing policies that Governments have adopted, the more realistic observations made by Pope Pius XII in 1954 deserve attention: *“As a consequence there now rises before the eyes of a terrified world the vision of destruction on a gigantic scale – the vision of vast territories rendered uninhabitable and useless to mankind, quite apart from the biological consequences, either by the mutations effected in micro-organisms and cells, or by reason of the uncertain outcome which a prolonged radio-active stimulus could have on major organisms, not excluding man and his descendants.”*

5.4 The illusion that escalation can be limited: The strategy of nuclear deterrence currently includes the conviction that, if it fails, we can wage a nuclear war, i.e. that we can limit and win it. This strategy however has no historical experience on which it can fall back, as there has been no nuclear exchange of blows to date. As we know, Japan was not itself a nuclear power when the atom bombs were dropped, and fortunately no such exchange occurred in those situations where the deployment of nuclear weapons was considered, such as in the Korean War or during the Cold War. Nobody therefore knows – from experience – what would happen if such an event should ever occur. None other than Clausewitz stressed emphatically that there is no human activity that is so closely connected with chance as war. Bearing this in mind, all plans and predictions relating to the possibility of preventing a nuclear conflict from escalating operate in the realm of more or less plausible speculation.

Such a conflict would first and foremost testify to behaviour which, according to the basic premises of deterrence theory, should actually be ruled out as irrational. For the rationality of human decision-making and action supposedly has as its core a will to survive that precludes risking one's own destruction or of suffering unsustainable damage. The example of Adolf Hitler refutes the first assumption, and that of Mao shows the second to be false. After the Ardennes offensive had failed, Hitler admitted for the first time that Germany had lost the war, but that it would drag a whole world with it into its demise. Mao announced in view of the danger of a worldwide nuclear war that China could afford to lose three million people without having to call an end to the war. Every suicide bomber ultimately proves that the crucial psychological precondition of the deterrence doctrine is

somewhat questionable. Such a doctrine systematically underestimates the (human) willingness of personalities and governments to take risks, which can be based on a wide variety of motives. The strategy of nuclear deterrence is not a rational calculation, but tempts us to play a high-risk game with the highest stakes ever. It tends to become all the more dangerous and uncontrollable as the number of possible conflicts increases in purely mathematical terms in a multipolar world with an increasing number of nuclear powers. In any case, nuclear deterrence has at best prevented nuclear war in the past, but it has failed to prevent a plethora of conventional wars and military conflicts. Nuclear weapons may discourage the direct use of these very weapons, but they increase the risk of the nuclear escalation of conventional wars and conflicts, as has been taught for instance by the Kashmir conflict being waged between India and Pakistan, or the North Korean crisis. During the Korean War (1950-1953), General McArthur demanded that 49 North Korean towns and cities be attacked with nuclear weapons, although the North Korean attackers had no nuclear weapons, and therefore had not used any, nor were they unable to use any. The Israeli Government also ordered the readying of 19 nuclear weapons in the Yom Kippur War (October 1973). The sole aim in both cases was to avert the temporary threat of conventional armed forces being defeated, which in the end was then also achieved without using nuclear weapons. The fact that the USA, in a departure from a decision taken by the Obama Administration, has once again reserved the right to carry out nuclear strikes against states that do not have any nuclear weapons of their own points in the same direction. What is more, technological innovations in areas such as cyberwarfare and missile defence make it even more difficult to calculate the effect of nuclear deterrence, and thus they heighten the risk of escalation. The same applies to new missile technologies, which make it increasingly difficult to distinguish between conventional and nuclear attacks.

Finally, the potential danger that is inherent in politically-unstable nuclear powers such as Pakistan or North Korea must be taken into account. If internal disintegration occurs in such cases, and this turns violent, then the use of existing nuclear weapons cannot be ruled out. The dissolution of the nuclear superpower Soviet Union in 1991/92 was only peaceful because it took place in a peak phase of international détente and cooperation in terms of security policy. It is precisely this framework that is not always in place, and which is currently disappearing at a worrying rate.

This all shows that nuclear deterrence is of only limited use as a tool for preventing war, and that it is also highly ambivalent. One should furthermore remember the considerable number of situations during the Cold War in which the world

stood on the brink of a nuclear war. Let us think of the Cuba crisis as the conflict escalated, or of misjudgments and misinformation, or accidents involving bombers or submarines. There have been several potential major and minor catastrophes which failed to materialise thanks to an almost inconceivable portion of luck. Counting on this in the long run borders on hubris.

It is of course impossible to eliminate all risks from security policy. The strategy of nuclear deterrence however involves taking risks that cannot be justified in a crisis. Such risks are difficult to assess over a prolonged period even under normal circumstances, and cannot therefore be justified in the long term. Such a strategy stems from a “logic of fear” which, according to the words addressed by Pope Francis to the participants of the disarmament conference convened by the Dicastery for promoting Integral Human Development in November 2017, concerns “the entire human race”: “International relations cannot be held captive to military force, mutual intimidation, and the parading of stockpiles of arms. Weapons of mass destruction, particularly nuclear weapons, create nothing but a false sense of security. They cannot constitute the basis for peaceful coexistence between members of the human family, which must rather be inspired by an ethics of solidarity.”

IV.

6. More than half a century ago, Pope John XXIII proposed a ban on nuclear weapons. Following him, the Holy See has persistently supported this demand at the United Nations, and declared in 2014 in its detailed statement entitled “Nuclear Disarmament: Time for Abolition” that the strategy of nuclear deterrence lacks a moral basis. In November 2017, Pope Francis expressly welcomed the fact that the ban treaty had been adopted by a majority in the UN, thus determining “that nuclear weapons are not only immoral, but must also be considered an illegal means of warfare. This decision filled a significant juridical lacuna, inasmuch as chemical weapons, biological weapons, anti-human mines and cluster bombs are all expressly prohibited by international conventions.” It would be a naive illusion to think that conventions or treaties per se would make these or other weapons disappear. In fact they are not even capable of preventing unscrupulous governments, regimes or warlords from using them. But they are demonstrably helping to establish control regimes that effectively make it more difficult to manufacture and store them on a large scale. It is imperative that the alarming tendency of the nuclear powers to rid themselves of the few constraints on nuclear arma-

ments that exist by virtue of arms control and disarmament not be taken sitting down. Protesting against this is a dictate of morality and reason. The global community has an abundance of huge and perilous tasks to accomplish if it is to have a peaceful future. Nuclear weapons however promise to provide only a small part of the remedy, even for the danger of violent and military conflicts.

The ups and downs of nuclear disarmament and its dependence on crises and economic fluctuations in international politics prove that, contrary to NATO doctrine, a ban on nuclear weapons cannot be the final destination, but must be the starting point. The best way to sustainably reduce the threat to the world that is posed by nuclear weapons is to eradicate them. It is undoubtedly difficult, lengthy and costly, but it also begins with the first step, namely the condemnation of these weapons.

7. The first, fundamental and most urgent requirement of international politics today is to do everything possible to improve the climate and the atmosphere in international relations. A comprehensive ban on nuclear weapons that is accepted by the nuclear powers can only be achieved by establishing a basis of trust between them, and this must be gradually achieved through regular contacts and talks. This is one of the lessons learned from the years of détente policy, with its consequences for arms control and arms limitation. This requires suitable formats and fora at various levels, and these need to be revived or created from scratch. The end of the INF Treaty could for example provide an opportunity to renegotiate the issue of medium-range missiles among a larger group of participants. The two previous contracting states America and Russia should take the initiative for such a new beginning. There is also a need to boost regional security organisations such as the OSCE and the African Union. The first step on this path should come from the West and be accompanied by an unconditional invitation to Russia and China to participate in a revival of détente-orientated diplomacy. The Western states, and the USA in particular, should declare the renunciation of their military superiority in order to curb the global arms dynamics that have intensified again in recent years, and to create a better framework for confidence-building, as well as for multilateral arms control and disarmament talks. This can only succeed if there is mutual respect and a will to strive to achieve understanding and agreement that includes honesty and criticism.
8. Governments have a right and an obligation to safeguard the interests of their countries and to ensure their security and well-being. The experiences of the recent past however give cause to recall that governments also bear responsibility

for world peace and for the welfare of the world community, and that the legitimate security interests of other countries must be taken into consideration and accommodated here. It is precisely in view of the dangers emanating from nuclear weapons that it becomes clear that the protection of national interests and of the universal common good are contingent on one another. Among the worrying developments is the tendency to push the United Nations into the sidelines of international politics, to ignore them altogether, or even to undermine their efforts. It is comparatively easy to destroy organisations and institutions of cooperation and exchange, but it takes time and effort to rebuild them again afterwards. The United Nations rose from the ashes of the two World Wars that took place in the 20th Century and, despite their undeniable weaknesses, there is no better alternative, but only the imperative to improve them through reform. They are more necessary than ever in a globalised world because there is no other, more all-embracing forum in which to discuss issues relating to the future of humanity and to negotiate common rules. It is therefore absurd to disregard or neglect them, and their promotion and strengthening through the policies of the powerful Members of the UN in particular is a task that takes the highest priority. It will of course not be possible to condemn nuclear weapons, to overcome the strategy of nuclear deterrence, and to eliminate nuclear weapons, without or against the nuclear powers. The United Nations however provide the political arena and the legal framework for this joint effort. The true greatness of the major powers would consist of making the well-being of mankind the guiding principle of their policies, over and above their own interests.

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Declaration of the German Commission for Justice and Peace

Condemnation of nuclear weapons as the starting point of nuclear disarmament

1. It is with growing concern that the German Commission for Justice and Peace has taken note of a steady deterioration in the climate of international relations. The abandonment of tried-and-tested diplomatic customs is moreover accompanied by the dismantling of institutionalised control mechanisms for nuclear armaments and disarmament. These and other developments have led the Commission to review the assessment of the nuclear deterrence strategy which it published in 2008. As a result, it endorses the view held by the Holy See and Pope Francis that this concept of peacekeeping can no longer be justified in ethical terms, and that nuclear weapons must be outlawed under international law.
2. The Church's doctrine of peace understands the highest goal of international peace policy to be the creation of a world order in which war as a means of conducting conflicts is replaced by non-violent ways of resolving conflicts. As long as this is not the case, the Church's doctrine concedes that the states have a limited right to mount a military defence. However, the use of weapons of mass destruction is unreservedly reprehensible. This particularly applies to the use of nuclear weapons, insofar as they are classified as weapons of mass destruction. The Church's doctrine has therefore declared the strategy of nuclear deterrence to be morally justifiable only to the extent that it serves strictly to prevent war, and when governments are recognisably working to move beyond it. The main reason for this condition lies in the moral dilemma of being obliged, for deterrence purposes, to credibly threaten to use nuclear weapons, something which cannot be morally justified.
3. The German Commission for Justice and Peace has examined recent developments in international politics and military affairs in the light of the relevant criteria of the Church's peace ethics and international law, and has particularly applied the criteria of proportionality and the "principle of discrimination" (the distinction between combatants and non-combatants) in its ethical assessment. It has

reached the conclusion that the previous moral tolerance of the strategy of nuclear deterrence as a concept for preventing war must be abandoned. The most powerful nuclear powers do not show any serious will to renounce deterrence, but are programmatically committed to being able to wage, limit and win a nuclear war. The Commission considers this idea to be a dangerous illusion which furthermore lowers the threshold for deploying nuclear weapons. In addition, the nuclear powers are ignoring the manifold risks stemming from the growing complexity and increasing unmanageability of international politics, which can hardly be reduced by nuclear weapons, but will rather be increased by them. They are once again prepared to invest huge sums to modernise nuclear weapons and in new weapons systems, financial resources that are urgently needed elsewhere to meet the enormous challenges facing the world's society today and in the future.

4. The Commission is convinced that the crisis in international politics does not primarily require an accelerated build-up of arms, but that intensive efforts must be made to reduce the prevailing mistrust in international relations through dialogue and cooperation. Trust forms the foundation for peace policy and is the key to nuclear disarmament and arms control. The goal of a world free of nuclear weapons cannot be achieved without or indeed against the nuclear powers. It is for precisely this reason that the first step on this path must be to outlaw nuclear weapons, and then to negotiate arms control and disarmament measures with determination and patience in order not only to ban nuclear weapons, but to actually remove them from the world. Solidarity within the NATO alliance must include the will to work towards a zero nuclear solution, without neglecting the assistance commitments that have been made. The USA, Russia and China should prove their strength by taking the lead in this process. They need to use the United Nations or regional security and co-operation institutions such as the OSCE and the OAU to this end, instead of weakening, blocking or ignoring them. Their true greatness as leading major powers in today's multipolar world lies in their ability to go beyond their own interests and to make the welfare of humanity the guiding principle of their policies.

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