



Social Justice Committee

## STEWARDS OF OUR EARTH All of God's Creation

### Nuclear Weapons: A Deterrence for Peace

“How can we propose peace if we constantly invoke the threat of nuclear war as a legitimate recourse for the resolution of conflicts? May the abyss of pain endured here remind us of boundaries that must never be crossed. A true peace can only be an unarmed peace.”

—Pope Francis, Meeting for Peace, Hiroshima, Japan, November 24, 2019

The first meeting of **States Parties to the Treaty on the Prohibition of Nuclear Weapons (TPNW)** will take place in Vienna, June 21–23, 2022. The U.S. must be at the table. Urge U.S. participation by [clicking here to contact President Biden and Secretary of State Antony Blinken](#) and urge them to assure the United States' participation.

#### Background

“Almost seventy-seven years after the bombings of Hiroshima and Nagasaki, the world continues to live under threat of nuclear annihilation. The current war in Ukraine only highlights the danger as this conflict could easily escalate into a confrontation between nuclear-armed states.

The Treaty on the Prohibition of Nuclear Weapons is the most recent effort to rid the world of nuclear weapons. It entered into force on January 22, 2021. **Currently eighty-six nations are signatories to the TPNW and sixty national legislatures have ratified it**, which means they are bound to abide by its provisions. **Unfortunately, none of the world's nuclear powers have signed or ratified the treaty.**

Thirty-nine years ago, on May 3, 1983, the U.S. Bishops issued their pastoral letter, *The Challenge of Peace: God's Promise and Our Response*. At that time, the bishops conditionally accepted the possession of nuclear weapons for deterrence, with the understanding that such a policy is inadequate for lasting peace.

Since that time, the limits of deterrence have come into sharper focus. The impact of even a limited nuclear exchange would have catastrophic global consequences. At a meeting with the Japanese prime minister at the Vatican on May 4, 2022, Pope Francis reiterated his total opposition to nuclear weapons and said that the use and possession of such weapons is inconceivable. Earlier this year, Archbishop John Wester of Santa Fe issued a powerful pastoral letter, *Living in the Light of Christ's Peace: A Conversation Toward Nuclear Disarmament*. His diocese is home to two of the three U.S. nuclear weapons labs, and the first atom bomb (a test) was detonated in the New Mexico desert in July 1945.” (Sisters of Mercy, *Mercy Justice Team*, May 6, 2022)

May 24th marked the 7th anniversary of Pope Francis' signature encyclical, *Laudato Si': On Care for Our Common Home*. Let us renew our commitment to protect people and our planet in peaceful ways. In the words of Pope John Paul II, **“Peace is not just the absence of war. It involves mutual respect and confidence between peoples and nations. It involves collaboration and binding agreements.”**