



The Holy See

**MESSAGE OF HIS HOLINESS POPE FRANCIS
SIGNED BY CARDINAL PIETRO PAROLIN, SECRETARY OF STATE
TO THE PRESIDENT OF THE CONFERENCE ON ANTI-PERSONNEL LANDMINES***

Mr President,

It is with great joy and appreciation that Pope Francis takes the occasion of the Third Review Conference of the Convention on Anti-personnel Mines to address, through you, Your Excellency, all of the participating Countries, International Organizations, and civil society. Allow me to express in a particular way my solidarity with, and compassion for, all victims of anti-personnel mines. They carry, in their bodies and their lives, the signs of an inhuman weapon, an irresponsible weapon, a cowardly weapon. Their wounds remind us that resorting to weapons in general, and to mines in particular, represents a defeat for everyone.

This Review Conference is the occasion to review the considerable work that has been done and to look to the future, as there are still great challenges to face. But it is above all an occasion to renew our commitment and to take the necessary decisions in order to change the present: the present of so many families, communities, regions and Countries which continue to live every day in fear of landmines, in insecurity and in poverty. The environment that surrounds them holds a constant threat, while it should be a source of fruitfulness, development and the joy of living.

Mr President, every person seeks peace, the opposite of fear. Anti-personnel mines are underhand because they prolong war and foster fear even after the conflicts have ended. To the human failure that war represents, they add a sense of fear which pervades the way of life and alters the building of peace. This feeling is destructive not only for the person subjected to it but also for the one who imposes it. Peace is the joy of life, faith in the day by day relationship of brotherhood, of gratuitousness, where the interests of all can be found only in sharing, in cooperation, and in the rejection of hate and indifference. All individuals, direct or indirect victims of landmines, are there to remind us every moment of this human failure and the emptiness that results from it. Conventions such as that on anti-personnel mines or that on cluster munitions, are

not only cold legal frameworks, but they represent a challenge for all those who are seeking to safeguard and build peace, and, in particular, to defend the weakest. Human dignity is what we all, strong or weak, rich or poor, have in common, apart from our various limitations. True wealth is not money, true power is not arms. True happiness is in love, in sharing and in generosity of heart.... Do we truly want security, stability and peace? Then let us reduce our weapons stockpiles! Let us outlaw the arms that have no place in human society, and let us invest in education, in health, in safeguarding our planet, in building societies that are more supportive and fraternal with their diversity, which is so enriching.

Pope Francis exhorts all the actors in this splendid humanitarian enterprise to preserve the integrity of the Convention, to develop and implement it as faithfully and quickly as possible. Pope Francis exhorts all the Countries to commit themselves within the framework of the Convention so that there are no more mine victims! So there are no more regions planted with landmines and no child in the world has to live in fear of mines!

May this Convention, exemplary and prophetic in its original intuition, be a model for other procedures, for nuclear weapons in particular and for other arms which should not exist. Let us place the human person, men and women, boys and girls, at the centre of our efforts for disarmament. What meaning do peace, security and stability have, if our societies, our communities and our families live in constant fear and destructive hatred? Let us make room for reconciliation, hope, love which are expressed in commitment for the common good, in international cooperation to aid the weakest among our brothers and sisters, in order to implement policies based on our common dignity, in service to a necessarily common future.

Mr President, on behalf of Pope Francis, I would like to congratulate you and Mozambique for your commitment to the Convention and I would like to wish you participants attending this Conference complete success in your work.

*(by *L'Osservatore Romano*, Weekly ed. in English, n. 27, 4 July 2014)