

# **Bishop Hubbard joins evangelical leader in call to ratify new nuke pact**

WASHINGTON - For the second time in a week, the chairman of the U.S. bishops' Committee on International Justice and Peace called upon the U.S. Senate to ratify the new Strategic Arms Reduction Treaty.

Bishop Howard J. Hubbard of Albany, N.Y., said ratification of the treaty that would further reduce nuclear weapon stockpiles of both the United States and Russia was an urgent matter and would send "a clear and moral message to the world."

Bishop Hubbard joined the Rev. Leith Anderson, president of the National Association of Evangelicals, in a nationwide telephone news conference Dec. 7 in urging the Senate to act by the end of the 2010 rather than to delay a decision until the new Congress convenes in January.

On Nov. 16, the Senate Foreign Relations Committee approved the treaty in a 14-4 vote and urged prompt consideration by the full Senate.

The START "follow-on" treaty was signed April 8 in Prague by President Barack Obama and Russian President Dmitry Medvedev. The arms accord calls for both countries to reduce their strategic arsenals - weapons deployed on long-range missiles, bombers and submarines - to 1,550 each. Under the previous START pact, which expired in December 2009, both countries reduced their strategic arsenals to 2,200 weapons each.

Bishop Hubbard said the new treaty would implement verification actions that currently do not exist because the first START has expired.

"Timely ratification is critical because verification assures transparency and transparency assures trust," he said.

Russian legislators have pledged to ratify the treaty at the same time the Senate

takes action on it.

Bishop Hubbard also outlined the church's long support for nuclear arms reduction, extending back to the Cold War. He said the U.S. bishops, as well as Pope Benedict XVI, have maintained that the reduction and eventual elimination of nuclear weapons is required in order to hold up the dignity of human life.

"Pope Benedict XVI has asserted that in nuclear war, there will be no victors, only victims," he said.

Rev. Anderson said the new START continues the progress made under the first accord signed by President George H.W. Bush in 1991 and ratified by an overwhelming majority by the Senate.

"The success of that (first treaty) has been amazing," Rev. Anderson said. "We have had reduction. We've had inspections. The new START is the opportunity to do the same."

Both religious leaders acknowledged that some opponents of the new pact have raised questions about the ability of the United States to modernize its nuclear arsenal. But Rev. Anderson said that if serious concerns arise after the treaty is ratified, either side can back out of it after giving a 90-day notice.

Bishop Hubbard and Rev. Anderson also expressed concern that the public has not seen the importance of ratification as a major concern, choosing instead to focus on economic concerns when discussing issues with Senate candidates.

In addition, Bishop Hubbard said he hoped treaty opponents would consider adopting the treaty in "the best interest of humanity."

"I think it would be a grave mistake to miss this opportunity for our nation," he said.

The news conference was sponsored by the Two Futures Project, an organization of American Christians working for the global elimination of nuclear weapons.