

Vatican reaffirms support for nuclear nonproliferation treaty at UN

UNITED NATIONS – The Vatican’s chief representative to the United Nations has set forth a series of steps that will move the world toward the goal of eventual nuclear disarmament.

Speaking at the U.N. May 5, Archbishop Celestino Migliore, papal nuncio to the world body, reaffirmed the Vatican’s support for the nuclear nonproliferation treaty in offering five “concrete, transparent and convincing” steps that could be achieved in “a short period of time” to demonstrate the world’s willingness to end the threat that nuclear weapons pose.

Archbishop Migliore called for:

- Adherence to the Comprehensive Test Ban Treaty, which outlaws nuclear weapons testing.
- The immediate opening of negotiations on a Fissile Material Cutoff Treaty that would prohibit the further production of weapons-grade uranium and plutonium.
- An end to reliance on nuclear weapons as a part of military policy among nuclear states.
- Giving oversight of the peaceful use of nuclear energy to the International Atomic Energy Agency and expanding the agency’s role to include the nonproliferation side of the treaty.
- Developing an agreement on the production of nuclear fuel to meet growing energy needs, with the international atomic agency taking a leading role to ensure safety, security and fair access for all countries.

“All these measures are necessary to promote trust, transparency, confidence and

cooperation among nations and regions,” Archbishop Migliore said at the second session of a 12-day preparatory committee meeting called in advance of a conference to review the treaty in 2010.

Noting that although 26,000 nuclear warheads remain in the world’s weapons stockpiles, the archbishop said the nonproliferation treaty remains “a cornerstone of nuclear disarmament ... as well as a key instrument to seeking to strengthen international peace and security.”

“The Holy See thus calls upon all the nuclear weapon states to take a courageous leadership role and political responsibility in safeguarding the very integrity of the (nonproliferation treaty) and in creating a climate of trust, transparency and true cooperation, with a view to the concrete realization of a culture of life and peace,” he said.

The committee meeting at the U.N. was the last of three leading to next year’s review conference that will look at the provisions of the nonproliferation treaty. Such conferences have convened every five years since the treaty was signed in 1970.