

Vatican's U.N. nuncio argues for greater protection of human rights

UNITED NATIONS - Human rights are best protected through disarmament and weapons nonproliferation, argued Archbishop Celestino Migliore, the Vatican's apostolic nuncio to the United Nations.

"As the human person is the ultimate aim of all public policies, arms regulation, disarmament and nonproliferation must have an interdisciplinary or, more importantly, a human approach," Archbishop Migliore said in an Oct. 7 address to the U.N.'s General Assembly.

Archbishop Migliore put his remarks in the context of the 60th anniversary in December of the U.N. Universal Declaration of Human Rights.

"This event invites us to a renewed commitment to disarmament, development and peace," he said. "All states are called upon to promote disarmament and nonproliferation as key elements for an international order in which the fundamental rights and freedoms of every person can be fully realized."

In an Oct. 6 letter to Father Miguel d'Escoto Brockmann, the retired Nicaraguan Maryknoll priest currently serving as president of the General Assembly, Archbishop Migliore underscored the connection between human rights and arms proliferation.

When the Universal Declaration of Human Rights was adopted, he said, "world leaders agreed that human rights are not bestowed by governments at their whim but rather are inherent in all individuals regardless of race, nationality or religious belief."

"It is humbling to recall the war that preceded the adoption of the (declaration) but also empowering to know that if the world could come together to ensure the rights of all after such a devastating conflict," he continued, "then surely today we can find the political will to guarantee the full enjoyment of all human rights."

Archbishop Migliore said, "The rights to life and freedom of thought, conscience and

religion remain the core of the human rights system. The discourse over these two fundamental rights is on the rise.

“However, too often these rights are neglected in favor of more politically expedient issues, and only when the voices of the disenfranchised and discriminated become too loud to be ignored do we give them their proper attention,” he said.

In his Oct. 7 remarks, the archbishop lamented the “scarce interest” in compliance with the Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons and lack of the quorum needed for putting into force the provisions of the Comprehensive Nuclear Test-Ban Treaty.

Further, “the Conference on Disarmament has not had a program of work for more than 10 years, and the lack of political will in the international community regarding these projects is disconcerting,” the archbishop said.

He said that more conflict seems to be emerging between “security and military policies,” as nations fight “nuclear terrorism” by banning the production, possession and transfer of such arms, while at the same time some other nations try to acquire “nuclear arsenals.”

“Disarmament is becoming an increasingly complex issue,” said Archbishop Migliore, adding that the Holy See calls on the international community for “a greater sensitivity and more efforts in promoting the peaceful coexistence and survival of the entire human family” through partnerships among nations, the U.N., civil society and international organizations.

Father d’Escoto was elected president of the U.N. General Assembly June 4. He served as Nicaragua’s foreign minister from 1979 to 1990. He has not been able to exercise his priestly ministry since 1985 because of his political activity.