



**Statement of H.E. Archbishop Ettore Balestrero, Permanent Observer  
of the Holy See to the United Nations and Other International Organizations in  
Geneva, at the 2025 Intersessional Meeting of the Anti-Personnel Landmines  
Convention – Universalization**  
*Geneva, 20 June 2025*

Madam President,

At the outset, my Delegation would like to thank you and Japan for all the preparatory work carried out in preparation for this intersessional meeting.

The Holy See wishes to congratulate the Marshall Islands for its recent ratification of the Anti-Personnel Landmines Convention. Each additional State Party to the Convention renews the commitment to achieve universality, in line with the Preamble's noble affirmation to "work strenuously towards the promotion of its universalization"<sup>1</sup>.

Achieving total universalization of the Convention also carries direct implications and far-reaching consequences, particularly in relation to the provision of assistance to victims and the prevention of further casualties, which are among the main reasons why this Convention came into existence.

For these reasons, the Holy See is deeply concerned about the intention of certain States Parties to withdraw from the Convention. Moreover, it calls upon all States that are not yet party to this noble legal instrument to adhere to it urgently and implement it promptly, in both letter and spirit.

Madam President,

By placing the human person at the center, the Convention establishes a clear link between disarmament and development. It is of profound concern that, as evidenced by numerous reports, every year, anti-personnel landmines and explosive remnants of war continue to claim innocent lives and have a profoundly negative effect on livelihoods. A significant portion of the victims are children who suffer life-changing injuries and trauma.

Existing disarmament treaties represent not only legal obligations, but also moral commitments to present and future generations. Adherence to and respect for international disarmament agreements and international law, including international humanitarian law, is not a form of weakness. On the contrary, they are an enduring source of strength and responsibility towards all of humanity.<sup>2</sup>

---

<sup>1</sup> Cf. Preamble, Convention on Anti-Personnel Landmines.

<sup>2</sup> Cf. Pope Francis, *Message to the first Meeting of States Parties to the Treaty on the Prohibition of Nuclear Weapons*, Vienna, 21 June 2022.

Madam President,

The vast proportion of human and economic resources allocated to armaments - with global military expenditure skyrocketing to over 2,7 trillion USD<sup>3</sup> last year - is a matter of grave imbalance and even scandal. This is particularly evident when compared to the limited resources dedicated to assisting those in need, feeding the hungry, and promoting integral human development. This makes it clear that no “peace is possible without true disarmament”<sup>4</sup> and “the requirement that every people provide for its own defence must not turn into a race to rearmament”<sup>5</sup>.

In this regard, the Holy See shares the appeal of the UN Secretary-General that “the protection of innocent lives depends on our collective action and commitment”<sup>6</sup>.

In conclusion, in the midst of intensifying tensions, it is imperative to return to reason and dialogue, while using all tools of diplomacy to prevent any escalation and destabilization. As Pope Leo XIV urges “we must never get used to war!”<sup>7</sup>. The Holy See therefore reiterates its appeal to promote a culture of peace and life, and to preserve the integrity of the Convention, remaining fully confident that the sanctity of human life as well as the inherent and inviolable God-given dignity of the human person will continue to inspire its implementation.

Thank you.

---

<sup>3</sup> <https://www.sipri.org/publications/2025/sipri-fact-sheets/trends-world-military-expenditure-2024>

<sup>4</sup> Cf. Pope Francis, *Urbi et Orbi* Message, 20 April 2025.

<sup>5</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>6</sup> <https://www.un.org/sg/en/content/sg/statement/2025-06-16/statement-the-secretary-general-the-anti-personnel-mine-ban-convention>.

<sup>7</sup> Pope Leo XIV, Appeal after the General Audience, 18 June 2025.