



# Action Alert!

## Urge Senators to Ratify New START Treaty to Verifiably Reduce Nuclear Weapons!

April 9, 2010



### Passages from a [USCCB Letter to President Obama](#)

Our 1983 pastoral letter, *The Challenge of Peace*, made a "definitive and decisive" moral judgment to say "no" to nuclear war. In 1993 in *The Harvest of Justice is Sown in Peace*, we argued: "The eventual elimination of nuclear weapons is more than a moral ideal; it should be a policy goal."...

The horribly destructive capacity of nuclear arms makes them disproportionate and indiscriminate weapons that endanger human life and dignity like no other armaments. Their use as a weapon of war is rejected in Church teaching based on just war norms. Although we cannot anticipate every step on the path humanity must walk, we can point with moral clarity to a destination that moves beyond deterrence to a world free of the nuclear threat. ...

Based on a moral imperative to rid the world of nuclear weapons, the Conference of Bishops will be a steadfast supporter of strong and bipartisan action on the new START Treaty as an important and essential step toward a nuclear-weapons-free future.

--Francis Cardinal George,  
OMI, USCCB President,  
April 8, 2010

**Summary:** President Obama and President Medvedev signed a new Strategic Arms Reduction Treaty (START) on April 8, 2010. The new START Treaty: reduces deployed strategic warheads to 1,550, 30 percent below the existing ceiling; limits the United States and Russia to no more than 700 delivery vehicles; and includes new verification requirements. The Treaty needs ratification by the U.S. Senate. USCCB supports strong, bipartisan action to ratify the new START Treaty.

**Background:** Originally proposed by President Ronald Reagan, the United States and Soviet Union signed the original START Treaty in 1991. This treaty limited the number of nuclear warheads and delivery vehicles (missiles and bombers) that each country could deploy.

Today the United States and Russia still hold about 95% of all nuclear weapons, large arsenals left over from the Cold War. Many of these weapons are on immediate alert status.

Ratification of the new START Treaty is critical because verification ensures transparency and these reductions in the number of weapons can set the stage for future reductions. The new START Treaty is also important to international efforts to address nonproliferation. With fewer nuclear weapons in the world the likelihood of one falling into terrorist hands is reduced and countries are more likely to cooperate in enforcing nonproliferation demands and controlling the supply of nuclear materials. Strong support for the new START Treaty will also help build momentum for eventual ratification of the Comprehensive Test Ban Treaty.

The possession and maintenance of nuclear weapons are a grave threat to human life and dignity. Consistent with Catholic teaching, the bishops have long supported securing nuclear materials from terrorists and reducing the number of nuclear armaments. For decades they have promoted the policy goals of preventing proliferation of these horrific weapons and ultimately eliminating them.

Nuclear war is rejected in Church teaching because the use of nuclear weapons cannot insure noncombatant immunity and their destructive potential and lingering radiation cannot be meaningfully proportionate. Pope Benedict XVI said in a January 2006 statement, "In a nuclear war there would be no victors, only victims."

### Take Action Now!

- Contact your Senators and urge them to give bipartisan support to the new START Treaty. (For contact information, visit [www.senate.gov](http://www.senate.gov).) The Capitol switchboard number is 202-224-3121.

### For more information, contact:

Dr. Stephen Colecchi, Director, International Justice and Peace, 202-541-3196, [scolecchi@usccb.org](mailto:scolecchi@usccb.org) or visit: [www.usccb.org/sdwp/international](http://www.usccb.org/sdwp/international).

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