

The Latest: NATO defends opposition to UN nuclear ban treaty - new - att.net

VATICAN CITY (AP) — The Latest on the Vatican nuclear conference (all times local):

7:00 p.m.

A top NATO official is defending the alliance's opposition to a new U.N. treaty calling for the elimination of nuclear weapons.

NATO Deputy Secretary General Rose Gottemoeller told a Vatican disarmament conference Friday that the treaty could undermine years of nonproliferation work and disregards current-day nuclear threats on the Korean peninsula.

Gottemoeller says the U.S. nuclear arsenal allowed American allies in Europe and Asia to set aside their own nuclear ambitions. That, she said, has allowed a separate nuclear non-proliferation treaty to work and effective disarmament to take place.

Other participants at the Vatican conference have resoundingly endorsed the new U.N. treaty.

Pope Francis told the conference earlier Friday that the Cold War era strategy of nuclear deterrence had bred a false sense of security. Francis says leaders should work to purge the world of atomic weapons.

12:45 p.m.

Pope Francis is warning that international relations can no longer be "held captive" by policies of fear and nuclear deterrence and is urging the world to instead endorse an admittedly utopian future free of atomic weapons.

Francis has addressed Nobel peace laureates, U.N. and NATO officials and diplomats from countries with the bomb during a Vatican conference aimed at galvanizing support for a global shift from the Cold War era policy of nuclear deterrence to one of disarmament.

Speaking in the Clementine Hall of the Apostolic Palace, Francis acknowledged that current tensions might render efforts at ridding the world of nuclear weapons remote. But he said reliance on such weapons "create nothing but a false sense of security," and that any use of them, even accidental, would be "catastrophic" for humanity and the environment.

He said: "International relations cannot be held captive to military force, mutual intimidation, and the parading of stockpiles of arms."

12:30 p.m.

The head of the Nobel Peace Prize-winning International Campaign to Abolish Nuclear Weapons says a new U.N. treaty calling for the elimination of atomic weapons will have an effect even on the nuclear powers that refused to sign on.

Beatrice Fihn says previous treaties banning chemical and biological weapons were a crucial first step in making such arsenals illegal, and putting pressure on countries that had the weapons to disarm.

Speaking on the sidelines of a Vatican disarmament conference Friday, Fihn has told The Associated Press: "If international law says it's prohibited, it's going to make it a lot harder for them (nuclear weapons states) to justify their decisions to modernize and invest in new types of weapons."

Fihn's group won the Nobel this year for its instrumental role in galvanizing support for the U.N. treaty.

9 a.m.

The Vatican is hosting Nobel laureates, U.N. and NATO officials and a handful of nuclear powers at a conference aimed at galvanizing support for a global shift from the Cold War era policy of nuclear deterrence to one of total nuclear disarmament.

Pope Francis is due to address the conference Friday, adding his voice to the campaign that produced a new U.N. treaty calling for the elimination of atomic weapons, and a Nobel Peace Prize for the small advocacy group that was instrumental in pushing the treaty through.

Among those speaking at the two-day meeting is Beatrice Fihn, executive director of the Nobel-winning International Campaign to Abolish Nuclear Weapons, and Masako Wada, who survived the atomic bombing of Nagasaki and has gone onto become a prominent disarmament activist.