

26 November 2009, Brussels

Her Excellency Ms Cecilia Malmström,
Minister for EU Affairs of Sweden

Dear Ms Malmström,

We would like to express our gratitude to you for receiving representatives of the Swedish and European Churches on 30 September. We most appreciated your generosity and your willingness to have this dialogue. Let us also congratulate you in your new position as an EU Commissioner.

One of the issues we discussed during our meeting was the new political momentum towards a world free of nuclear weapons and the great importance attached to this by the churches. Recently, a letter (see the attachments) on this topic was issued by four councils of churches: the World Council of Churches, the Conference of European Churches, the National Council of the Churches of Christ in the USA, and the Canadian Council of Churches. The letter was also addressed to Mr Fredrik Reinfeldt in his capacity as President of the Council of the European Union. It is unusual that these ecumenical organizations together specifically address European responsibilities in the context of NATO and EU. Furthermore, the strong commitment of the Catholic Church towards the complete elimination of nuclear weapons was re-affirmed by Archbishop Dominique Mamberti, the Vatican's Secretary for Relations with States, in his address to the UN Security Council on 24 September¹. This position was reiterated in the meeting of the Assembly of the Commission of the Bishops' Conferences of the European Community (COMECE) in November.

During our meeting we raised the question as to whether Sweden, in the framework of its EU Presidency, could launch the process of drafting the new EU Common Position for the May 2010 Review Conference of the Non-Proliferation Treaty. We expressed our concern that so far European support for President Obama's new 'zero' policy has been weak, if not absent. We would like to come back to our question, with the following specific requests.

1. In our discussion you promised to raise the issue with the Minister for Foreign Affairs Mr Carl Bildt. We would be interested in hearing about the outcome of your talks. We are aware that the main responsibility for the new Common Position will rest with the Spanish Presidency, which will start on 1 January 2010. However, we would appreciate to be informed about steps taken by the Swedish Presidency so far. We consider it essential that

¹ http://www.vatican.va/roman_curia/secretariat_state/2009/documents/rc_seg-st_20090924_mamberti-security-council_en.html

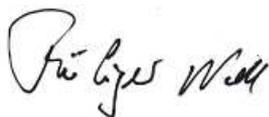
explicit European support for the new policy of the US administration becomes visible at an early stage. This can help to make the 2010 Review Conference a success, which is essential for the future of the non-proliferation regime after the failure of the NPT review in 2005.

2. We are aware that the EU is divided on this matter. Under the current limitations of the Common Foreign and Security Policy (CFSP) this means that only the lowest common denominator can be expressed, also by a Presidency that would like to be more ambitious². The structure of the CFSP, however, also entails that individual Member States can go beyond the joint EU statements and express their own views, as indeed happened during the 2009 NPT PrepCom meeting in New York and on other occasions. Moreover, some countries or groupings of countries present their views on certain issues in working papers prior to the meetings. Our request to you is to examine possibilities to make the process of reviewing the NPT more transparent. NATO General Secretary Mr Anders Fogh Rasmussen promised a maximum of transparency in the process of reviewing NATO's Strategic Concept. We would like to call upon the EU to do the same, especially in its process of formulating a Common Position for the 2010 NPT Review Conference. The Presidency could promote this transparency from the very beginning.

3. More transparency would also facilitate our own efforts to keep churches in the EU informed, thus enabling them to be more involved³. Since churches and many organisations in civil society continue to be committed to achieving a world free of nuclear weapons, we would welcome if you considered ways in which churches and non-governmental organisations can contribute to this process. One possibility would be to organize a hearing on the priorities of the Common Position for the 2010 NPT Review Conference. Evidently, this would be the responsibility of the Spanish Presidency, but this possibility could already be raised at your initiative. As the new Common Position needs to be finalized by April 2010, it is very timely to consider ways in which the EU can involve its citizens through the churches and the organised civil society.

We hope that you will favourably consider our requests and wish you success in completing the six-month term of Swedish presidency of the EU.

Yours sincerely,



Reverend Rüdiger Noll
Director of the Church and
Society Commission of the
Conference of European
Churches



Father Prof Dr. Piotr Mazurkiewicz
Secretary General of COMECE



Reverend Sven-Bernhard Fast
Secretary General of the Christian
Council of Sweden

² We believe this to apply to Sweden with its solid reputation in the field of nuclear arms control and disarmament.

³ The annual 'Global Week of the Churches' in Sweden is one of the signals of the churches' sense of responsibility for issues like this.