

Canada should sign UN treaty on nuclear prohibition, says peacemaker Doug Roche

Negotiation is the only solution to the North Korean nuclear crisis, according to Douglas Roche, former Canadian ambassador for disarmament and a Catholic statesman based in Edmonton.

In an interview with Grandin Media, Roche said he's frustrated with the rising tension between the United States and North Korea over the Asian regime's nuclear ambitions.

Both leaders have threatened and insulted each other, with U.S. President Donald Trump calling North Korean leader Kim Jong Un "Little Rocket Man."

"If you use the word 'immaturity,' it's not a strong enough word to describe the conduct of these leaders involved," said Roche, the author of 22 books on nuclear disarmament and an international expert on peace and non-violence.

"You [have] got to consider Mr. Trump as a phenomenon, which he is, but in passing. He's not going to be there forever," he said.

Roche's comments come just days after an emergency missile alert in Hawaii that turned out to be a false alarm, but not before it provoked panic in the U.S. state and highlighted the risk of possible unintended nuclear war, in this case with North Korea.

Pope Francis weighed in on the threat of a nuclear miscalculation while en route to South America on Jan. 15.



Pope Francis holds a photo from the aftermath of the 1945 atomic bombing of Nagasaki, aboard his flight to Chile. "I thought about making copies of it because an image like this says more than a thousand words," the pope told the journalists who are traveling with him. CNS photo/Paul Haring

The Holy Father told reporters travelling on the airplane with him that he was afraid about the danger of nuclear war and that the world now stood at "the very limit."

"I am really afraid of this. One accident is enough to precipitate things," he said before landing in Santiago, Chile.

Roche said the prospect of North Korea becoming a nuclear power is an immediate, specific threat, but the larger issue is the continued proliferation of nuclear arms and the threat to world peace in general.

"What right do they have to maintain their nuclear weapons while proscribing their acquisition by any other country?" Roche said, noting that humankind has a set of needs that are universal.

"I've been all over the world in my career. I see people who want the same things. What do they want? They want simply enough to exist. Food for their families, education, health. People don't want to go around clobbering one another and throwing nuclear weapons," said Roche, who served as ambassador for disarmament from 1984 to 1989.

Roche said he was particularly proud of Pope Francis and the Holy See for being among the first nations to ratify and sign the United Nations Treaty on the Prohibition of Nuclear Weapons last year.

"I believe that the prestige and respect for Pope Francis is at such a high

level in the world today, that his words can play an extraordinary role in affecting public policies.”



Doug Roche is a former chairman of the United Nations Disarmament Committee, MP, senator, and visiting professor at the University of Alberta. In 1995, he received the Papal Medal for his service on disarmament and international security.

Canada did not sign the treaty as it is a member of NATO, which sees nuclear arms as a necessary deterrent. While not a nuclear power, Canada can plan the use of U.S. nuclear weapons and deliver nuclear payloads through NATO’s “nuclear sharing” policy.

“And thus when Pope Francis comes out explicitly condemning the possession of nuclear weapons, then I think it’s the responsibility of all the rest of us in the Church to hear that.”

Roche also called Canada’s Catholic bishops to issue a statement of support for Pope Francis’s condemnation of nuclear weapons and to convince the Canadian government to sign the treaty.

“This is what conference after conference and all manner of organizations have been saying leading up to the new treaty on the prohibition of nuclear weapons,” said Roche. “We ought not to be living in God’s world on the edge of Armageddon. It’s a wonderful world out there.”

The bishops are currently studying the issue, said Deacon René Laprise, spokesperson for the Canadian Conference of Catholic Bishops.

Now retired, Roche has received numerous awards for his work. In 1995, he received the Papal Medal for his service on disarmament and international

security. He is a former chairman of the United Nations Disarmament Committee, MP, senator, and visiting professor at the University of Alberta. He was also the first editor of the *Western Catholic Reporter* newspaper.

For more information on Roche, visit his website
http://www.roche.apirg.org/public_html/index.html

Grandin Media conducted a wide-ranging interview with Roche, which will be posted to our website soon as part of a series of interviews with Catholic newsmakers.