



**Statement by the Secretary General of OPANAL
Ambassador Edmundo Vargas Carreño
in the Inauguration of the Seminar on
“New Approaches to Nuclear Verification and Nuclear Security”
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For the Agency for the Prohibition of Nuclear Weapons in Latin America and the Caribbean – OPANAL’s Spanish acronym- is a great honor to be one of the co-sponsors of this Seminar on “New Approaches to Nuclear Verification and Nuclear Security.”

OPANAL was established by the Treaty of Tlatelolco in 1967. Today, with the ratification of Cuba in October 2002, all the 33 States of Latin America and the Caribbean are part of that treaty and full members of OPANAL.

The Treaty of Tlatelolco was really precursory and visionary through the elimination of the regional arms race involving the most terrible of all weapons, and has contributed significantly to the global non-proliferation process with a demonstration effect in other regions of the world. By establishing the first inhabited zone of the planet free of nuclear weapons, the Treaty of Tlatelolco set the example and became the inspiration for the creation of other denuclearized zones.

At present, the current zones that have been established in Latin America, the South Pacific Islands, the South East Asia and Africa –and we hope that soon it will be established a fifth one in Central Asia- include more than 100 States, that is, more than half of the States forming the international community.

We believe that the NWFZs have made a significant contribution to the nuclear non-proliferation

process. The States participating in these agreements have not only committed themselves to not develop, acquire or use nuclear weapons, but they are also committed to not deploy in their territories nuclear weapons belonging to another State. This prohibition of the treaties establishes the NWFZs sustains non-proliferation by reducing the geographic scope in which nuclear weapon installations can be built or operated.

The NWFZs also fulfill an important function by helping to promote international peace and security. Several examples may be given in this regard. The first one is the commitment contained in all Treaties -Tlatelolco, Rarotonga, Bangkok and Pelindaba- that, it is obligatory that the States Parties to such Treaties sign agreements with the International Atomic Energy Agency for the application of safeguards concerning peaceful nuclear activities, in the present as well as in the future.

These agreements are based on the model adopted by the IAEA for the safeguard agreements of ample scope established in the Nuclear-Weapon Non-Proliferation Treaty. However, as the role of the IAEA concerning safeguards has been evolving to implement new modalities or adopt Additional Protocols to the pre-existing safeguard agreements, the cooperation that can be furnished by the NWFZs can result greatly convenient. For instance, OPANAL has firmly supported the Additional Protocol to the Safeguards Agreement of the IAEA and has helped to make it known. Also, jointly with the United Nations Regional Center for Peace, Disarmament and Development in Latin America and the Caribbean, it supported the Regional Seminar that took place in Lima in December 2001 to promote precisely this Protocol.

I am sure that this Seminar will be a significant contribution to the important subject of the Nuclear Verification and Security. I regret not to be present with you and I wish you great success.