



AGENCY FOR THE PROHIBITION OF NUCLEAR WEAPONS IN
LATIN AMERICA AND THE CARIBBEAN

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United Nations General Assembly

First Committee: Disarmament and International Security

Statement by

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Secretary-General

of OPANAL

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Mr Chairman,

On behalf of OPANAL – the Agency for the Prohibition of Nuclear Weapons in Latin America and the Caribbean, I express to you our congratulations for your election to conduct the work of the First Committee, greetings extended to the members of the Bureau and the Secretariat whom we thank for their dedicated work.

In the field of nuclear disarmament and non-proliferation, OPANAL is the only one that exclusively deals with it in all its aspects. On this side of the Conference Room where I find myself, you see just a few Intergovernmental Organizations. In fact, I would feel lonely here if I had not the pleasure of being surrounded by representatives of the civil society.

During the current year, we are commemorating the 50th Anniversary of the Treaty of Tlatelolco. The invention of Nuclear-Weapon-Free Zones represented a breakthrough in the direction of solving the problem of nuclear weapons. It was conceived, proposed, negotiated, and brought to reality during one of the worst phases of the Cold War. The idea proved to be so successful that it was expanded to four other regions, encompassing today a total of 115 States.

Nuclear-Weapon-Free Zones are not only a legal and political innovation but also, a practical and political success. The five treaties bearing colorful names such as Tlatelolco, Rarotonga or Pelindaba, have never been transgressed and represent a moral and political patrimony. That is enough reason to commemorate.

Nuclear-Weapon-Free Zones are a dynamic reality. Starting in 1967, 39 years later, we had reached the number of five Zones. This means that it is possible to go further enlarging their number, to include the Middle East and other areas. The increase in the number of Nuclear-Weapon-Free Zones is inversely proportional to the danger of nuclear holocaust.

Among the creations brought about by the Treaty of Tlatelolco, the Agency for the Prohibition of Nuclear Weapons in Latin America and the Caribbean – OPANAL, has been ensuring full compliance with the obligations contained in the Treaty. Moreover, it has been an element of convergence making possible a crescent expression by the Region in the debates and negotiations concerning the question of nuclear weapons. This year, for example,

two Declarations carefully drafted and discussed were adopted by the unanimity of our 33 States, the first on the occasion of the 50th Anniversary of the Treaty of Tlatelolco on 14 February and the second on 26 September, the international day for the total elimination of nuclear weapons. The Region also reacted, by means of a communiqué, to the latest nuclear test conducted by the DPRK.

The active participation of Latin American and Caribbean States was equally noted in the negotiation of the Treaty on the Prohibition of Nuclear Weapons which was conducted by a most distinguished diplomat from Costa Rica, Ambassador Elayne Whyte.

At this point, I would like to refer to the specific subject of interpretative declarations made by some of the States Parties to the Additional Protocols to the Treaty of Tlatelolco.

The negotiators of the Treaty solved by means of these Protocols, the intractable problem of ensuring the observance of the Treaty by specific extra-regional States. Those are the five States that at that moment possessed nuclear weapons and the States internationally responsible, *de jure* or *de facto*, for territories within the limits of the geographical Zone established in the Treaty.

Some of these States made what is called interpretative declarations when signing or ratifying the Protocols. This was replicated in the case of subsequent Treaties establishing Nuclear-Weapon-Free Zones. The issue has been one of concern for States belonging to these Zones and to other States. Numerous General Assembly Resolutions, concluding documents of the NPT Review Conferences, and other documents have expressed concern over the matter, asking for modification or withdrawal of those declarations.

In recent years, the governing bodies of OPANAL have been looking afresh to this question. Some parts of the interpretative declarations constitute clear reservations as defined in the Law of Treaties. The Treaty of Tlatelolco does not admit reservations. In this connection, those parts of interpretative declarations amount to a breach of the obligations assumed by States Parties to the Additional Protocols.

A conclusion has been reached that the specific problems identified could be solved through negotiations. Not everything in the interpretative declarations causes problems.

For decades, the appeals made for review or withdrawal of the declarations went unheeded. Having identified the specific points which constitute reservations, it is possible to negotiate a solution.

Proposals have so far been addressed to two of the four States concerned. This process presents a new approach that could bring a satisfactory solution which would be a rare improvement in international relations concerning the problem of nuclear weapons.

Mr Chairman,

The momentum reached this September with the adoption of a legally binding instrument to prohibit the only weapon of mass destruction not yet banned, provides the impetus to sustain the effort to reach nuclear disarmament, a goal embedded in the very first resolution adopted by the General Assembly. You can be assured that OPANAL will be heading this effort onwards.

Thank you.