

STATEMENT OF H.E. PERFECTO R. YASAY
Secretary of Foreign Affairs of the Republic of the Philippines
at the 25th Session of the General Conference of OPANAL
and the 50th Anniversary of the Treaty of Tlatelolco
14 February 2017, Mexico City

I wish to express my deepest appreciation to H.E. Luis Videgaray, Foreign Minister of Mexico, and to the Member States of the Agency for the Prohibition of Nuclear Weapons in Latin America and the Caribbean (OPANAL¹) for the invitation to address the 25th General Conference of OPANAL and to celebrate with you the 50th Anniversary of the Signing of the Treaty of Tlatelolco.

It is also an honor for my country to be the Chair of the Association of Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN) as it celebrates its 50th Anniversary this year. On behalf of our fellow ASEAN members Brunei Darussalam, Cambodia, Laos, Malaysia, Myanmar, Singapore, Thailand and Vietnam, the Philippines joins you in your commemoration of that momentous day on February 14, 1967 when the Treaty of Tlatelolco created a nuclear weapon-free zone (NWFZ) in Latin America and the Caribbean-- the first densely populated part of the world to declare itself to be totally free of nuclear weapons.

Because it preceded the Nuclear Non-Proliferation Treaty (NPT) by a year, the Tlatelolco Treaty influenced the negotiations on the NPT (which mentions the establishment nuclear weapon-free zones in Article VII), and has served as a

¹Organismo para la Proscripción de las Armas Nucleares en la América Latina y el Caribe

political, legal and institutional model for the creation of other nuclear-weapon-free zones in different parts of the world. Indeed, the Treaty of Tlatelolco, inspired and set in motion the creation of the four other nuclear weapon-free zones now in existence², including the Southeast Asia Nuclear-Weapon Free Zone (SEANWFZ).

SEANWFZ was created by the Treaty of Bangkok in December 1995, but the 10 countries comprising ASEAN did not stop there. In 2008, we further committed to maintain our region as a zone free of all weapons of mass destruction by affirming in the text of the ASEAN Charter that one of the purposes of the association is to preserve South-East Asia as a zone free of nuclear weapons and all other weapons of mass destruction.

The Philippines and ASEAN shall remain committed to preserving the SEANFWZ. As such, we again stress the importance of full and effective implementation of the Treaty, including through the Plan of Action to Strengthen the Implementation of the SEANWFZ Treaty (2013-2017). In this regard, we hope to develop closer relations with OPANAL and share views and best practices towards of goal of successfully having all Nuclear Weapon States sign and ratify the protocol to the Bangkok Treaty.

² The Treaties of Bangkok, Pelindaba, Rarotonga, Semipalatinsk created NWFZs in, SE Asia, Africa, South Pacific and Central Asia, respectively.

Ladies and Gentlemen, we in ASEAN shall endeavor to accomplish the following in 2017 and sustain these actions in the years leading to the next review conference of the NPT in 2020:

Together with the 33 member states of OPANAL, ASEAN shall work for the promotion of the establishment of more zones free of nuclear weapons and other weapons of mass destruction all over the world, in particular in the Middle East. We at ASEAN will continue to underscore the humanitarian consequences of nuclear weapons in all disarmament fora and provide a comprehensive understanding of the catastrophic effects of nuclear weapons, both on humanity and the environment. We shall continue to support the global disarmament architecture and shall be active in the next NPT review cycle.

The ASEAN Member States, as a group and in our individual national capacities, shall remain actively engaged in discussions in regional and international fora to take forward the discourse and action on nuclear weapons and disarmament. We will likewise actively participate in the discussions on nuclear terrorism, fissile material cutoff, the IAEA, and the situation in the Korean Peninsula.

Lastly, the Philippines co-sponsored resolution 71/258 titled "Taking forward multilateral nuclear disarmament negotiations", which was adopted at the UNGA's First Committee at its 71st Session in October 2016. Allow me now, before concluding my statement, to express my country's appreciation for Mexico's

leadership in shepherding the successful adoption of the resolution, as well as in coordinating follow-through post-adoption action. We in ASEAN are keen to work actively with members of OPANAL at the forthcoming conference to be held in March, June and July this year in New York to negotiate a legally binding instrument to ban nuclear weapons.

Like OPANAL, ASEAN and the Philippines shall make it its primary objective to focus our individual and collective efforts this year in the conference to negotiate a Nuclear Ban Treaty and to have a working text as soon as possible, in order to bring us closer to realizing our common aspiration for a world without nuclear weapons.

Thank you.