

XXV Regular Session of the General Ministerial Conference of OPANAL

Intervention of the Mrs. Dinara Kemelova, First Deputy Minister of Foreign Affairs of the Kyrgyz Republic in capacity of depositary of the Treaty on Nuclear-Weapon-Free Zone in Central Asia

(14 February 2017, Mexico)

**Mr. President,
Excellencies, Ladies and Gentlemen,**

At the outset on behalf of the Kyrgyz Republic, as depositary of the Treaty on Nuclear-Weapon-Free Zone in Central Asia, and States Parties - namely Kazakhstan, Tajikistan, Turkmenistan and Uzbekistan, let me congratulate you all with the 50th Anniversary of the Treaty for the Prohibition of Nuclear Weapons in Latin America and the Caribbean.

We welcome the important contribution of the Treaty of Tlatelolco to international peace and security, for promoting and strengthening global nuclear-weapon-free zone regime, nuclear disarmament and nuclear non-proliferation and also welcome the progress made so far.

Today, we have to work together to strengthen the cooperation among Nuclear-Weapon-Free Zones. This activity may include promotion of the exchange of good practices and lessons learned as well as to support regional processes on creation of Nuclear-Weapon-Free Zones.

Mr. President,

In September 2006 the Central Asian States signed the Treaty on Nuclear-Weapon-Free Zone in Central Asia which entered into force on March 21, 2009. This Treaty represents an important step toward strengthening the nuclear non-proliferation regime, promoting cooperation in the peaceful use of nuclear energy, and furthering cooperation in the environmental rehabilitation of territories affected by radioactive contamination. Since 2010 we have annual consultative meetings of States parties.

The Central Asian Nuclear-Weapon-Free Zone is distinguished by a number of characteristics. First, this zone includes a state which previously possessed nuclear weapons. Secondly, it is the first nuclear-weapon-free zone established in the Northern Hemisphere. Thirdly, it is first time that a nuclear-weapon-free zone has been created in a region having a long border with two states possessing nuclear weapons. Another distinctive feature of the Treaty is that its parties are required to conclude agreements with the International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA) on the implementation of comprehensive safeguards, pursuant to the Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons (NPT), and to add the additional protocol to their respective safeguards agreements with the IAEA. In

addition the States Parties pledged to comply with the Comprehensive Nuclear-Test-Ban Treaty and the Convention on the Physical Protection of Nuclear Material. We regard these provisions as the first line of defense against nuclear terrorism. And finally, among the innovative features of the Zone are provisions that call for efforts to remediate the environmental damage to the region resulting from prior nuclear weapons activities.

The issue of mitigating the environmental consequences of uranium mining and associated nuclear fuel cycle activities in the production of nuclear weapons is a great concern of our countries.

In this regard the UN General Assembly in 2013 adopted the Resolution “The Role of the International Community in Averting the Radiation Threat in Central Asia”, noting the importance of remediating areas affected by former uranium extraction plants and recognizing the need to devise and promote effective programmes for the responsible and safe management of radioactive and toxic waste in Central Asia.

There are number of tailings with toxic radioactive wastes left by the mining industry in Central Asia. The conditions of the tailings have further deteriorated over the past decades, after those industries were shutdown or reoriented, and in a number of cases the situation is close to catastrophic.

This situation is aggravated by the fact that many burial sites of highly toxic and firstly uranium waste are located in active seismic zones, landslide risk areas, close to ground water zones and transboundary river banks. In the event of natural disasters, degradation of protective structures, the highly toxic substances from these tailings will surely seep into the rivers and other fresh water sources. It would have major consequences not only for millions of people and the environment, but also for the whole sustainable development process in the countries of the region. It could take several decades and significant financial resources to mitigate the consequences of such accidents and disasters.

In this regard we urge Governments and international organizations that have expertise in the field of clean-up and disposal of radioactive contaminants to consider giving appropriate assistance, as may be requested, for radiological assessment and remedial purposes in affected areas, while noting the efforts that have been made to date in this regard.

Dear Participants,

On May 6, 2014 the five nuclear-weapon States, namely France, China, Russia, UK and US signed the Protocol on Negative Security Assurances to the Treaty on a Nuclear-Weapon-Free Zone in Central Asia. It is the first time that a protocol to nuclear-weapon-free zone treaty was signed by the nuclear “five” simultaneously.

This accomplishment marked an important milestone for enhancing both regional security in Central Asia and a global nuclear non-proliferation regime. By ratifying the Protocol, the five nuclear-weapon States will undertake legally binding obligations not to use or threaten to use nuclear weapons against the states

parties of the Treaty. To date, China, Russia, France and the UK have ratified the Protocol.

In conclusion, let me emphasize that for Central Asian states the establishment of a zone was a practical necessity driven by the need to ensure that people in our region will never suffer the consequences of a nuclear arm race.

Thank you for your attention!