



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

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**Side Event**

**“50 years of the Treaty of Tlatelolco: an inspiration to the world”**

*Statement by*

**Ambassador Luiz Filipe de Macedo Soares**

Secretary-General of OPANAL

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ECOSOC Chamber, UN Headquarters  
New York

High Representative of the Secretary General for Disarmament Affairs, Mr Kim Won -Soo  
Ambassadors,  
Representatives,  
Representatives of the Civil Society,  
Ladies and Gentlemen,

First of all, I would like to thank the Permanent Mission of Brazil, current coordinator of OPANAL at the UN Headquarters in New York, for having graciously organized this event and of course, all of you for being here.

The idea of a Latin America and a Caribbean free of nuclear weapons started here at the UN in the General Assembly in 1962. Although, the negotiation of the Treaty of Tlatelolco was conducted by the States of the region, it was a transparent process and cooperation was received from a number of other interested States. It suffices to remember that the final round of negotiations in February 1967 was attended by more than 20 extra-regional States.

The UN Secretariat provided an invaluable support in the person of a specialized officer in disarmament, Mr. William Epstein. Since then, the UN has been involved in the matter of the creation of Nuclear-Weapons-Free Zones (NWFZ) in many ways, as for example the guidelines adopted by the UN Disarmament Commission in 1999.

Three conferences gathering the five NWFZ plus Mongolia have been organized – two of them at the UN Headquarters in New York. The 115 countries involved in this process have an interest to communicate and collaborate among themselves.

In spite of their different texts, the five treaties establishing NWFZ have similar aims. They are not static objects. Together they compose a movement in the direction of freeing the world of nuclear weapons.

It is important that the cycle of conferences of States Members of NWFZ have continuity. This could be facilitated by the creation of an informal contact group composed by some Members of each zone meeting informally at the UN in order to exchange ideas regularly.

Among other objectives, the main one being the elimination of all nuclear weapons, the contact between Members of NWFZ could favour progress in different areas including the establishment of new zones starting with a zone free of all weapons of mass destruction in the Middle East.

The golden jubilee of the Treaty of Tlatelolco was celebrated on 14 February in the place of its birth, Mexico City. The XXV Session of the General Conference of OPANAL, was attended by Member States at the ministerial level, delegations from the six States Party to the Additional Protocols to the Treaty of Tlatelolco, representatives of the NWFZ of Southeast and Central Asia, international organizations and civil society.

On that occasion, the General Conference adopted a Declaration which has been circulated as UN General Assembly document A/71/803.

The exchange of views during the XXV Session of OPANAL General Conference was especially rich. We will shortly be publishing the proceedings of the Session, but I consider it appropriate to quote now from the messages sent by the two States possessing the largest arsenals of nuclear weapons.

The Minister of Foreign Affairs of the Russian Federation, Mr. Lavrov, declared “*The Treaty’s contribution to further strengthening the nuclear non-proliferation regime and ensuring global security and stability can be hardly overestimated.*”

The message received by Secretary of State Mr. Tillerson of the United States contains the following affirmation “*By keeping Latin America and the Caribbean free of nuclear weapons and establishing a model for other regions to follow, the Treaty of Tlatelolco serves as the international model for limiting the risks of nuclear war and strengthening regional nuclear non-proliferation.*”

Opening the Conference, the President of Mexico, Mr. Enrique Peña Nieto stated that “*El Tratado de Tlatelolco es una prueba patente de la eficacia y vigencia de los acuerdos multilaterales. Su esencia es clara: ningún Estado, por poderoso que sea, puede pretender imponer su voluntad en contra de los principios forjados por la comunidad internacional.*”

It is not a coincidence that the Conference starting today, here, to negotiate a legally binding instrument on the prohibition of nuclear weapons is presided by a Latin-American, Ambassador Elayne Whyte of Costa Rica.

The Member States of OPANAL have steadily demanded this step to be taken as it can be seen in the declarations issued by them in the last few years.

The American scientist Carl Sagan described what would be the result of a nuclear war as “the nuclear winter”. Today we are living a “nuclear spring” thanks to the vast majority of the international community.

Thank you.