



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

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Side Event

“Nuclear-Weapon-Free Zones and Mongolia”

Statement *by*

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Secretary-General

Agency for the Prohibition of Nuclear Weapons in
Latin America and the Caribbean

(OPANAL)

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The Agency for the Prohibition of Nuclear Weapons in Latin America and the Caribbean (OPANAL) is deeply grateful to Ambassador Mauro Vieira and the Permanent Mission of Brazil - Member State currently assuring the coordination of OPANAL in New York and current President of the Council of OPANAL - for organizing this informal meeting gathering representatives of States parties to the Treaties that establish Nuclear-Weapon-Free Zones plus Mongolia, as well as from other States and friends from civil society organizations. This ample attendance shows that these Zones, a novel creation of International Law, concern everybody, not only those States and people within their respective boundaries.

I acknowledge with pleasure the presence of the Under-Secretary General and High Representative, Ms Izumi Nakamitsu, who brings the important support of the Office for Disarmament Affairs.

Our foremost intention in organizing this informal meeting is to enhance the role of Nuclear-Weapon-Free Zones for our common objective of a world free of those weapons of mass destruction. Such Zones essentially share a common juridical nature. The legal instruments establishing them are similar to each other. On the other hand, it is undeniable that each of the five treaties, assembling a total of 114 States, responds to its own political peculiarities.

Moreover, we have to take into consideration the geographical factor. Distance and specific original political concerns do not erase the common goal but do not necessarily facilitate contact and dialogue concerning the experience and perspectives of the ensemble of States that share the common situation of belonging to a Zone free of nuclear weapons. I should add to this picture the institutional aspect. Only Tlatelolco and Pelindaba provide the establishment of institutions to ensure compliance with the respective treaties.

These considerations justify the interest of having periodical conferences of Parties and signatories of Treaties creating Nuclear-Weapon-Free Zones.

This idea was conceived in OPANAL in 1998. Six years later, Mexico took the initiative to invite all interested States to a Conference, which took place in Mexico City, in April 2005.

It is interesting to note that on that occasion, the Treaty of Pelindaba was not yet in force and the countries of Central Asia had not yet gone beyond affirming their desire to constitute a Nuclear-Weapon-Free Zone. The five Treaties now in force and the status of Mongolia demonstrate that the movement that began with Tlatelolco in 1967 has a dynamic political force. It grew larger and will hopefully expand in the coming years.

A broadly encompassing Declaration was adopted in that first Conference in Mexico City, showing in some 40 paragraphs the unity and strength of views on the problems posed by nuclear weapons and the policies needed to overcome them.

If any other justification was needed for the initiative of 2005 and for acknowledging its success, it is enough to consider that the States belonging to the Zones promoted two further Conferences, in 2010 and 2015. An important aspect was that both were convened through UN General Assembly Resolutions, namely 64/52 and 69/66, adopted by overwhelming majorities, virtual consensus. Thus, the Conferences were not an affair limited to a group of States. They interested the whole of the membership of the United Nations.

Both Resolutions clearly indicated the objective of the Conferences: *“to consider ways and means to enhance consultations and cooperation among States parties and signatories, the treaty agencies and other interested States with the purpose of promoting coordination and convergence in the implementation of the provisions of the treaties and in the strengthening the regime of nuclear disarmament and non-proliferation”*.

In addition, the Resolutions urged the development of activities of cooperation and coordination.

The Declaration adopted in 2010 goes considerably further in proposing specific political actions, including the creation of additional zones free of nuclear weapons in several regions.

The failure of the 2015 Conference of Nuclear-Weapon-Free Zones to adopt a final document was due, we all know, to procedural problems. That circumstance does not point to any exhaustion or any kind of impasse in the process of exchange of views and experiences among States party and signatories of Nuclear-Weapon-Free Zone Treaties. It is therefore important to start planning a fourth Conference, which could take place one day before the opening of the X NPT Review Conference in 2020 in New York.

Preparation would be necessary and an informal meeting of States party and signatories could be organized in Geneva next year alongside the second session of the Preparatory Committee for the NPT Review Conference.

As you know, the first two Conferences were respectively coordinated by Mexico and Chile, both Parties to the Treaty of Tlatelolco. The third Conference was coordinated by Indonesia, a State party to the Treaty of Bangkok. It would be highly desirable that a State party to one of the three other treaties, or Mongolia, could take up the coordination in case, of course, it is decided to hold the fourth Conference.

I would like to touch briefly on the subject of contact among the Nuclear-Weapon-Free Zones.

In the commemoration of the 50th Anniversary of the Treaty of Tlatelolco, in Mexico City, on 14 February 2017 we had the pleasure of receiving representatives from the Nuclear Weapon-Free Zones of Southeast Asia and Central Asia. We would have been delighted to have representatives from the two other Zones.

Besides solemn festivities, it would be very useful to permanently exchange information and experiences. Concerning OPANAL, you have our website in addition to the correspondence we try to maintain with the sister Zones.

A focal point or person for each Zone and a possible informal get together from time to time here at the UN could be of great help for increasing our influence in order to reach the common goal of a world free of nuclear weapons.

Thank you.