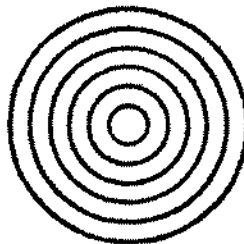


AGENCY FOR THE  
PROHIBITION OF NUCLEAR WEAPONS  
IN LATIN AMERICA



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GENERAL CONFERENCE  
Seventh Regular Session  
Mexico City, April 21-24, 1981

Statement by the Secretary General,  
Dr. Héctor Gros Espiell

This appearance of mine at the Opening of the Seventh Regular Session of the General Conference, is essentially due to the circumstance that this will be the last time I address the supreme body of the Agency as Secretary General of OPANAL.

Elected in November of 1972, at the First Extraordinary Session, I submitted my Reports to the Third, Fourth, Fifth and Sixth Regular Sessions, held in 1973, 1975, 1977 and 1979, as well as at the Second Extraordinary Session, convoked in February of 1977 to commemorate the Tenth Anniversary of the Treaty for the Prohibition of Nuclear Weapons in Latin America. On those occasions, to the written Report submitted in compliance with Article 10, paragraph 4 of the Treaty of Tlatelolco, I added a statement, made at each of the Openings, in which I summarized the main points of my Report to the General Conference. Today, I must follow another method. Naturally, in the written Report I have prepared, document CG/203, you will find a complete analysis of each and every activity carried out by the Agency between April 1979 and April 1981, that is, between the Quito Conference and the one we are holding today. I submit it for your

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consideration. But, in contrast to former meetings of the General Conference, in my address today I shall not summarize the most important items of my Report but shall limit myself to making some general remarks on the meaning and present worth of the existence of a Zone free of nuclear weapons in Latin America, and concerning the situation that exists in the world with regard to nuclear disarmament in its relation to international peace and security as judged from the point of view of a Latin American.

Regarding the most important problems dealt with in my Report, particularly with those referring to the status of the Treaty of Tlatelolco and its two Additional Protocols and to the operation of the Control System and the most important question of Safeguards Agreements, I prefer to analyze them at the time the General Conference studies these specific Agenda items during the coming days. At that time, I shall make my comments, pin-pointing the current situation in reference to them, the prospects that exist and my opinions concerning the way solutions must be sought for questions posed and still unanswered.

Before setting forth my points of view concerning zones free of atomic weapons in general and those of Latin America, in particular, as well as on the problems of nuclear disarmament and the international situation prevailing today, I would like to refer to some preliminary questions that I feel must undeniably be dealt with.

In the first place, I want to express my sincere, deep and enduring appreciation to all the Latin American countries which, as a result of my designation as Secretary General of OPANAL, have provided me with an opportunity to dedicate these years of my life to the high and noble enter-

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prise of striving, at the head of this Agency, for the nuclear disarmament of Latin America and the consecration of the aims of the Treaty of Tlatelolco, the opportunity to reaffirm before the entire world this incomparable example given by Latin America. It has been an exceptional demonstration of the will of a Continent to dedicate its efforts to progress and development and not to the madness implied in any race for arms. These years have been both positive and revealing to me. While working with enthusiasm to comply adequately with an international function resulting from a common enterprise that is a credit to Latin America, I have had the satisfaction of facing my retirement with the conviction that the Treaty of Tlatelolco today constitutes one of the most positive elements of the international system: one that will contribute to international peace and security; and that the action began on February 14 of 1967, in the scope of Latin American nations and the States that are or should be Parties to Protocols I and II, is on the verge of reaching full and successful culmination. These words, naturally, do not imply ignorance of the difficulties that have been met and some of which still exist in seeking a solution to the problems of the status of the Treaty and its two Protocols.

Having thus manifested my appreciation and gratitude, as well as my complete identification with the principles and aims of the Treaty, I would like to recall that the General Conference is meeting today in Mexico, after having held its two past Sessions in Caracas and Quito. The decision to hold the General Conference in two capitals of State Parties to the Treaty of Tlatelolco, was based on the desire to confirm practically how this multilateral Treaty truly responds to the principles and the aims of all Latin American countries as a common enterprise to which they have contributed and

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continue to contribute with their will and their efforts.

I believe that in the future, it will continue to be useful for the General Conference to meet in other capital cities of the Continent thus keeping this positive contact with the peoples and Governments of the States that are Parties to the Treaty of Tlatelolco.

But today, the General Conference is meeting again in Mexico, the country that is the permanent headquarters of the Agency according to the terms of Article 7,4 of the Treaty of Tlatelolco. I consider that it is only just to reiterate, on this occasion, all that Mexico has meant in achieving that the Treaty of Tlatelolco become a reality during the process of its elaboration between 1964 and 1967, and that, once it was opened for signature and established the Agency it had envisaged, it could proceed successfully in the complex process aimed at obtaining signatures and ratifications from all Latin American countries in order that OPANAL could develop its activities, become effective the Control System created by the Treaty and entailing with other international agencies of the same type, projecting —through a complex and diversified activity— this Latin American example on all the appropriate international forums.

On expressing my appreciation to the Government of Mexico for the constant and decided support of which I have had so many tangible evidence during my years as Secretary General in my permanent contact with the highest officials of the country, I want to express the hope that this co-operation and support will continue to be forthcoming in the future of OPANAL, as an international institution, and will be extended to the person that the General Conference designates as the next Secretary General. And let me further

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say that to this support may be added those of all the State Parties to the Treaty as well as of the International Agencies with which OPANAL has had contact, particularly with the United Nations, the International Atomic Energy Agency, the Organization of American States, the Inter American Nuclear Energy Committee, the Latin American Energy Agency and the Latin American Economic System.

Although the present situation and prospects of the nuclear weapon free zone of Latin America can be considered relatively positive, the question of the creation of other nuclear weapon free zones has made absolutely no progress. Despite the resolutions of the General Assembly of the United Nations in its recent sessions, nothing has been accomplished.

The creation of these zones continues to be a hypothesis, the realization of which, daily, appears more difficult in view of the fact that none of the political circumstances that impede or hamper it has disappeared. Under these conditions, the nuclear weapon free zone of Latin America, considered in the past as one destined to coexist with other free zones forming a joint effort towards disarmament and as essential contribution to peace, will have to survive, perhaps for years, as the sole example of practical execution of a noble and visionary idea. This circumstance will unquestionably oblige us to reassess many problems and make a new analysis of the Latin American situation in regard to the great questions of disarmament, security and peace.

This fact deserves a new analysis of concepts.

The lack of prospects for the creation of other nuclear weapon free zones aside from that of Latin America, deprives this zone of its global scope and its contribution

to international peace and security that it could have if it coexisted with other zones covering a large part of the world's surface.

It upholds its great importance for Latin America by avoiding an absurd, insane race for nuclear arms among the countries of the Continent and by preventing any possibility of nuclear warfare in Latin America, but it must be admitted that it lacks the world importance it would have, as a means of contributing to efforts aimed at arresting the possibility of an intercontinental nuclear confrontation, if other analogous zones existed.

If, to the foregoing, we add the failure of efforts to limit and balance the development of nuclear weapons in the hands of the great powers and other medium powers, as well as the frustration of the almost utopic will to achieve general, complete and universal nuclear disarmament, the extreme danger of the present situation becomes apparent.

This danger is increased by the fatalism which the world, stunned by the arms furore and incapable of reacting in the face of the warlike euphoria that leads it toward the abyss and hecatomb, attends as a terrified but resigned spectator of a process that would seem to guide humanity inevitably toward a future Apocalypse.

The intention of these words is not to create an atmosphere of fear and timidity. The concepts deduced from an objective analysis of the gloomy reality of today and from serene reflection on the consequences of the present arms race, which has surpassed all foreseeable limits and presents obvious signs of increasing its speed in the immediate future, are undeniable.

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The countries of Latin America, which have offered the insuperable example of the Treaty of Tlatelolco, should take the lead in a veritable crusade throughout the world to expose this terrible reality and mobilize public opinion on a world scale in favor of peace, security and disarmament. It is essential that we support all efforts, and redouble our own, to give new vitality to universal comprehension of the hecatomb that a nuclear war would be for humanity. As a result of regrettable factors, awareness of this extremity would appear to have been drowsy today.

The need for the signature and ratification of the Treaty of Tlatelolco by all the States of the Zone at the earliest possible date, and that the two Additional Protocols be, respectively, signed and ratified by all States having international responsibility for territories located within the Zone, continues to be the principal concern of the Secretary General. It is not necessary to repeat here the reasons for this necessity, nor enter into detail concerning the negative effects, in relation to the efficacy of the Treaty, the fact that these instruments have not yet entered into force for a small number of States. But it is advisable to again point out that a combined effort of all the Governments of Member States is needed to procure final realization of this process, particularly now that the proliferation of nuclear weapons seems to constitute an immediate danger of renewed significance and gravity which does not fail to threaten even the Latin American Zone. It is necessary to make use of the elements provided by the present international moment to give impetus to negotiations and procedures, both on a multilateral and a bilateral scale, in order that the Treaty of Tlatelolco and its Additional Protocol I be signed and ratified by all States that can become Parties to

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them at the earliest possible date. This eminently plausible aim, fully supported by international public opinion, would make it possible to definitely withdraw Latin America from the danger of nuclear war and, at the same time, insure the peoples of our region of the benefits of full pacific use of nuclear energy. The progress achieved during the past two years has been very slight as compared to the situation analyzed in my last Report which covered the 1977-1979 period. It is necessary to recognize that there have been serious difficulties, particularly in regard to the causes that have prevented or made difficult the signing of the Treaty by Cuba and Guyana. But I believe that these difficulties can be overcome if a collective effort is made in good faith, to comprehend and eliminate their causes. It can consequently be hoped that the desired conclusion of the process will not be impossible to attain. I base my speculation on the concrete and specific data contained in my Report, in which I have also pointed out the procedures and negotiations which, in my opinion, must be completed or undertaken in the immediate future.

If these problems are solved, as I hope, a goal that only a short time ago seemed unattainable will have been reached, showing the unanimous will to peace of Latin America and the comprehension and solidarity that this continental undertaking has met within the International Community.

The obstacles and difficulties that have been overcome to reach the present result, and the fulfillment of the final purposes now in sight despite the problems still to be solved, are an exceptional proof of the creative capacity of Latin American pacifist philosophy and the political and negotiating ability of Latin American Governments.



The constantly increasing importance of the Treaty of Tlatelolco, recognition of its significance and influence in the world environment cannot be doubted, nor can it be ignored that it is the most characteristic contribution of Latin America to international policy and law that has been made in the last years. These are extremes that I cannot fail to mention. But, at the same time I cannot hide the negative and pessimistic political outlook and the need to take into consideration the question of the Latin American nuclear weapon free zone within the present political context and the world situation with respect to warlike nuclear developments. Only this positive and realistic view of the negative factors existing in the Zone and the world at large can make of Latin America a vital and active element favoring disarmament, peace and security, not only at a regional but also at a world level.

I leave my office satisfied with the tasks accomplished, aware of the present limitations of the Tlatelolco System but convinced of the truth and greatness of the cause of which the Treaty for the Prohibition of Nuclear Weapons in Latin America is a symbol.

The honor I received from the State Parties to the Treaty, which I have appreciated and continue to appreciate, has confirmed me in my Latin American ideals and in the conviction that the contribution of our Continent to nuclear disarmament constitutes an extreme of obvious significance for regional and world peace and security, within the limitations I have pointed out.

I conclude my work at a moment of crisis, of doubt, of skepticism and of grave threat to these values —which are objectives and purposes not to be eluded in

international coexistence—, at a moment in which the arms race is reaching ever-higher levels and when it would appear that a road is opening that would lead to a nuclear hecatomb.

Nuclear war is, in essence, incompatible with geographic limitation. The use of tactical nuclear weapons, scientifically and technically possible, does not, however, signify localization or limitation of the effects of an eventual nuclear war. The use, in battle, of tactical nuclear arms, would only be the prologue to a nuclear conflagration the consequences of which would be world-wide. No territory in the world, no inhabitant of our planet, regardless of where he might be, would completely escape the consequences of a nuclear war. Even though present nuclear arsenals—which are large enough to destroy the Planet Earth several times— should not be completely used, their partial use (in the hypothetical supposition that it were strategically and militarily possible) would be enough to sow destruction and death, immediate and lingering, among the members of humanity as a whole and to put an end to civilization as we know it.

The renewed possibilities, reborn today, of a war in and from outer space, which would necessarily presuppose the use of nuclear weapons, makes the present panorama even more tragically negative.

In the face of this prospect, which is not that of science fiction but a cold and truthful expression of an uncontestable fact, it is essential that we reaffirm with forceful conviction that nuclear war is avoidable. It must be hoped that the conscience of all men and all peoples will make it possible to return to the roads of sanity, to keep these years in which we live from becoming the prologue to a

war which would not be a Third World War but the ultimate,  
final and Apocalyptic conflict on our Earth.