

AGENCY FOR THE
PROHIBITION OF NUCLEAR WEAPONS
IN LATIN AMERICA



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Address by the Chairman of the Delegation of Ecuador,
Dr. José Ricardo Martínez Cobo

1. Two years ago our Agency temporarily transferred its seat to the exact place where the world is divided into two halves. There, very high up in the Andes, in Quito, my country's capital city, the Sixth Regular Session of the General Conference was held. Ecuador, a country of profound and enduring vocation for peace, open to co-operation and good understanding, received OPANAL with satisfaction and heartfelt pleasure, recognizing it as a true expression of a solidarity with roots that go much deeper than mere geographic proximity. As a matter of fact, the Treaty of Tlatelolco is the first strictly Latin American covenant, which places it in a truly exceptional situation in the past, and one of great strength in the future.

2. On that occasion the Chancellor of the Republic of Ecuador pointed out that the Treaty for the Prohibition of Nuclear Weapons in Latin America, which was signed in this very hall, is not only a bond imposed by the inherent need for survival, but is also the true fulfillment of the mandate of the shapers of our national identities. Like no other instrument, it embodies the dream of Bolivar, whose desire was that, from the Isthmus of Panama, tropical apex where the two

Americas meet, the newly-independent Republics should commit themselves to do away with any possibility of aggression, and decide to form a united front in brotherhood that would let their peoples live without fear or tribulation.

3. The Treaty of Tlatelolco is not only the combined effort to protect the region from the vicissitudes and the terrifying dangers associated with nuclear energy used for purposes that are not strictly civilian in nature, but it is also undoubtedly one of Latin America's most effective contribution to political philosophy, International Law and world disarmament. The United Nations General Assembly has repeatedly recognized this, proclaiming it to be a model and example that ought to be applied to other regions of the globe. And the great nuclear powers also recognize it, by sending Delegations of Observers of the highest level to all our meetings.

4. The Secretary General will inform us of the progress made during the two years that have passed between the Quito and the Mexico City meetings. Perhaps nothing spectacular has occurred, but what is clear is that OPANAL, a young Agency directed with remarkable ability by a brilliant Uruguayan jurist and diplomat, who unfortunately will soon leave us as required by the terms of the Treaty, has in a few short years become a stable and viable international Agency, with clear objectives and well-planned programs. With the end of the mandate of Ambassador Gros Espiell, to whom I express my admiration and special recognition for the extraordinary work he has done in more than eight years, a very important stage in the life of the Agency is drawing to a close.

5. In fact, we can already recognize with deep satisfaction that the principal objective of the Treaty has been met. With the great majority of Latin American countries

having subscribed to the Treaty, there is every reason to think, in view of the definite and persistent statements made by the leaders of Argentina, Brazil and Chile, which, having signed, have not yet complied with ratification or the waiver requirement, that they will soon become Parties, thus culminating in the longed-for process of denuclearization of the hemisphere. All territories of the region in any way possessed by non-Latin American countries have been covered by the Treaty of Tlatelolco, through subscribing to Additional Protocol I. Similarly, all the nuclear powers, in signing Protocol II, guarantee that they will respect the sovereign decision of the Latin American peoples to prevent the mass destruction of their population and the annihilation of their cultural heritage, built up by the arduous effort of countries generations.

6. With respect to the other objectives of the Treaty, unfortunately, no more nuclear-weapon-free zones have been created, despite repeated United Nations resolutions. The establishment of such zones remains a hypothesis ever more difficult to bring about in reality. Therefore, the problem of establishing co-operative relationships with them is non-existent, and will remain so for many years. As for the Control System for nuclear disarmament of the region, it is functioning without problems and has caused no difficulties. All of this leads us to think that the time has come to give more substance to OPANAL, which of necessity must begin to act in the field of the peaceful uses of atomic energy.

7. We cannot even conceive of the sort of selfish discrimination that would proscribe or delay the right to the use of nuclear energy for peaceful purposes here in this

Continent of Peace. That is a sovereign attribute of all States, recognized by the Treaty of Tlatelolco. Technological progress and great scientific achievements should be at the service of mankind without distinction of race or social or economic condition, in order to promote the balanced progress of humanity. To the terrible inequalities that still persist between rich and poor peoples, industrialized and underdeveloped nations, there must not be added another monopoly over the tremendous energy produced by the splitting of the atom. It is urgent and essential to broaden collaboration and the exchange of experiences among States, and it is necessary to speed up the training of personnel in order to take advantage of the immense opportunities that the peaceful use of nuclear energy brings, within the framework of the pertinent safeguards of the International Atomic Energy Agency.

8. Through various resolutions of the General Conference and co-operation agreements with other international organizations, the juridical structure already exists that will allow OPANAL to undertake the gigantic task of co-ordination and preparation, so that all Latin American countries—large or small, strong or weak— can in some way make use of the potential of this new source of energy. The truth of the matter is, however, that despite the efforts of the Secretariat, the Agency has not yet been able to draw up programs in this field, which offers so many possibilities. It is up to you, fellow Delegates, to provide those decisions with a practical content, committing your Governments to share with OPANAL its experiences in dealing with other countries that lack the means to build thermonuclear reactors, or that feel the anxiety of not being able to resolve the severe problem brought about by the increase in fossil-fuel prices by replacing such fuels with nuclear energy. What

is called for is joint, interinstitutional international action to place the forces of death at the service of life.

It is a great privilege and a matter of extraordinary good fortune for our Agency to have its permanent seat in this magnificent country, which does honor to our heritage through the dignity and courage with which it marks the northern frontier of our way of being and way of life, and through the noble idealism with which it always fosters Latin American unity. The true inspirer of the Treaty of Tlatelolco has been the Mexican people, who have brought to it their enthusiastic and solid support through their legitimate and democratic Administrations.

The presence among us of the Secretary of Foreign Relations, Mr. Jorge Castañeda, eminent internationalist and jurist, serves to confirm once more that lasting support.