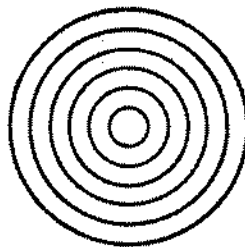


AGENCY FOR THE
PROHIBITION OF NUCLEAR WEAPONS
IN LATIN AMERICA



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Address delivered by the Foreign Secretary
of Mexico, His Excellency
Jorge Castañeda

I was privileged to personally participate in the whole negotiation process of the Treaty for the Prohibition of Nuclear Weapons in Latin America and have closely followed the installation and first steps of OPANAL, the agency envisaged in the Treaty to facilitate and supervise its application.

I have observed the expansion of the Treaty of Tlatelolco in regard to its scope of application and fourteen years from its presentation for signature, I feel great satisfaction in the fact that the State Parties have now reached the number of twenty two, including young States which have become independent recently. On the other hand, I have been concerned that some sister countries still find sufficient motives to avoid formally committing themselves, through this means, to renunciation of bellicose use of nuclear energy.

Fourteen years, as I said, have passed since the majority of Latin-American countries united their efforts to establish the first and, up to now, the only zone free of nuclear weapons in a heavily populated region of the world.

The rise of this scheme, product of the pacific will and the political imagination of Latin-Americans, was honored by the world community, not only because it was proposed before the Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons, but also because it constituted an example of the contribution that a group of countries could make in tangible deeds, toward the preservation of peace and international security. Unfortunately, circumstances of widely varying types have impeded other regions from following this example and continue to make it difficult, even in our own region, for the process to culminate in the full effectiveness of the regime established by the Treaty of Tlatelolco.

Consequently, today, I want to reaffirm my Government's belief in the aims and principles that first led to the creation of the Treaty, and reiterate Mexico's support to the work of OPANAL. I believe that no effort should be spared to ensure that these aims be reached and these principles be consolidated, for if they were valid in 1962, a year in which the concept of a Latin-American zone free of nuclear weapons was first conceived of, their recognition and application have again become most urgent today.

In fact, at the beginning of the sixties, Latin America became aware of the danger it ran if it were dragged into a confrontation of the two blocks under conditions that, by their very nature, did not exclude the precipitation of an atomic holocaust. The Treaty of Tlatelolco reflects the measure of our rejection of such an eventuality. Then, came years of relative calm, and, although international tension never completely disappeared, there existed hope that the powers possessing this type of arms would at least renounce the use of the most destructive weapon ever conceived by man-

kind. The two superpowers also foresaw the danger and, as a result, opened negotiations for the limitation of strategic arms.

Unfortunately, things have changed today, and we are again living through a stage similar to that which was precisely the cause that brought into being the Treaty of Tlatelolco. The world at large has turned again to belligerent rhetoric and its will to pursue a policy of disarmament negotiation has drastically weakened. In our environment, we observe with profound concern that there exists the intention of again turning Latin America into a zone of confrontation between conflicting blocks. It is for all this that the spirit of the Treaty of Tlatelolco has again taken on all its original strength, for we are convinced that our region should never find itself involved in a power play having nothing to do with the real interests of Latin-American countries nor the values that its peoples recognize.

I do not want to close without rendering homage to the work of the Secretary General. At the forefront of OPANAL, we have been able to count on the unyielding dedication of Dr. Héctor Gros Espiell, who has dedicated himself to an extraordinarily complex task. His consecration and his unflagging spirit have given the Agency a dynamic drive to which we owe, in large part, the growth of areas free of nuclear weapons in Latin America. For his steadfastness and dedication to the goals set forth in the Treaty of Tlatelolco, he shall receive our gratitude.

Finally, on declaring today, Tuesday, April 21, 1981, formally opened the Seventh Regular Session of the General Conference of the Agency for the Prohibition of Nuclear Weapons in Latin America, I express my warmest wishes for the success in its work.