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**PREPARED REMARKS OF
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UNITED STATES OF AMERICA**

Mr. Chairman, Mr. Secretary General, and distinguished Delegates. It is an honor for me to represent the United States at this 16th Regular Session of the General Conference of the Agency for the Prohibition of Nuclear Weapons in Latin America and the Caribbean. The United States is privileged to have had a long association with the Treaty of Tlatelolco, dating from 1963 when the United Nations General Assembly endorsed with U.S. support the concept of a nuclear weapon free zone in Latin America.

The people of Latin America can take pride in the fact that their political leaders established the first nuclear weapon free zone in a populated region. Their foresight put into place, even before the global Nuclear Non-Proliferation Treaty, a framework designed to prohibit the acquisition and deployment of nuclear weapons in the territories of Latin America and the Caribbean. Moreover, the Treaty of Tlatelolco was the first Treaty to require its parties to negotiate an agreement with the IAEA for the application of safeguards on all nuclear activities to assist in verifying compliance.

Significant progress has been made this decade in gaining additional adherence to the Treaty, and we are hopeful it will soon be accepted by all states in the region. There would seem to be virtually no prospect today of nuclear weapons competition among the states of Latin America and the Caribbean. This situation is due to the courage of your leaders and of the foresight of those

statesmen who negotiated this landmark Treaty. It has helped to strengthen peace and security throughout the hemisphere.

Nuclear weapon free zone arrangements can be substantially strengthened through support from nuclear weapon states and from states external to the region with territories in the region. The United States is pleased to contribute to the Treaty of Tlatelolco through adherence to Protocols I and II.

In 1968, Vice President Humphrey signed Protocol II wherein the United States agreed to respect the denuclearization of the region as set forth in the Treaty and not use or threaten to use nuclear weapons against parties to the Treaty. This Protocol was ratified by President Nixon in 1971. In 1977, President Carter signed Protocol I wherein the United States agreed to apply the provisions of the Treaty to territories in the zone for which it is internationally responsible. Protocol I was ratified by President Reagan in 1981. Both Protocols have been ratified and are in force for the United States. Pursuant to Protocol I, the United States concluded and brought into force an IAEA safeguards agreement that covers the relevant territories.

This history demonstrates the consistent support of the Treaty since its inception by all U.S. Administrations. Two years ago upon the 30th anniversary of the opening of the Treaty for signature, President Clinton praised the Treaty in a written statement as "an historic and early step by the members of the international community to stem the spread of nuclear weapons."

The Treaty establishes a framework in which nuclear energy can be used for economic development and social progress while minimizing the risk of diversion for military purposes. The United States has provided significant assistance to the peaceful nuclear programs of parties to the Treaty of Tlatelolco. This has occurred both bilaterally and through the IAEA and has ranged from the supply of reactors and fuel to assistance in the use of radioisotopes for agriculture or medicine.

We are also pleased that cooperative arrangements have resulted in the United States taking back U.S. -supplied spent research reactor fuel from five countries in the region, and we are working with a sixth country toward a shipment next year.

Our national laboratories have formed alliances with several nuclear research institutes in the region. U.S. nuclear experts have lectured throughout the region and nuclear scientists and

technicians from your countries have been trained in the United States. This cooperation has involved a wide range of peaceful nuclear applications as well as safeguards related matters. We will continue to pursue cooperation in the peaceful uses of nuclear energy within the Latin American and Caribbean region in a manner that supports nuclear nonproliferation goals.

Parties to the Treaty are continuing to pursue efforts toward further consolidation of the Treaty regime. One means for contributing to that objective is to ensure that the strongest possible safeguards measures are being applied through the IAEA.

As many of you know, in May 1997 the IAEA Board of Governors approved an additional protocol for improving the IAEA safeguards system. Globally, forty-five countries, including the United States, have signed the protocol to date, and seven have brought their protocols into force.

Broad acceptance of this protocol throughout Latin America and the Caribbean would further strengthen the nuclear nonproliferation regime in the region. We would urge all countries in the region to adhere to the additional protocol and to work with the IAEA towards signing it and bringing it into force before the NPT Review Conference, which begins in April of next year. Widespread acceptance of the protocol throughout Latin America and the Caribbean would help to encourage similar action in other regions.

In conclusion, I want to thank the Members of OPANAL for the opportunity to participate in this General Conference. The Conference demonstrates on a regional basis the type of international cooperation that is essential to preventing the further spread of nuclear weapons.