



XIX Regular Session of the General Conference
Santiago, Republic of Chile, 7-8 November, 2005.

**STATEMENT BY AMBASSADOR SHEILA SEALY MONTEITH
PERMANENT REPRESENTATIVE OF JAMAICA TO OPANAL
TO THE XIX SESSION OF THE GENERAL CONFERENCE**

Mr. President,

The Jamaican delegation congratulates you on your election to the chairmanship of this meeting. We are assured of your able guidance of the proceedings and we pledge the delegation's support of your efforts. We congratulate the delegations of Mexico and Cuba for their election as Vice-Presidents.

Jamaica thanks also the delegation of Cuba, which served as President over the preceding period.

We would wish to thank the Government of Chile for graciously hosting this Conference.

My delegation expresses appreciation to the Secretary-General of OPANAL, Mr. Edmundo Vargas Carreño, for the steadfastness with which he has pursued the activities and programmes of the Organization in seeking to strengthen its role and function. We express appreciation to him and his staff for the guidance they continue to provide to Member States, and thank him for his comprehensive report to the Conference.

We note the valuable work that has been done by the Council in steering the activities of OPANAL over the reporting period.

Similarly, the Committee on Contributions and Administrative and Budgetary Matters has recorded a significant achievement with the recommendations to amend the scale of contributions

and to rationalize the budget of the Organization to contribute to greater efficiencies and effectiveness.

Mr. President,

My delegation was pleased to have been able to participate in the International Conference of States Parties and Signatories of Treaties that Establish Nuclear-Weapons-Free-Zones which took place in Mexico City in April of this year. We congratulate the Government of Mexico for the initiative, and welcome its outcome. It is our hope that through the engagement with other NWFZs it will serve as an additional fillip to the cause of nuclear disarmament and non-proliferation globally.

In the words of the Secretary General of OPANAL in his report "by adopting the Declaration of the Representatives of the States that make up the four current NWFZs, the non-nuclear-weapons States have made a historic contribution to the cause of non-proliferation - and more importantly - to the goal of complete and total nuclear disarmament."

As a small island developing country, Jamaica does not possess nuclear arsenals nor indeed the capacity to do so, and we are fully convinced of the importance of the global effort towards non-proliferation and disarmament. For this reason, we have long been a State Party to the Treaty of Tlatelolco and more recently ratified the IAEA Additional Protocols. We have also ratified the Comprehensive Nuclear Test-Ban Treaty and are State Party to a number of other international and regional instruments in the field of disarmament.

It is in this context that we continue to give our support to OPANAL. We believe that at the regional level, the Organization is well-placed to galvanize the efforts of its Member States in defence of non-proliferation. It can be the watchdog as it is doing in relation to the Interpretative Declarations of the Nuclear powers to Additional Protocols 1 and 11. It can also assist in the dissemination of the values and principles of non-proliferation to civil society, academia, legislators and even to the media, among others. Through these and other means, OPANAL remains a relevant tool for achieving our common purposes for the region.

Beyond its regional role, however, Jamaica also recognizes that OPANAL can be a valuable link and support system for efforts that already exist at the international level to promote

disarmament and non-proliferation. Many of our countries are members simultaneously of these organizations, and we believe that there is no inconsistency between their work and that of OPANAL, rather it is one of mutual support.

There ought to be no fear that in seeking to address the concerns of all of its Member States, OPANAL is deviating from the original interpretation of its role. Some issues require more fervour in their treatment as technology improves and facilities even more obvious violations of the rules of international conduct. We must remain vigilant and use the means at our disposal to continue to engage the community and to protect the interests of our Members.

Mr. President,

An issue of great concern to us relates to the contamination of the marine environment. We are extremely concerned at the threats to our safety and environmental health posed by the maritime transport of nuclear waste and other radioactive material through the Caribbean waters.

We emphasize the need for safety and security in relation to these transshipments, even as we understand the right of States under Article IV of the Non-Proliferation Treaty to benefit from the peaceful uses of nuclear energy. This latter should not, however, detract from the ability of others to pursue sustainable development.

We welcome therefore the attention that has already been given to the issue within the framework of the NPT. We believe that OPANAL's continued engagement with the issue is another important plank of its work and would strengthen its profile in the field. It is also a vital contribution to recognition at the larger international level of the interests of its Member States. We urge that the discussions continue with a view to determining how best we as a region can support the analysis and treatment of the issue at the global level.

Despite the challenges we face collectively, it is important that we continue to support our regional institutions in their work. Jamaica pledges to continue its efforts, despite its own national imperatives, to support the strengthening of OPANAL in a manner that redounds to the benefit of its Member States, and the Latin American and Caribbean region.

I thank you, Mr. President.