



AGENCY FOR THE PROHIBITION OF NUCLEAR WEAPONS IN
LATIN AMERICA AND THE CARIBBEAN

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**II Preparatory Committee for the 2020 Nuclear Non-Proliferation Treaty
Review Conference**

Statement by:

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Secretary-General

Agency for the Prohibition of Nuclear Weapons in Latin America and the Caribbean
OPANAL

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Mr Chairman,

In my capacity as Secretary-General of the Agency for the Prohibition of Nuclear Weapons in Latin America and the Caribbean – OPANAL, I am pleased to convey warm congratulations to you, Ambassador Adam Bugajski, for your election to conduct the Preparatory Committee for the NPT Review Conference. We had the opportunity to see your commitment when you organized regional consultations in Mexico City last February.

OPANAL is the sole intergovernmental organization entirely devoted to non-proliferation and disarmament of nuclear weapons. Latin America and the Caribbean are proud of such an achievement. The five nuclear-weapon States and the Netherlands having ratified its two Additional Protocols, the Treaty of Tlatelolco is fully effective. We are proposing, to four of those States, understandings that would solve the problem posed by some of the interpretative declarations made by them in relation to the Treaty.

Tlatelolco preceded the NPT by a little more than one year. Both Treaties reflect those times when a window of opportunity succeeded a peak of danger in the Cold War. It was urgent to avoid proliferation and the conscience dawned again on the need for disarmament. On the first issue – non-proliferation – we all agree the NPT has been basically successful. On the second – disarmament – we have seen ascending curves and we are now experiencing a descending phase.

Nuclear-Weapon-Free Zones, a breakthrough in International Law, constitute one of the most important contributions to the implementation and strengthening of the NPT. They conform, notwithstanding all individual and regional distinctions, a block of 115 States that prohibited nuclear weapons in their regions. By way of consequence, those States would not be counted as supporters of nuclear weapons. All the five Treaties that create the Zones mention nuclear disarmament as the ultimate goal.

It is fit to remind ourselves that Member States of Nuclear-Weapon-Free Zones have not withdrawn from the debates and concerns regarding international security, increasingly threatened by nuclear weapons. In the case of OPANAL, this can be attested to by the declarations and communiqués it issues every year.

Mr Chairman,

The latest reference at our disposal for the present review cycle is the 2010 Action Plan in which Action 9 encourages the establishment of further Nuclear-Weapon-Free Zones. I intend to confine my brief remarks to this topic since it is an undisputable fact that the five Zones, in accordance with Article VII of the NPT, covering more than half the Earth's surface, greatly enhance international peace and security. Nevertheless, the stumbling block that caused the failure of the 2015 Review Conference was precisely the question of establishing a zone free of weapons of mass destruction in the Middle East. The Preparatory Committee should take this matter into special consideration in order to avoid the repetition of that negative outcome. Lack of results in a Review Conference affects the whole system, not just the specific point of disagreement.

No one ignores or challenges the guideline adopted by the United Nations Disarmament Commission in 1999 according to which a nuclear-weapon-free zone should be established on the basis of arrangements freely arrived at among the States of the region concerned. This guideline is so obvious that one wonders whether anyone would think of imposing from outside the creation of a zone free of nuclear weapons. Its careful language states that the decision is arrived at not by "all the" States of the region but "among" them. There is no doubt that a Zone can be established even though not all the States in the respective region participate from the beginning. Latin America and the Caribbean is an example of that. However, all the States in the region must take part in pursuing the initiative. Since 1974, the 43 Resolutions of the UN General Assembly on the establishment of a nuclear-weapon-free zone in the Middle East have been adopted by consensus, which means all the States in that region.

The negotiation of the arrangements on a zone free of nuclear weapons should include contacts with the nuclear-weapon States, States with territories in the region under their responsibility and other interested States. The closing meeting for the negotiation of the Treaty of Tlatelolco was attended by 22 extra-regional States.

Finally, the endogenous creation of a nuclear-weapon-free zone does not prevent external States from working in favour of the establishment of a zone in a given region. Conversely, it should not be acceptable that external States stand in the way of the desires of the region concerned. That happened in the 2015 NPT Review Conference.

OPANAL would like to see the creation of further zones free of nuclear weapons. I have no doubt its Member States, if called upon, would continue to contribute with the expertise and authority earned in 50 years of an impeccable fulfilment of the provisions and objectives of the Treaty of Tlatelolco.

Mr Chairman,

In spite of the difficult times we are living through, we have reasons for hope. Last year, the Treaty on the Prohibition of Nuclear Weapons was adopted by a strong majority and opened for signature. The participating States, all of them non-nuclear-weapon States, made thereby one of the most important contributions to the implementation of Article VI in the history of the NPT.

Thank you.