



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

SECRETARIAT

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**Commemoration of the 45th Anniversary of the Signing of the
Treaty of Tlatelolco**

Statement by

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Mexico City
14 February 2012

**STATEMENT AT
CONFERENCE MARKING 45TH ANNIVERSARY
OF THE TREATY OF TLATELOLCO**

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Director General



INTERNATIONAL ATOMIC ENERGY AGENCY

Mr Chairman, Excellencies, Ladies and Gentlemen,

It is a great honour for me to participate in this important event marking the 45th anniversary of the signing of the *Treaty for the Prohibition of Nuclear Weapons in Latin America and the Caribbean*, generally known as the Treaty of Tlatelolco.

I warmly congratulate all 33 countries which are now part of this nuclear-weapon-free zone, as well as Secretary General Ubeda of the Agency for the Prohibition of Nuclear Weapons in Latin America and the Caribbean (OPANAL). I especially thank the Government of Mexico, depositary of the Treaty and our host today.

Latin America has valuable experience with arms control and disarmament to share with the world. The Treaty of Tlatelolco established the world's *first* nuclear-weapon-free zone in a populated area. There was no experience to learn from. The drafters of the Treaty had to be innovative and creative. Importantly for the international nuclear safeguards regime, the Treaty enshrined a requirement that all parties should conclude comprehensive safeguards agreements with the IAEA – and this was before the *Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons* was signed.

In establishing and implementing a nuclear-weapon-free zone in Latin America and the Caribbean, the countries concerned demonstrated the importance of dialogue and persistence. Their success was such that Tlatelolco provided the inspiration for four similar treaties in Africa, Central Asia, Southeast Asia and the South Pacific. A total of 133 countries – nearly two-thirds of the countries of the world – now belong to nuclear-weapon-free zones. This is a significant achievement, and it started here – in Mexico, 45 years ago.

I have long been convinced that nuclear-weapon-free zones are a highly relevant and effective means of non-proliferation, arms control and disarmament.

Each of the five nuclear-weapon-free zones in existence today has its own special characteristics. But they also have many important elements in common.

All nuclear-weapon-free zones prohibit the development, stationing or testing of nuclear weapons in their respective regions. They cover large inhabited areas. They provide for IAEA verification of the non-diversion of nuclear material. While banning nuclear weapons, they recognize the rights of all States in their respective regions to make full use of nuclear technologies to enhance economic and social development. They have brought real security benefits, both regionally and to the whole world.

In the years following the signing of the Treaty of Tlatelolco, Latin America remained a trailblazer in the area of arms control and disarmament. For example, in 1991, Argentina and Brazil overcame a legacy of mutual distrust and agreed on the exclusively peaceful use of nuclear energy. They created a joint agency, the Brazilian-Argentine Agency for Accounting and Control of Nuclear Materials (ABACC), to cooperate with the IAEA in verifying that nuclear materials held in both countries are not diverted to nuclear weapons. It is not an exaggeration to say that this helped to prevent a nuclear arms race in Latin America. The Treaty of Tlatelolco played an important part in creating a benign environment in which the rapprochement between Argentina and Brazil could flourish.

Ladies and Gentlemen,

Last November, I hosted an IAEA *Forum on Experience of Possible Relevance to the Creation of a Nuclear-Weapon-Free Zone in the Middle East*. There is broad international support for the establishment of a nuclear-weapon-free zone in the Middle East. But there are long-standing differences among countries of that region, and beyond, about how the issue should be approached. That is why it took 11 years to secure agreement among the countries concerned to hold the IAEA Forum.

There was considerable interest at the Forum in the experience of Latin America and the Caribbean. In particular, I recall, representatives from your region stressed the importance of confidence-building, flexibility in negotiations, transparency and political will, and the support of the international community. This is sound advice for other regions of the world which may be considering establishing a nuclear-weapon-free zone.

I was encouraged by the positive spirit in which the Middle East Forum was conducted. One of the key lessons I took away was that it *is* possible to have a constructive dialogue on the establishment of a nuclear-weapon-free zone, despite the complexity of the issue and differences of views among States concerned. Mistrust between key parties *can* be overcome in time and be replaced by mutual confidence and cooperation. It is up to the region concerned to decide whether to establish a nuclear-weapon-free zone. But if they decide to do so, a multilateral component can be very helpful. The IAEA will continue to do everything in its power to assist with the establishment of new nuclear-weapon-free zones, in the Middle East and elsewhere. In this spirit, I wish Ambassador Laajava of Finland every success as facilitator for the Conference in 2012 on a zone free of nuclear weapons, other weapons of mass destruction and their delivery systems in the Middle East.

Ladies and Gentlemen,

Latin America has been an inspiration to the world in arms control and disarmament. We are grateful for your example. I compliment all of you once again on the 45th anniversary of the Treaty of Tlatelolco. The IAEA looks forward to continuing to work constructively with all of you in the coming decades.

Thank you.