



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

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**OPEN-ENDED WORKING GROUP ESTABLISHED BY  
UNITED NATIONS GENERAL ASSEMBLY RESOLUTION A/RES/67/56  
“TAKING FORWARD MULTILATERAL NUCLEAR DISARMAMENT NEGOTIATIONS”**

**Panel: A Nuclear-Weapon-Free World**

**Ambassador Gioconda Ubeda  
OPANAL Secretary-General**

Mr Chairman,  
Delegates of States,  
Representatives of International Organizations and  
Non-Governmental Organizations,

At the outset, I would like to thank Ambassador Manuel Dengo, Chairman of this Working Group, for inviting me to participate in these consultations; this is an opportunity to reiterate the commitment of OPANAL Member States (Agency for the Prohibition of Nuclear Weapons in Latin America and the Caribbean) to the establishment of a nuclear-weapon-free world.

While addressing this issue, we assume that all Nuclear-Weapon-Free Zones (NWFZs) have as ultimate goal the achievement of a world free of such weapons. In the case of the NWFZ in Latin America and the Caribbean, this goal was established in the preamble of the Treaty of Tlatelolco, and it becomes more relevant because of the negotiation context of the Treaty, to which I will refer briefly.

At the end of World War II, Latin America's concern over the risks of nuclear escalation by great powers became a reality after the Missile Crisis in Cuba, in October 1962. This confrontation, between the United

States of America and the Union of Soviet Socialist Republics, together with the Berlin blockade, are considered the major crises between both powers during the Cold War. After a few months (April 1963), five Latin American Heads of State (Mexico, Bolivia, Brazil, Chile and Ecuador) signed the Joint Declaration on the Denuclearization of Latin America, in this document they called on all other states in the region to sign a multilateral agreement in which Latin American States commit themselves to declaring the region a military denuclearized zone. The response was immediate and arduous negotiations started in 1964 under the leadership of Mexico, these involved 21 out of the 22 States in the region at the time. From the beginning, the States had the political conviction that this project was a priority to regional peace and security. These negotiations concluded in February 1967 with the adoption of the text of the Treaty of Tlatelolco, which was signed by all 21 States that same year. Furthermore, Nuclear-Weapon States committed themselves, through Additional Protocols I and II, to respecting the denuclearized status of the region and not to use or threaten to use nuclear weapons against States Parties to the Treaty.

What did this multilateral agreement mean to the world? For the first time a region committed itself, legally and politically, to the non-proliferation norm, which was developed a year later by the Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons (NPT); at the same time, the region declared that *“militarily denuclearized zones are not an end in themselves but rather a means for achieving general and complete disarmament at a later stage.”* From then on, OPANAL’s agenda is imprinted by the indivisibility of these purposes and more recently, in September 2011, the 33 Member States agreed by consensus *“to join forces with the international community to move forward towards the negotiation of a universal legally binding instrument aimed at banning nuclear weapons.”*

From its origins, the Treaty of Tlatelolco has been a concrete contribution to regional and global peace and security. In 1967, the United Nations General Assembly devoted 12 sessions to the analysis of the Treaty. The message of the UN Secretary-General at the time, U Thant, was very enlightening; it was addressed to the Preparatory Commission for the Denuclearization of Latin America (COPREDAL) on the day when the Treaty text was adopted, 12 February 1967, from which I now quote: *“the Treaty for the Prohibition of Nuclear Weapons in Latin America is an important stage in the long, difficult search for disarmament...It also sets forth the required by-laws towards the creation, for the first time in history, of a denuclearized zone in a populated area of the world...The Latin American Nations can, with ample justification, take pride in what they have wrought by their own initiative and through their own efforts.”*

Certainly, this unprecedented event and the journey travelled from the Declaration of the five Heads of State in 1963 to today, give legitimacy to Latin American and Caribbean States to continue to promote the ultimate goal that today is considered one of the greatest global challenges: a world free of nuclear weapons.

50 years have passed since the establishment of the first NWFZ in a highly populated area was negotiated, and almost 25 years since the end of the Cold War. During this time emerged five NWFZs and a unilaterally declared nuclear-weapon-free State. The world still hopes for the establishment of a Weapons of Mass Destruction Free Zone in the Middle East, but above all, it hopes for the planet to become a NWFZ. The questions that still persist are: Where do we stand today in the long and complex path to a world free of nuclear weapons? What can we do to move forward? How can we do it? if we have in stock paralyzed disarmament machinery. These forums are therefore a door to share not only legitimate aspirations, but also ideas and proposals that clarify the way forward.

Back to the subject of Latin America and the Caribbean, all States in the region are Parties to the Treaty of Tlatelolco and to the Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons (NPT). They have also complied with their undertakings and met their obligations under the various instruments of the global and regional nuclear disarmament and non-proliferation architecture; they therefore hope that progress is made in the process of general and complete nuclear disarmament. But they are not only hoping for progress, they have also continued to generate agreements and conditions to move towards this primary purpose by considering that the only absolute guarantee that our peoples have against the threat of use or, in the worst case scenario, the use of nuclear weapons, is their total and complete elimination. We share the view that no nuclear weapons are in good hands.

Mr Chairman,

OPANAL Member States adopted the 2011 Declaration, including new regional consensus and taking pragmatic steps in the area of general and complete nuclear disarmament. I had the opportunity to submit this Declaration to the United Nations General Assembly at its 66th Session, highlighting sections 14 and 15, in which Member States agreed *“to support the exhortation made by the United Nations Secretary-General in his five-point plan on nuclear disarmament to all NPT States Parties and to nuclear-weapon States in particular, to accomplish their obligation under the Treaty and to undertake negotiations on more efficient measures leading to nuclear disarmament.”* As well as, *“to express, in accordance with the*

*previous paragraph, their conviction on the importance to initiate the negotiations for a universal legally binding instrument aimed at prohibiting nuclear weapons. All 33 States are committed to joining forces in favour of this main objective.*” The message is clear and objective; today it represents one of the guidelines for the Agency’s agenda. This priority is the backbone of the Vision for the future that OPANAL has built over the last two years with the dynamic participation of its Member States and its different Organs. Certainly, the strengthening of the non-proliferation regime, nuclear disarmament and non-proliferation Education, the consolidation of the NWFZLAC, the coordination and cooperation with other NWFZs, as well as incipient subjects such as Nuclear Safety and the humanitarian consequences of the use of nuclear weapons are all items on the Agenda.

Parallel to the political revitalization of OPANAL’s Agenda, the regional junction has changed favourably to the articulation of works towards nuclear disarmament. On 23 February 2010, the Community of Latin American and Caribbean States (CELAC) was created, this is a regional intergovernmental organization. The Summit of Heads of State and Government held in Caracas, Venezuela, on 2-3 December 2011, had the purpose of constituting this Community. Since then, priorities were outlined on its agenda, inter alia, the efforts towards a nuclear-weapon-free world. At the I CELAC Summit held in Santiago, Chile, last January, Member States stated in the Declaration of Santiago (sections 44 and 45) that they *“recognise the value and contribution to peace and international security of the Treaty for the Prohibition of Nuclear Weapons in Latin America and the Caribbean and its Protocols (Tlatelolco Treaty), which established the first most densely populated nuclear-weapon-free zone on the planet. In this regard, reaffirm the necessity to advance toward the goal of nuclear disarmament and non-proliferation, and reach and uphold a world free of nuclear weapons (...) and also reaffirm the Special Communiqué on the Total Elimination of Nuclear Weapons adopted at the Summit of Caracas on 3 December 2011. In this regard, we emphasize our commitment to participate actively and introduce a common position within the framework of the High Level Meeting of the UN General Assembly on Nuclear Disarmament, to be held in New York on 26 September, 2013.”*

To this end, they agreed in their Action Plan *“to form a Working-Group in conjunction with the Secretariat-General of the Agency for the Prohibition of Nuclear Weapons in Latin America and the Caribbean (OPANAL), to determine the joint positions of the 33 Latin American and Caribbean States for the aforementioned meeting.”* For this purpose, I participated in the I CELAC Summit. In the coming months, Cuba, in its capacity as President Pro-tempore, will provide the guidelines to follow in order to

start this coordination; all the Organs of OPANAL (the General Conference, the Council and the Secretariat-General) are preparing themselves for it.

As you might appreciate, the latest mandates of the Latin American and Caribbean Heads of State, and the recent consensus built in OPANAL create a propitious environment to promote, from our region, the works of general and complete nuclear disarmament, and to continue to strengthen the non-proliferation regime.

Mr Chairman,

As I have expressed in various multilateral forums, I would like to reiterate that our region is ready to work with other States, International Organizations, NWFZs, and Civil Society Organizations in order to move forward in the long and complex path that leads to a world free of nuclear weapons. We have the conviction that this is the only possible way, and we will not rest until we reach this primary objective in favour of humankind.

I am attentive to questions and comments from the plenary, as this is an opportunity to reflect upon the role of NWFZs in the process of general and complete disarmament.

Thank you.