



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



Nuclear-Weapon-Free Zone in
Latin America and the Caribbean

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**United Nations General Assembly
First Committee: Disarmament and International Security**

Statement *by*

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OPANAL Secretary-General

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Mr Chairman,

I am having the honour to address the First Committee in my capacity as Secretary General of the Agency for the Prohibition of Nuclear Weapons in Latin America and the Caribbean – OPANAL.

It is a special pleasure to work under the guidance of a very distinguished diplomat of Jamaica, one of the 33 Member States of the Agency of which more than one third are Caribbean States, having specific security concerns and very determined positions on nuclear disarmament and non-proliferation. Since the start of my term-of-office, I have been working for an increased participation of the Caribbean in the endeavours of OPANAL.

Mr Chairman,

OPANAL is the sole regional International Organization devoted to nuclear disarmament and non-proliferation. Latin America and the Caribbean brought to world peace and security an inestimable and truly innovative contribution. A space equivalent to 20 million square kilometres, which is the home to about 600 million people, has been kept free of nuclear weapons.

Since 1967 the General Assembly saluted this exploit that inspired four other regions which decided to follow the same political and strategic attitude, totalling today 115 States.

Latin America and the Caribbean may not be a *Shangri-La*, but it is important to note that no significant crisis affecting world peace and security has arisen there since many years. No new UN peace-keeping operation has been established in the region since 2004. Not a single country in the region is party to any military alliance based on nuclear weapons.

These are credentials for Latin America and the Caribbean to be increasingly active and outspoken in the debates and initiatives in favour of a world free of nuclear weapons. In this sense, the Nuclear-Weapon-Free-Zone in Latin America and the Caribbean is not an inward association limited to keep its realm without nuclear

weapons. Member States are conscious that their duty and interest is to increase pressure to open the way to serious negotiations, including on a convention to ban nuclear weapons. This was clearly stated in the Declaration by OPANAL Member States, issued last 26 September, on the International Day for the Total Elimination of Nuclear Weapons.

Through this and other actions, OPANAL is demonstrating its wish to join with the other Nuclear-Weapon-Free-Zones in a major movement to break the long stalemate in nuclear disarmament negotiations and the paralysing so-called priorities of the nuclear-weapon States.

It is of special importance the forthcoming III Conference of Nuclear-Weapon-Free Zones and Mongolia to take place next year. The first two such Conferences were led by OPANAL and we are glad that this time it is Indonesia that is coordinating the preparations for the Conference.

We expect that the III Conference will not only reiterate the unanimous positions of its 115 participating countries, but also adopt new co-ordinating arrangements in order to make its influence more permanent, including concerning the creation of new Nuclear-Weapon-Free Zones, especially and more urgently in the Middle East. We also hope that, in the future, this First Committee will include in its structured debates segment a panel on Nuclear-Weapon-Free Zones.

Mr Chairman,

We may sound over-ambitious and somewhat unrealistic.

Perhaps it is because we believe that human beings are equal everywhere. Therefore, we cannot admit that nuclear weapon States have a more sound judgment than the huge majority of States that have categorically reiterated their desire and commitment to achieving a world without weapons of mass destruction, the worst being nuclear weapons.

Perhaps, it is because we believe in investing our resources in the promotion of development and well-being.

Perhaps it is because we are increasingly worried about present trends, and I can mention a sample of that.

Since the States possessing nuclear weapons are engaged in modernization and upgrading programmes in their arsenals, it is appropriate to consider that, after some decades, a new nuclear arms race is going on. This is a momentous development, for the nuclear arms race was one of the distinguishing aspects of the cold war, a page of world History that we believed definitely turned.

Thank you.