



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

Inf.17/2018

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United Nations General Assembly
73rd Session
First Committee – Disarmament and International Security

Statement *by*

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Secretary-General

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

17 October 2018

New York

Mr Chairman,

On behalf of the Agency for the Prohibition of Nuclear Weapons in Latin America and the Caribbean (OPANAL), I express to you our congratulations for your election as Chairman of the First Committee, greetings extended to the members of the Bureau.

Mr. Chairman,

On 26 September, the Member States of OPANAL issued a Declaration on the occasion of the International Day for the Total Elimination of Nuclear Weapons, as they have been doing in the last five years since the General Assembly established this commemoration.

This Declaration expresses the consensus of all the 33 Latin American and Caribbean States on the main aspects concerning non-proliferation and disarmament of nuclear weapons.

Latin America and the Caribbean is the only region in the world that regularly manifests a joint position on these central questions that concern the First Committee. This reflects a remarkable unanimity, which – we have no doubt – is noted by all the Member States of the United Nations and in particular by nuclear weapons possessors and their allies.

The fact that these 33 States can reach such common expression stems from the creation, more than 50 years ago, of this institute of International Law known as the Nuclear-Weapon-Free Zone.

Besides serving as a permanent forum that allows the expression of common stands by the States Party, OPANAL is also in charge of ensuring the effectiveness of the Treaty of Tlatelolco. This also requires that the Nuclear-Weapon States and States administering *de jure* or *de facto* territories in the region concur for the full implementation of the Treaty. They undertook obligations thereon by signing and ratifying Additional Protocols to the Treaty of Tlatelolco. This implies respecting the military denuclearization of the zone and providing guarantees to the States Party of not being object of the use or threat of use of nuclear weapons.

Unfortunately, by means of interpretative declarations, which are in fact reservations, the commitments of some of the States Party to the Protocols have been limited.

Since 2016, OPANAL has been offering those States a way out of this problem, having proposed the signing of Adjustments which would eliminate misunderstandings and provide full respect of the Treaty. OPANAL Member States are not proposing any new commitment from Nuclear-Weapon States other than a common understanding.

Two of the Nuclear-Weapon States concerned have responded to our proposal of Adjustement, albeit in a flat negative fashion. Another one among those States has not even accepted to receive the representatives of the five Member States of OPANAL Council to present our proposal. A fourth Nuclear-Weapon State object of démarches has not yet responded. All this seems a strange way to conduct normal *bona fide* relations.

Protocols to other treaties establishing nuclear-weapon-free zones have also been subject to reservations. Nuclear-Weapon States should be open to reconsider the scope of their reservations in agreement with the States belonging to nuclear-weapon-free zones.

Mr Chairman,

The five nuclear-weapon-free zones and Mongolia sum 116 States. Today, more than ever, the political capital represented by nuclear-weapon-free zones must be used to strengthen the non-proliferation regime. The Conferences of the Parties and Signatories to the Treaties that Establish Nuclear-Weapon-Free Zones are an excellent opportunity to articulate a common voice of this majority of the international community.

OPANAL is already deploying efforts to hold a successful IV Conference of the nuclear-weapon-free zones and Mongolia in 2020. We expect that the IV Conference will not only reiterate the common position of its 116 participating countries, but also adopt arrangements in order to make contact and collaboration among them more permanent and effective.

Thank you.