



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

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Statement by

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Member State of the Council of OPANAL

on behalf of

Ambassador Luiz Filipe de Macedo Soares
Secretary-General of OPANAL

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Mr/Mme Chair,

It is an occasion of special joy for the Agency for the Prohibition of Nuclear Weapons in Latin America and the Caribbean (OPANAL) to participate for the first time in a meeting of the African Commission on Nuclear Energy (AFCONE).

On behalf of the Secretary-General of OPANAL, Ambassador Luiz Filipe de Macedo Soares, I want to thank the Executive Secretary of AFCONE, Mr. Messaoud Baaliouamer, for his kind invitation to attend this important meeting.

The Council of OPANAL, of which Peru is one of the five Member States, mandated that Peru represent the Agency in this meeting.

Mr/Mme Chair,

As you know, in 1967, Latin America and the Caribbean was the first region to adopt a Treaty, creating a new institute of International Law – something that is uncommon and difficult. This is the nuclear-weapon-free zone.

I should say nevertheless that Africa was the first region that raised the idea of a nuclear-weapon-free zone. In 1961, the United Nations General Assembly adopted resolution 1652 (XVI), which called upon Member States to consider and respect the continent of Africa as a denuclearized zone. However, the adoption of the Treaty of Pelindaba took almost 35 years.

Latin American and the Caribbean States never had or intended to have nuclear weapons. The immediate motivation for the negotiation of the Treaty of Tlatelolco was the missile crisis in Cuba in 1962, materially bringing the Cold War to our region in one of the most serious east-west confrontation.

Africa was prompted to establish a nuclear-weapon-free zone for different circumstances, among them nuclear tests and nuclear weapons production. In spite of that the objectives of the Treaty of Tlatelolco and the Treaty of Pelindaba are the same: the prohibition of nuclear weapons in all aspects in a vast region.

It took 35 years for all the 33 States of the region to participate in the Nuclear-Weapon-Free Zone in Latin America and the Caribbean. However, it is important to bear in mind that the zone within its area of application has been valid, in force and respected since 1969, when the Treaty entered into force following the deposit of the eleventh instrument of ratification. The Treaty of Pelindaba has not yet reached universality in the region, but no one doubts its full value and respect.

The negotiators of the Treaty of Tlatelolco were inspired to include the creation of an institution in the Treaty, which is OPANAL. This year, OPANAL will celebrate 50 years of continuous work.

OPANAL is basically an instrument to ensure the unflinching functioning of the control system established by the Treaty of Tlatelolco. Based on the Treaty's principles and legitimacy, OPANAL, beyond controlling its implementation, is an instrument to enhance the expression of the region in all the debates and fora dealing with non-proliferation and disarmament of nuclear weapons.

The Secretary-General of OPANAL regularly attends the First Committee of the United Nations General Assembly and the meetings of the Review Cycle of the Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons. In addition, he attends occasional negotiating meetings, such as the one in which the Treaty on the Prohibition of Nuclear Weapons was adopted in 2017.

He may attend meetings in the International Atomic Energy Agency, the Conference on Disarmament, and other organizations. Moreover, OPANAL maintains a system of coordination of its Member States in the three main seats of the United Nations: New York, Vienna and Geneva. This is a light and cost-free system. In each of those three seats, one Member State of OPANAL assumes the coordination and ensures the circulation of OPANAL documents and occasionally organizes events. In some cases, Member State in charge of the coordination takes the floor on behalf of OPANAL. Current OPANAL coordinators are Brazil in New York, and Peru in Vienna. The Geneva coordination is still pending for 2019.

OPANAL Member States express themselves collectively and formally at least twice every year: 14 February (Anniversary of the Treaty of Tlatelolco) and 26 September (declared by the United Nations General Assembly as the International Day for the Total Elimination of Nuclear Weapons). In both cases, the Declaration by OPANAL Member States are circulated as official documents of the United Nations General Assembly, the General Conference of the International Atomic Energy Agency and the Conference on Disarmament. It is important to note that these documents are not limited to the nature of nuclear-weapon-free zones. They cover a wide range of aspects concerning nuclear weapons. I would stress that preparation and negotiations regarding these texts constitute an exercise of consensus-building.

I would also mention education as an important activity for OPANAL, mainly conducted by means of courses in Member States and an internship programme at the headquarters in Mexico.

For many years, OPANAL was the only intergovernmental institution of its kind in the world. The Treaty of Pelindaba brought to Latin Americans and Caribbean the company of AFCONE. OPANAL hopes that this is the beginning of a close and constant collaboration. We belong to different regions, but our purpose is essentially the same.

We expect, for instance, AFCONE's presence in our meetings, specifically in our General Conference this year, probably taking place in November (date and venue to be decided).

Another initiative in which AFCONE and OPANAL can work together is in the Fourth Conference of Nuclear-Weapon-Free Zones and Mongolia, which will take place in New York on 28 April 2020, in accordance with resolution 73/71 adopted by the United Nations General Assembly on 5 December 2018. AFCONE and OPANAL, together with the other nuclear-weapon-free zones, established by the Treaties of Rarotonga, Bangkok, and Central Asia, should support Mongolia, designated by resolution 73/71 to coordinate the preparation of the Conference.

With a successful Fourth Conference and cooperation among nuclear-weapon-free zones, the nuclear-weapon-free States have a crucial instrument to attain and maintain a world without nuclear weapons.

Thank you.