



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

Secretariat

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Panel discussions and exchanges with independent experts and other high-level officials

**Statement by the Secretary General of the Agency for the Prohibition of
Nuclear Weapons in Latin America and the Caribbean – OPANAL,**

H.E. Ambassador Flávio Roberto Bonzanini

Thank you, Mr Chair.

Indeed, I have the honor to participate in this Panel in my capacity of the Secretary-General of the Agency for the Prohibition of Nuclear Weapons in Latin America and the Caribbean (OPANAL) and to present the perspective of the region on the current trends on disarmament and non-proliferation of nuclear weapons.

First of all, I would like to present our role in the **evolution of international law and the strengthening of the norm** in support of a nuclear-weapon-free world.

- As it is widely known, through the Treaty for the Prohibition of Nuclear Weapons in Latin America and the Caribbean - Treaty of Tlatelolco, our region established the first Nuclear-Weapon-Free Zone in a densely populated area.
- This model has been replicated in other regions. It not only enhances global and regional peace and security, but it also strengthens the nuclear non-proliferation regime and contributes towards realizing the objectives of nuclear disarmament.

- The five Nuclear-Weapon-Free Zones and Mongolia sum more than 100 States. Today, more than ever, the political capital represented by nuclear-weapon-free zones must be used to continue pursuing efforts to strengthen this norm.
- The Fourth Conference of the Parties and Signatories to the Treaties that establish Nuclear-Weapon-Free Zones is an excellent opportunity to agree on further arrangements in order to facilitate contact and collaboration among them in a more permanent and effective fashion. That is why we encourage the UN General Assembly to adopt the decision that will convene the Conference in 2021.

Second, we are witnessing with deep concern **the erosion of the treaty-based disarmament architecture inherited from the Cold War era** in particular bilateral instruments that contributed to the arms control of the two countries that possess over 90% of the global nuclear arsenals.

- As my predecessor used to say: [...] *it would be meaningless for Latin America and the Caribbean to be satisfied in their shangrilah, napping under the shade of palm trees in the calm provided by the NWFZ, pretending to ignore that the world is a whole ensemble and that today there are [...] thousands of nuclear weapons, most of them deployed.*”
- For that reason, the Member States of OPANAL are closely following the developments in the discussions on arms control between the United States and the Russian Federation. We are witnessing with concern, the negative implications of not extending the New START Treaty.
- This could be the first time, in more than 50 years, that there is no legal constraint between the two countries that possess, by far, the largest nuclear arsenals. No more limitations or verification measures will be in place, thus, potentially triggering a new arms race (not only qualitative, but also quantitative).

- Above all, it would be a clear, but unfortunate message from both countries to the Non-Nuclear Weapon States that they are not taking their commitments on arms control, and advancing on the implementation of Article VI of the NPT, but instead they are contributing to damage the nuclear nonproliferation regime in a greater extent. Perhaps, permanently.

In spite of the difficult times we are living through, we have reasons for hope in the future of multilateral disarmament diplomacy.

- Last weekend, two countries from our region (Jamaica and Honduras) added up to the list of States Parties to the Treaty on the Prohibition of Nuclear Weapons, which has now a total of 50 ratifications, 21 of them are from Latin America and the Caribbean.
- We are on the verge of the entry into force of the Treaty. In 89 days, the TPNW will add to the Treaty for the Prohibition of Nuclear Weapons in Latin America and the Caribbean (Treaty of Tlatelolco) and the NPT on the path towards the elimination of these weapons of mass destruction.

Third, we believe that the establishing of a nuclear-weapon-free zone is a voluntary decision of a region, its contribution to international peace and security, and should be respected by the Nuclear Weapon States. Thus, the Nuclear-Weapon States must **sign and ratify the Additional Protocols of the treaties** which establish the Nuclear-Weapon-Free Zones in order not to harm their effectiveness and to give them full and unequivocal security assurances.

- The Treaty of Tlatelolco is the only Nuclear-Weapon-Free Zone treaty with the Additional Protocols which were signed and ratified by the Nuclear Weapon States. Nevertheless, when signing the Additional Protocols to the Treaty of Tlatelolco,

some of the Nuclear Weapon States made interpretative declarations, which are in fact reservations, that limit their commitments.

- By having made those declarations, France, the Russian Federation, United Kingdom and the United States of America have reserved the right to withdraw from the Additional Protocols and use nuclear weapons against the States Party to the Treaty of Tlatelolco. Also, through those interpretative declarations these four Nuclear-Weapon States expressed that they do not recognize the zone of application of the Treaty.
- As I pointed out in my statement during the General Debate of the United Nations General Assembly First Committee, OPANAL has been offering those States a way out of this problem since 2016, having proposed the signing of Adjustments which would eliminate misunderstandings and provide full respect to the Treaty. OPANAL Member States are not proposing any new commitment from Nuclear-Weapon States other than a common understanding.
- OPANAL Member States urge these four Nuclear-Weapon States to reconsider their approach and to carry out discussions in bona fide, with the aim to find a mutually agreed solution.

Finally, but not less importantly, at OPANAL we are convinced that it is crucial to keep **raising awareness about the threats that pose nuclear weapons and educate younger generations** on the importance of the elimination of such weapons.

- For this reason, we continue working on the implementation of educational programs on disarmament and non-proliferation of nuclear weapons with the conviction that it is an effective contribution to the consolidation of international peace and security.

- Among many other activities, I would like to highlight our concrete and effective efforts in terms of disarmament and non-proliferation education. In the last three years, OPANAL has organized four courses on disarmament and non-proliferation of nuclear weapons, that took place in Uruguay, Bolivia, Guatemala and Nicaragua and thus around 150 government officials in those countries received complete information and training on this matter.
- To that, we may add our internship program for students and young professionals which is also part of our educational program.

Dear colleagues,

To finish with my initial remarks, I would like to highlight that there have never been and there will never be nuclear weapons in Latin America and the Caribbean. No State in the region is under extended nuclear deterrence policies by means of military alliances.

As stated in the preamble of the Treaty of Tlatelolco:

“the privileged situation of the Signatory States, whose territories are wholly free from nuclear weapons, imposes upon them the inescapable duty of preserving that situation both in their own interests and for the good of mankind.”

This is our vision.

Thank you for your attention. I very much look forward to the discussion and your questions.