



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

Conference General

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Report of the Secretary-General

Thank you, Mr. President.

The report that I have the honour to present to the General Conference today is both a perspective exercise, covering the past two years, and a prospective one that addresses some priority issues for the following year.

I would like to start with this brief review by highlighting the continuous and uninterrupted work of OPANAL during these two atypical years marked by the global pandemic caused by the SARS-CoV-2 virus. Despite this health crisis, OPANAL has continued its substantive work and engaged in joint efforts with other nuclear-weapon-free zones. All this work and effort would certainly not have been possible without the constant and committed support of the 33 Member States of OPANAL.

At a time when we seem to see the light at the end of the tunnel, it is important to reflect on the work done by all of us, but even more important is to seize the opportunities that will be presented before us next year and in which our region can and must contribute actively and proactively.

Consolidation of the Treaty of Tlatelolco

First of all, I would like to refer to one of the aspects that have contributed to the process of consolidating the regime established by the Treaty of Tlatelolco: the introduction of amendments to articles 7, 14, 15, 16, 19, 20 and 25, and the resolutions adopted by the General Conference during the nineties. In this regard, in the last two years we have registered new ratifications of the amendments by Bolivia, in 2019, and Nicaragua, in 2021, which constitutes an important step in the consolidation process. However, ratifications by

some Member States are still pending, thus, we will soon establish contact with them in order to explore ways to support their efforts.

Control System

Regarding the Control System, which constitutes the backbone of the Treaty of Tlatelolco, in particular Article 14, it is a pioneering verification system by which formal declarations by each Member State on the absence of activities contrary to the Treaty in their respective territories. If there is no compliance with Article 14, it cannot be certainty that the Treaty is being fully respected. The six-month frequency of article 14 reports makes sense, not only at political and legal, but also practical level. Full compliance with the Treaty of Tlatelolco is of the utmost importance not only to its States Parties, but also to the entire international community. That is why it is worrying that 10 Member States are not up to date with this obligation, so I respectfully call on those States that find themselves in this situation to attend to it with the importance of the case.

OPANAL Headquarters

Another relevant aspect that has not been neglected by Member States is the fact that the Agency still does not have its own permanent headquarters. This issue has been the subject of constant attention and action by the Secretariat. While the host and depositary State of the Treaty had supported the efforts and sought the financial survival of the Agency, it was incumbent upon Member States to join forces to contribute to the solution of that issue, which represented not only a practical problem but a political one.

External Relations of OPANAL

As you all know, OPANAL is not an organization alienated from the rest of the world and focused solely in the Latin American and Caribbean region. Nor is it "some kind of oasis" that is strange to the *les enjeux politiques* around nuclear weapons. The purpose of the Treaty, the Agency and its Member States is also to work beyond our region towards the complete elimination of nuclear weapons. For that reason, the Secretariat has sought to intensify the presence and recognition of OPANAL in the international arena. In recent years, that

presence has grown, not only due to the continuous presence of the Secretary-General, but also because of the active participation of representatives of the Member States and even the officials of the Secretariat.

Despite the difficulties caused by the pandemic, we have continued to participate annually in the First Committee of the United Nations General Assembly and in the General Conference of the International Atomic Energy Agency, in Vienna. This work has been facilitated by the volunteer coordination of the Member States at the three city venues of the United Nations: in New York, Geneva, and Vienna.

Other meetings in which I had the opportunity to participate and which I would also like to highlight is the First Meeting of States Parties to the South Pacific Nuclear Free Zone Treaty (Treaty of Rarotonga), which took place virtually on 15 December 2020, and in which I reiterated the interest of OPANAL in maintaining and reactivating the cooperation agreement that has existed since 2003 between our two regions. Likewise, there has been a continued dialogue and cooperation with the African Nuclear-Weapon-Free Zone and its Commission on Nuclear Energy (AFCONE), with whom, in addition to agreeing on a joint communiqué at the beginning of the year, on the occasion of the entry into force of the Treaty on the Prohibition of Nuclear Weapons, we have negotiated and agreed on the text of a Memorandum of Understanding, under the leadership of the President of the Council and Coordinator of the Working Group, His Excellency Ambassador Anibal Cabral Segalerba. If the General Conference decides so, I would have the great honor and privilege of signing on a date yet to be defined in consultations with the Executive Secretary of AFCONE.

Interpretative declarations

The issue of interpretative declarations to Additional Protocols I and II to the Treaty of Tlatelolco has been one of the issues of greatest importance and concern to all Member States. However, the circumstances imposed by the SARS-CoV-2 pandemic forced us to interrupt our démarches before the four States parties to the Protocols I and II that have issued these Interpretative Declarations - the United States, France, the United Kingdom and the Russian Federation. However, this new virtuality has forced us to rethink about new

strategies of rapprochement and dialogue. That is why I celebrate and welcome the work of the Council, including the establishment of a Technical Group, under the coordination of Minister Alejandro Torres Lépori (Argentina), whose diligent work has outlined a possible new strategy. I am certain that our joint efforts can be translated into an action plan.

Budgetary management of OPANAL's financial situation

Despite the challenges presented during these two years, the Agency has maintained an excellent financial health thanks to the contributions of Member States. It is important to note that the percentage of collection for 2020 is over 54% and the percentage so far this year already exceeds 30%. I have maintained an austere, serious and effective management, which helps to ensure the proper functioning of the Agency, since the financial resources to cover budgetary expenses are guaranteed until April 2022. This represents the most significant collection in recent years.

Priorities for 2022

On this last point, I would like to refer to some of the priorities that OPANAL has ahead of it in 2022, including its participation in relevant meetings such as the Tenth Review Conference of the Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons (NPT) in January 2022 and the IV Conference of Nuclear Weapons Free Zones, which date for its celebration is to be defined. OPANAL will also seek to be represented at the First Conference of States Parties to the Treaty on the Prohibition of Nuclear Weapons (TPNW) to be held in March 2022. On the other hand, the OPANAL Secretariat will work on the drafting of the resolution to the First Committee of the General Assembly of the United Nations, on the Treaty of Tlatelolco, which is traditionally presented by Mexico and co-sponsored by the Member States of OPANAL. The Secretariat of OPANAL will also submit a proposal to promote, with the support of Member States, a new comprehensive study on nuclear-weapon-free zones within the framework of the United Nations.

Thank you.