



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

Inf.04/2022

**55th Anniversary of the
Treaty for the Prohibition of Nuclear Weapons in Latin America and the Caribbean
Latin America and the Caribbean**

-Treaty of Tlatelolco-

Statement by
Ambassador Flávio Roberto Bonzanini

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

Mexico City
14 February 2022

- *Your Excellency, Mr. Marcelo Ebrard Casaubón, Secretary of Foreign Affairs*
- *Your Excellency Martha Delgado Peralta, Under-Secretary for Multilateral Affairs and Human Rights*
- *Your Excellency Mr. Robert Floyd, Executive Secretary of the Preparatory Commission for the Comprehensive Nuclear-Test-Ban Treaty Organization*
- *His Excellency Mr. Oscar Lorenzo Arnold, Ambassador Extraordinary and Plenipotentiary of Belize to Mexico and Chairman of the OPANAL Council*

Distinguished members of the diplomatic corps,

Ladies and Gentlemen,

It is an honor for me to address you today in my capacity as Secretary General of OPANAL to commemorate the 55th Anniversary of the opening for signature of the Treaty for the Prohibition of Nuclear Weapons in Latin America and the Caribbean (Treaty of Tlatelolco), which established the first Nuclear-Weapon-Free Zone in a densely populated territory, and which, as stated in its preamble, aims to "*contribute, so far as lies in their power, towards ending the armaments race... and towards the strengthening a world at peace*" and without nuclear weapons.

The Treaty of Tlatelolco is, without a doubt, the most important multilateral instrument for the 33 Latin American and Caribbean States in the field of disarmament and non-proliferation of nuclear weapons. There are several compelling reasons that allow us to make this affirmation.

1. First, the Treaty of Tlatelolco is a historic milestone for the region's diplomacy, which emerged in a conflictive context framed by the Cold War, particularly the Missile Crisis in the Caribbean. The immediate objective was, and is, to preserve the region free of nuclear weapons. The broader objective remains to liberate the world of these weapons of mass destruction. As long as they exist, life as we perceive it will continue to be in danger.

2. The Treaty has positioned our region as a relevant actor and key player in all multilateral negotiations on nuclear disarmament. Its existence has not only endowed the region with political weight and moral authority to demand the prohibition and elimination of nuclear weapons, but has also contributed to projecting the regional view in multilateral forums. Moreover, the spirit of the Treaty has permeated the collective imagination of generations of diplomats and specialists in Latin America and the Caribbean, which is reflected in OPANAL's joint positions.

3. The Treaty of Tlatelolco established important precedents without which the international disarmament and non-proliferation regime could not be understood.
 - a. The Treaty of Tlatelolco introduces nuclear weapons into international law, as it was the first multilateral instrument to define and prohibit nuclear weapons.
 - b. The Treaty of Tlatelolco precedes the Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons (NPT) and influenced the provisions of the latter to guarantee the inalienable right of all States to benefit from the development of nuclear energy for exclusively peaceful purposes; the right of any group of States to conclude regional treaties to ensure the total absence of nuclear weapons in their respective territories; and the obligation of all States to negotiate "*effective measures relating to cessation of the nuclear arms race... and to nuclear disarmament*".
 - c. The Treaty of Tlatelolco was the first international instrument to establish a verification and control regime through a permanent monitoring body and to obtain security assurances from nuclear-armed States.

Ladies and Gentlemen,

Later today, the current President of the Council of OPANAL, His Excellency Ambassador Oscar Arnold, will read out the Communiqué of the OPANAL Member States on the 55th Anniversary of the Treaty of Tlatelolco. This Communiqué, together

with the Declaration of the OPANAL Member States on the International Day for the Total Elimination of Nuclear Weapons, are two occasions a year when Latin America and the Caribbean make a joint and regular statement with the same position on the issues concerning the Treaty and work, as a region, on this fundamental issue for the survival of humanity: the elimination of nuclear weapons.

No other region in the world does so, which once again reaffirms our region's historic commitment to nuclear disarmament, as well as renews our firm position in favor of the elimination of nuclear weapons.

Ladies and Gentlemen,

To conclude my statement, I would like to recall what is also found in the preamble of the Treaty, that nuclear-weapon-free zones are not an end in themselves, but a means to achieve nuclear disarmament. Therefore, the Treaty of Tlatelolco is a Latin American contribution to peaceful understanding and to the projection of a civilized and humanist order that prohibits nuclear weapons and which, in these troubled times characterized by a new arms race and by the ghost of nuclear war, is important to remember.

Thank you for your attention.