

**Statement by H.E. Selwin C. Hart, Ambassador of Barbados to the
USA and Permanent Observer to the OAS
on the Occasion of the OPANAL General Conference,
Mexico City, 14 February 2017**

Mr. President

Mr. Secretary-General

Ministers

Excellences

Ladies and Gentlemen

I have the honour to deliver this statement on behalf of the Government of Barbados on the occasion of the 50th Anniversary of the conclusion of the Treaty for the Prohibition of Nuclear Weapons in Latin America and the Caribbean. The Government of Barbados offers its sincerest gratitude to the Government of Mexico and to the OPANAL Secretariat for organizing this timely and historic meeting and for their generous hospitality. At the outset let me signal Barbados' full support for the Ministerial Declaration adopted at this meeting.

Barbados gained its independence on November 30, 1966. One of its first acts as an independent member of the international community was to become a signatory to the Treaty of Tlatelolco in 1968 and to ratify it on April 25, 1969. Barbados remains committed to the full and effective implementation of the Treaty of Tlatelolco and will continue to work towards fulfilling its obligations under this legally binding agreement. The Treaty of Tlatelolco established the world's first

nuclear-weapon-free zone in a populated area and inspired similar zones in the South Pacific, Southeast Asia, Africa, and Central Asia.

The establishment of nuclear weapons free zones represent concrete steps under Article VII of the NPT and contribute directly to strengthening global peace and security. However, the establishment of such zones must be aligned with the spirit, objective and purpose of the treaties and their protocols. In this regard Barbados reiterates its support for the call made in the Ministerial Declaration to the Nuclear Weapons States that have issued interpretative declarations to Additional Protocols I and II to the Treaty of Tlatelolco which are contrary to the spirit of the Treaty to revise or eliminate them and respect the military de-nuclearized character of our region.

Today, the regional or territorial approach to disarmament covers most of our planet. Yet we cannot afford to be complacent. While the entire Southern Hemisphere is now nuclear-weapons free, the majority of the world's population still lives in countries that possess nuclear weapons. And international efforts to achieve the goal of a nuclear weapons free world and prevent nuclear proliferation continue to face significant challenges.

Mr. President, there are close connections between our efforts on disarmament and non-proliferation and our development efforts including our efforts to achieve the sustainable development goals (SDGS). Today countries spend approximately 1.6 trillion dollars a year

on military expenditure. Global expenditure on maintaining the current arsenal of nuclear weapons is estimated at 100 billion dollars a year or 300 million dollars a day.

We could make significant progress towards addressing humanitarian most urgent and pressing challenges if these resources were redirected to economic and social development efforts including the root causes of global insecurity – poverty, disease, lack of access to education, intolerance and inequality.

Mr. President, Barbados welcomes the recent decision by the General Assembly to convene a United Nations conference to negotiate a legally binding instrument to prohibit and eliminate nuclear weapons. We call on all UN Member states, especially the nuclear weapons states to actively participate in the upcoming conference. Our region must play its traditional leadership role in the negotiations of this new international agreement. You can be assured that Barbados will work within CARICOM and GRULAC to advance the interests of our region in the upcoming negotiations. This new agreement must be ambitious and comprehensive in scope with a clear timeline towards the total elimination of nuclear weapons.

As we celebrate this important milestone, let us redouble efforts to achieve our shared goal of a nuclear-weapon-free world. I am optimistic that with political will this goal can be achieved within our lifetime. The existence of one nuclear weapon is one too many in a civilized world.

We cannot pass on to future generations the legacy of a nuclearized world. Multilateral cooperation remains absolutely indispensable to moving forward on disarmament and non-proliferation. OPANAL remains an important pillar in our collective efforts to free the world of the nuclear threat. I encourage you Mr. Secretary General to continue and intensify your outreach to civil society and the public in our region to alert them to the risks of nuclear weapons but also to the opportunities a nuclear-weapons free world presents to current and future generations.

You can be assured of the full support of Barbados in your efforts.

I thank you.