



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

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**United Nations General Assembly**  
**First Committee: Disarmament and International Security**

*Statement by*

**Ambassador Luiz Filipe de Macedo Soares**

Secretary-General of OPANAL

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Mr Chairman

On behalf of the Agency for the Prohibition of Nuclear Weapons in Latin America and the Caribbean (OPANAL) I express our warm congratulations for your election as Chairman of the I Committee, greetings extended to the members of the Bureau and to the Secretariat. As a State Party to Protocol I to the Treaty of Tlatelolco, the Netherlands is associated to the Nuclear-Weapon-Free Zone of Latin America and the Caribbean.

I thank you for giving me the floor to participate in this general debate since it is fit for the I Committee to hear the views of international organizations that are specialized in disarmament and international security and also to receive information on their state and activities. Those organizations are not many. In fact, just a handful. This reflects perhaps the paucity of achievements and the timidity of actions in the field of disarmament.

Next Monday 19th October, as it happens every year, a panel will take place in this Conference Room to examine the “current state of affairs in the field of arms control and disarmament and the role of international organizations with mandates in this field”. The panel will be composed of the United Nations, the Conference on Disarmament, and three international organizations. I call your attention to the absence of OPANAL, a full-fledged organization established by the Treaty of Tlatelolco 48 years ago which attends exclusively to nuclear disarmament and non-proliferation and comprises 33 Member States, the whole of Latin America and the Caribbean, with an area of application covering more than 90 million square kilometres, involving a population of about 625 million people and counting with a permanent Secretariat with its headquarters in Mexico City of which I have the honour to be Secretary General. Moreover, among the five treaties that created nuclear-weapon-free zones, only Tlatelolco and Pelindaba created institutions and we hope that the African Commission on Nuclear Energy (AFCONE) will soon be fully operative.

The exclusion of OPANAL is not a trivial organizational matter. Firstly, because OPANAL member States find it difficult to understand why their Agency is not considered in the same footing as others. Secondly, because this situation shows the averseness of some States to any change whatsoever in the frozen world of nuclear weapon politics.

Mr Chairman,

This year OPANAL took an active part in the NPT Review Conference having submitted a working paper containing sixteen elements that should have been necessarily included in the final document in order to contribute to the success of the Conference (Doc. NPT/CONF.2015/WP.40). That sort of gauge to measure the outcome of the Conference could not be applied since there was no outcome. This cannot be considered a mere *accident de parcours*. Since the NPT is the touchstone of the nuclear disarmament and non-proliferation regime, it is a matter of grave concern the inexistence of a final document that would register compliance with past decisions taken in 2000 and 2010 and include new agreements on actions for furtherance of the regime. The failure of the Conference to adopt a final document was due to a specific reason. However, it is an inescapable fact that there was not a final document. No agreement or conclusions were reached.

In any case, the impossibility of progress concerning the establishment of a zone free of nuclear weapons and all other weapons of mass destruction in the Middle East is a reason for dismay on the part of OPANAL member States, as expressed in their official Communiqué dated 15th June (Doc. C/008/2015).

Mr Chairman,

Latin America and the Caribbean, the eldest among the nuclear-weapon-free zones, deplored the lack of results in the third Conference of States parties to these Zones that took place here at the UN Headquarters on 24<sup>th</sup> April 2015.

Since its beginning ten years ago, this initiative has shown to be a promising instrument for strengthening the Zones themselves as well as for increasing their influence in achieving a world free of nuclear weapons. This setback cannot halt the progress towards better communication and cooperation among the five nuclear-weapon-free zones and Mongolia. During that last failed Conference, OPANAL suggested an informal mechanism for contact among the zones which could meet, for example, on the margin of this I Committee. That suggestion remains still more valid. In particular, OPANAL is willing to

open new possibilities of work with the other zones and Mongolia through their institutions or focal points in order to ensure the continuation of the process of periodic Conferences.

Mr Chairman,

Born outside the scope of the United Nations, the movement concerning the catastrophic humanitarian consequences of nuclear weapons has been growing in substance, following and influence. The fact that there is no acronym attached to it shows that content and political meaning, not form, are the mark of the movement, which, after three successful Conferences produced the Humanitarian Pledge, gathering strong and widespread support among UN member States including all the member States of OPANAL. We believe that humanitarian considerations brought a new dimension to the debate on nuclear weapons. It is drawing increasing attention from the world public opinion. This is extremely important, for, despite all setbacks and paralysis in different aspects and mechanisms, the member States of these United Nations are opening paths for new initiatives in this inexhaustible strife for the abolition of nuclear weapons, the most imminent risk for our survival and the greatest obstacle for a truly democratic international system.

I refer specially to Resolutions 68/32 and 69/41. They represent a tool that might lead us out of the quagmire into which nuclear disarmament efforts have fallen over the years. Among other actions, we need to invest in the preparation of a High Level International Conference on nuclear disarmament to take place not later than 2018.

This question and many other central items on the agenda of the I Committee are clearly and carefully worded in document A/70/404, circulated with a letter from the Permanent Representative of Mexico, current coordinator of OPANAL in New York. This document contains the Declaration of OPANAL member States on the International Day for the Total Elimination of Nuclear Weapons, on 26th September. No better contribution could OPANAL make to the success of this Session of the General Assembly.

Latin America and the Caribbean States through their Community – CELAC – is a region at the forefront of nuclear disarmament and non-proliferation. This is amply shown by the Special Declarations adopted by our Heads of State and Government in Havana last year and in Belen, Costa Rica this year. These Summits recognized OPANAL as the “specialized body in the region for articulating common positions and joint actions on nuclear disarmament”.

Mr Chairman,

Our peoples know that nuclear weapons are a loaded gun pointing to the head of humankind.

Thank you.