



Nuclear-Weapon-Free Zone
In Latin America and the Caribbean

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

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**General Debate
68th Session - First Committee of the
United Nations General Assembly**

OPANAL

**Hon. Federico Villacorta Noval
Guatemala
Presidency Pro-Tempore of the Council**

October 2013
New York

Mr Chairman,

Allow me at the outset to congratulate you on your election as chairman of the First Committee and wish you every success in your endeavours.

Over the last four years, OPANAL has here conveyed its revitalization process and political agenda in the current international context. At this time, we are pleased to inform you that the 33 States forming the Nuclear-Weapon-Free Zone in Latin America and the Caribbean adopted by consensus the Resolution entitled “Urgent need for general and complete nuclear disarmament” during the XXIII Regular Sessions of OPANAL General Conference, which were held this year in Buenos Aires, Argentina.

46 years have passed since Latin American and Caribbean States signed the Treaty of Tlatelolco whereby not only they committed themselves to the military denuclearization of the region, but also declared that the ultimate goal of the Zone is to achieve general and complete disarmament at a later stage. The aforementioned Resolution marks the start of such later stage stated in the preamble of the Treaty and emphasises the urgent need to start negotiations for a universal legally-binding instrument aimed at prohibiting nuclear weapons.

Latin America and the Caribbean have complied with the nuclear non-proliferation norm and have made concrete contributions to the nuclear disarmament process; however, this is not enough. As long as nuclear weapons exist, we will live under the threat that any explosion, accidental or intentional, would cause global catastrophic humanitarian consequences. Therefore, we have to move forward towards the abolition of these weapons. To this end, it is important that Nuclear-Weapon States eliminate the role of such weapons in their military doctrines and security policies. In the meantime, OPANAL Member States urge the Signatory States to the two Additional Protocols to the Treaty of Tlatelolco to modify or withdraw the reservations and/or interpretative declarations issued upon their signature and/or ratification.

Also in 2013, we have made regional and international progress. In the regional context, we would like to highlight the work coordination between OPANAL and the Community of Latin American and Caribbean States (CELAC), which aims to continue to promote actions in favour of total and complete nuclear disarmament. It is especially important to mention the cooperation “*to articulate a joint position regarding the issues for nuclear disarmament*”, as stated in CELAC’s 2011 Special Communiqué on the Total Elimination of Nuclear Weapons and reiterated in the Santiago Declaration adopted at the 1st Summit of CELAC Heads of State and Government held in Santiago, Chile, on 26-28 January 2013; and also included in the CELAC Declaration on Nuclear Disarmament adopted on 20 August 2013, in Buenos Aires, Argentina.

In the international arena, we welcome the celebration, for the first time in history, of the United Nations General Assembly High-Level Meeting on Nuclear Disarmament held at this headquarters on 26 September 2013. Within the framework of this meeting, CELAC’s Presidency Pro-Tempore reiterated our region’s consensus on the strong conviction to achieve a universal and legally binding instrument banning nuclear weapons, as the only guarantee against their use or threat of use.

We could not agree more with the United Nations Secretary-General, Mr Ban Ki-moon, who expressed at the same meeting that *“Some might complain that nuclear disarmament is little more than a dream. But that ignores the very tangible benefits disarmament would bring for all humankind. Its success would strengthen international peace and security. It would free up vast and much-needed resources for social and economic development. And it would remove a layer of fear that clouds all of human existence.”*

The adoption (2012) and implementation (2013) of the United Nations General Assembly Resolution 67/56 have also been a landmark that established an Open-Ended Working Group to develop proposals to take forward multilateral nuclear disarmament negotiations. We acknowledge the efforts made by the OEWG Presidency, led by Costa Rica, as well as the participation of different actors that enhanced consultations and the corresponding report submitted to the UNGA. The Secretary-General of OPANAL and OPANAL Member States also participated in these debates.

Furthermore, in the same vein of positive developments, we welcome the preparations being made by Mexico to hold, in Nayarit, the II Conference on the Humanitarian Impact of Nuclear Weapons, on 13-14 February 2014. We hope that all States take part in this event. We also acknowledge the importance of the I Conference on this subject held in Oslo, Norway, in March this year.

Mr Chairman,

As we can see, 2013 has been a year when the colours of the rainbow began to mark the horizon of a world without nuclear weapons. Certainly, we will live in a world without nuclear weapons, as it was before 1945. Today, more than ever before, OPANAL and its Member States are committed to this cause. We will continue to participate actively in the regional and global arenas by promoting nuclear disarmament and non-proliferation education, by coordinating efforts with other nuclear-weapon-free zones, by discussing multilateral initiatives that lead to negotiations for the abolition of nuclear weapons, and by articulating efforts with governments, international organizations and civil society to favour this goal.

Thank you.