



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



Nuclear-Weapons-Free Zone
in Latin America and the Caribbean

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**Vienna Conference on the
Humanitarian Impact of Nuclear Weapons**

Statement read *by*

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in Latin America and the Caribbean - OPANAL

On behalf *of*

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Secretary-General of OPANAL

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The 70th anniversary in a few months of the first nuclear weapon explosion is an opportunity to reflect on the imminent danger upon us.

The Conferences on Humanitarian Impact of Nuclear Weapons are increasingly attracting the attention of States, International Organizations and civil society. Historically, nuclear weapons have been considered from the strategic point of view, in other words, in terms of their role concerning the security of States possessing them.

The Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons (NPT), “the cornerstone of the non-proliferation regime”, does not take explicitly into account the humanitarian approach.

One year before the signature of the NPT a pioneer exception to the strategic debate took place. The Treaty of Tlatelolco was the first ever international instrument for nuclear disarmament and non-proliferation with a humanitarian approach. Its Preamble states: *That nuclear weapons, whose terrible effects are suffered, indiscriminately and inexorably, by military forces and civilian population alike, constitute, through the persistence of the radioactivity they release, an attack on the integrity of the human species and ultimately may even render the whole earth uninhabitable.*

Nuclear weapons are instruments of total annihilation rather than instruments of war. Nuclear arsenals bring a permanent menace of accidents and appropriation by non-state actors.

The end of the Cold War was not the end of nuclear danger.

The humanitarian approach adds new actors and elements to the debate. International peace and security equally concern civil society, International Organizations and Non-Nuclear-Weapon States.

Nuclear disarmament is not a concession, but a right and an obligation to honor our idea of humanity and civilization. We must not perceive disarmament as a dream, but as a pending task.

We must act to delegitimize nuclear weapons in the political level and to criminalize them as it has been done in the case of other weapons of mass destruction.

The Nuclear-Weapons-Free Zones have proven successful in stigmatizing and marginalizing nuclear weapons; promoting the idea that they cannot be an element of international relations. Their use would destroy international relations.

Planet Earth, in its entirety, used to be a nuclear-weapons-free zone. The goal of OPANAL is and will always be to return to this natural condition.