



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

Secretariat

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WORKSHOP ON GOOD PRACTICES AND LESSONS LEARNED WITH RESPECT TO
THE IMPLEMENTATION OF TREATIES ESTABLISHING NUCLEAR-WEAPON-FREE
ZONES

Statement by

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and

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“How the Treaty of Tlatelolco contributed to the regional peace and stability while helping to
brake the Cold War nuclear arms race”

-7 July 2020-

Mexico City, Mexico

Distinguished colleagues,

I would like to thank the organizers for convening this workshop. During these difficult times it is crucial to keep the conversation on such important issues going.

In order to understand the role of the Treaty of Tlatelolco in contributing to the regional peace and stability and in the goal of global nuclear disarmament, it is necessary to recall how it was conceived in midst of the Cold War era.

Next week we will commemorate the 75th anniversary of the first in history nuclear test, which forever changed the world. With the so-called "Trinity Test" carried out by the United States on July 16, 1945 in Alamogordo, New Mexico, the concept of the arms race reached a whole new dimension. The Soviet Union followed suit with its first nuclear test in 1949 and the nuclear arms race and the Cold War between these two superpowers began.

In October 1962, during the so-called "Cuban Missile Crisis", the Cold War had never been so close to Latin America and the Caribbean. The region was confronted by the fact that it was not geographically alien to the risk of a nuclear war but suddenly became the location with its highest possibility. This situation increased the awareness of the nuclear threat.

In April 1963, five Presidents of Latin American States (Bolivia, Brazil, Chile, Ecuador and Mexico) issued the "Declaration on the denuclearization of Latin America". By means of said Declaration, the five Presidents announced: "that their Governments are prepared to sign a multilateral Latin American agreement whereby their countries would undertake not to manufacture, receive, store or test nuclear weapons or nuclear launching devices."

In November 1963, the United Nations General Assembly addressed the Latin American and Caribbean initiative by adopting resolution 1911 (XVIII), which expressed the support of the international community for the idea that our region should become the first one to be exempt from nuclear weapons. Furthermore, it was an autonomous decision to guarantee the security of Latin American and Caribbean States through a treaty that would prohibit, in all its forms, nuclear weapons.

Consequently, the States of the region began a negotiation process that culminated in the adoption of the Treaty of Tlatelolco in 1967.

It should be noted that during the last session of the Preparatory Committee for the Denuclearization of Latin America (COPREDAL), 21 out of 33 States from the region and 22 extra-regional States participating as observers, were present. This is relevant to our workshop for two main reasons.

First, the importance of starting the negotiation of a treaty even when not all the parties that subsequently sign and ratify it participate in the process from the beginning. In case of Tlatelolco, the Treaty and its zone of application reached the universalization only in 2002, when with the ratification of Cuba, all the 33 States of Latin America and the Caribbean became Parties to the Treaty. This lesson could serve as an example for other regions that intend to create zones free of weapons of mass destruction, such as the Middle East.

Secondly, it was important to have the participation of observers because this legitimized the transparent process under which the text of the treaty was agreed at the international level. Likewise, this allowed the six extra-regional states that would become Parties to the Additional Protocols to the Treaty of Tlatelolco (United States, Soviet Union, France, United Kingdom, China and Netherlands) to be involved from the start. This is another lesson learned that could be applied to the negotiations on the establishing of a zone free of weapons of mass destruction in the Middle East.

Distinguished colleagues,

The Treaty of Tlatelolco emerged in a conflictive context framed in the Cold War and has never lost its relevance. On the contrary - living in such dangerous times as today, when the nuclear superpowers are modernizing their arsenals and are unwilling to sign or extend the agreements that reduce their atomic arsenals, our region, being the pioneer in establishing a zone free of weapons in a densely populated territory, has the mission of promoting peace and a world without nuclear weapons. We are willing to work together with other Nuclear Weapon Free Zones for the benefit of international security.