



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

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**INFORMAL WORKSHOP ON GOOD PRACTICES AND LESSONS LEARNED
WITH RESPECT TO THE EXISTING NUCLEAR-WEAPON-FREE ZONES**

Statement by

Ambassador Flavio Roberto Bonzanini,

Secretary General of the Agency for the Prohibition of Nuclear Weapons in Latin America
and the Caribbean (OPANAL)

**Theme 6: How zones institutionalize arrangements for regional peace, disarmament
and non-proliferation**

*Proposed Topic: The role of international organizations in promoting regional and
international norms.*

The Treaty of Tlatelolco and the institutionalization of the norm

Thank you, Mr. Wang.

It is truly an honor to share, at least virtually, the floor with this panel. And, of course, I would also like to thank the organizers for inviting the Agency for the Prohibition of Nuclear Weapons in Latin America and the Caribbean (OPANAL) to take part in this panel.

My presentation will be devoted to providing you with an overview on the role of international organizations in promoting regional and international norms. In this regard, I will present the experience of OPANAL -organization which I have the honor to be its Secretary-General- in establishing and consolidating the international law institution created by the Treaty for the Prohibition of Nuclear Weapons in Latin America and the Caribbean, best known as the Treaty of Tlatelolco.

Dear colleagues,

The Treaty of Tlatelolco is the first practical expression on the prohibition of nuclear weapons in International Law. It is not a political declaration, nor a statement of principles. It contains provisions establishing rights and obligations, for its 33 States Party, on nuclear non-proliferation and peaceful uses of nuclear energy.

Moreover, it established an institution and created a machinery to ensure its enforcement and compliance. By means of the Treaty of Tlatelolco, our region has contributed to the codification and evolution of International Law. Now, the norm created by the Treaty of Tlatelolco has been consolidated and it represents a key component of the international nuclear disarmament and non-proliferation regime.

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Dear colleagues,

International organizations play a critical role in implementing, consolidating and reinforcing new norms. Through its moral standing and technical expertise, international organizations act as forces of change at different levels. Its work is driven by the need to find innovative solutions to support norm observance and norm development involving different actors. And the creation of new areas for regional and international collaboration constitutes forms to socialize initiatives led to norm strengthening. Nonetheless, empathy and political will of all actors involved are critical in order to succeed on this goal.

Latin America and the Caribbean, as the eldest among the nuclear-weapon-free zones, has long devoted efforts to strengthen and consolidating the norm of the prohibition of nuclear weapons in vast populated areas. In that regard, I would like to highlight some of the most recent efforts carried out by OPANAL, which contribute to institutionalize the norm regionally and globally:

As part of its **regional efforts**, OPANAL encourages its member states to agree on *joint declarations and common positioning*. These positions, and many others, are adopted unanimously by all Latin American and Caribbean States on two special occasions: The Commemoration of the Opening for signature of the Treaty of Tlatelolco -on 14 February- and the International Day for the Total Elimination of Nuclear Weapons -on 26 September-. Although these 33 States may not share identical interests and beliefs, they absolutely endorse these declarations and stand on common ground regarding the threat posed by nuclear weapons and their catastrophic impact. Besides its role of ensuring the effectiveness of the Treaty of Tlatelolco, OPANAL serves as a permanent forum that allows the expression of common stands by the States Party.

Regarding its **global efforts**, OPANAL takes advantage of two of the main multilateral fora in which the issues on nuclear disarmament and non-proliferation are addressed: *the UN General Assembly and the NPT Review Process and Conference*. Every three years,

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OPANAL prepares the zero-draft resolution on the Treaty of Tlatelolco, agreed by all its member states, which is later presented by the depositary state at the First Committee. At the NPT Review Process and Conference, OPANAL submits working papers with those elements that are priority to the region. These working papers represents a contribution of Latin America aimed to the success of the Conference, including the content of its Final Document.

Finally, but not least significantly, it is important to mention one of the most relevant initiatives conceived and encouraged by OPANAL: The Conferences of Nuclear Weapon Free Zones. Since 2005, OPANAL contributes to convene these Conferences through the elaboration of a UN General Assembly resolution which is adopted every five years prior to the NPT Review Conference. The resolution convening the IV Conference of Nuclear Weapons Free Zones, originally scheduled to be held this year, was not the exception. OPANAL will also contribute to the resolution that will be presented this year in order to agree further dates in 2021 for the celebration of the Conference.

Dear colleagues,

As you can see with the brief overview that I presented, OPANAL -as an international organization entirely devoted to nuclear disarmament and non-proliferation- is fully committed with the strengthening and consolidation of the norm prohibiting nuclear weapons. Even more, OPANAL has been engaging and establishing close contact with other nuclear-weapon-free zones in order to explore further ways to work towards the establishment of a more formal, sustained dialogue and cooperation, as well as the necessary mechanisms to that end.

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Finally, I want to highlight that the greatest challenge for international intergovernmental organizations to consolidate regional and international norms is achieving the necessary political will of all parties involved. It is always far from being an easy task to agree on common positioning, even in a region with an historic tradition in favor of nuclear disarmament and non-proliferation such as Latin America and the Caribbean. However, both organizations and its member states have the responsibility and commitment to find ways to further advance in joint initiatives and reach compromise. We should not take for granted the existence of nuclear-weapon-free zones. It is our responsibility to preserve the NWFZ as institutions that actually work and play a significant role in promoting and consolidating international norms on nuclear disarmament and non-proliferation.

I thank you for your kind attention.