



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

Secretariat

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UN General Assembly - First Committee

**Panel discussions and exchanges with independent experts and other high-level
officials**

**Statement by the Secretary General of the Agency for the Prohibition of
Nuclear Weapons in Latin America and the Caribbean – OPANAL,**

H.E. Ambassador Flávio Roberto Bonzanini

Thank you, Mr Chair.

It is an honor and a pleasure to participate today in this Panel. I will briefly present some perspectives from Latin America on the current trends on nuclear disarmament and non-proliferation, so that we can have an interactive conversation.

The NWFZs and international law

- First and foremost, I would like to highlight the relevance of the international norm established by the nuclear-weapon-free zones and pioneered by the Treaty for the Prohibition of Nuclear Weapons in Latin America and the Caribbean – Treaty of Tlatelolco, more than five decades ago.

- The establishment of Nuclear-Weapon-Free Zones (NWFZs) is a regional approach to strengthen global nuclear non-proliferation and disarmament norms and consolidate efforts towards peace and security. The Treaty of Tlatelolco, in particular, established a set of key precedents. The Treaty of Tlatelolco precedes and goes beyond the NPT. Moreover, it inspired relevant provisions of the NPT, including:
 - Article IV (on the rights and obligations of States parties regarding the development of nuclear energy)
 - Article VI (on nuclear disarmament); and
 - Article VII (on the establishment of other nuclear-weapon-free zones).

Several decades have passed and the international norm established by the nuclear-weapon-free zones is more important than ever. This is something that the Member States of OPANAL highlighted during the XXVII General Conference held on 30 September 2021.

XXVII General Conference

Regarding the General Conference OPANAL, I would like to briefly mention some of its highlights.

First, there was a record participation of attendees including Member States and Observers. In spite of the ongoing pandemic, a hybrid format was held allowing the participation of several representatives.

Second, three landmark resolutions were adopted by consensus:

- *Memorandum of Understanding between OPANAL and the African Commission on Nuclear Energy*. This resolution approves the Memorandum

which contributes to fostering cooperation and collaboration between the nuclear-weapon-free zones established by the Treaty of Tlatelolco and the Treaty of Pelindaba.

- *Internship program at the Secretariat.* Recognizes the enormous contribution of interns to OPANAL's work by establishing a paid internship program, starting in January 2022, to pay a token amount to all our interns regardless of their nationality.
- *Gender, non-proliferation, and disarmament:* For the first time, the XXVII Session of the General Conference incorporated the relationship between gender, non-proliferation and disarmament as part of the discussions, adopting a resolution in this regard recognizing the valuable contribution of women in the region in the promotion of disarmament, non-proliferation and arms control and incorporating a gender perspective to support and strengthen the effective participation of women in OPANAL, its bodies and programs.
- One announcement:
 - It is the intention of OPANAL to present next year two resolutions to the First Committee of the UN General Assembly:
 1. First, our traditional biennial resolution on the Treaty of Tlatelolco, presented by Mexico, highlighting the relevance of the Treaty and its contribution to the nuclear non-proliferation regime.
 2. Second, a resolution to mandate the establishment of a group of governmental experts and the preparation of a comprehensive study of nuclear-weapon-free zones in all its aspects. This will be presented to

the First Committee by a Member State of OPANAL and ideally co-sponsored by the 33 Member States.

With these actions, OPANAL Member States reaffirm their historic commitment to work towards a world free of nuclear weapons by including new perspectives and promoting joint efforts beyond our region.

IV Conference of Nuclear-Weapon-Free Zones and Mongolia

Before finishing my presentation, and in a less cheerful note, I would like to express and echoed the great concern of OPANAL and to make an urgent call to all UN Member States, that are also parties or signatories to the treaties that establish nuclear-weapon-free zones, to pursue the necessary efforts to agree on a date to convening the IV Conference of Nuclear-Weapon-Free Zones and Mongolia, originally scheduled in 2020, but postponed due to the ongoing pandemic.

This is, by far, the most important occasion to foster the cooperation and exchange between the existing nuclear-weapon-free zones. It would be a real tragedy if further postponed, let alone not convening the Conference.

This is all from my part. I thank you for your attention and I look forward to the discussion and your questions.