



## OPANAL

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

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### **2023 Summer School on Nuclear Non-Proliferation and Nuclear Disarmament for Diplomats in Latin America and the Caribbean**

*Welcoming remarks 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*

*Dear participants, colleagues, and friends,*

Good afternoon,

It is an honor and my great pleasure to welcome you all to the provisional headquarters of the Agency for the Prohibition of Nuclear Weapons in Latin America and the Caribbean (OPANAL). As you are now aware of the important role of the region in the construction and consolidation of the global nonproliferation regime, it is only natural for you to gain in-depth knowledge of the history of the Treaty of Tlatelolco and the activities carried out by OPANAL.

One of these myriads of activities is the 2023 Summer School on Nuclear Non-Proliferation and Nuclear Disarmament for Diplomats in Latin America and the Caribbean, which represents an avant-garde testament to the region's unwavering dedication to advancing multilateral nuclear disarmament and non-proliferation efforts.

This long-standing regional tradition promoting international peace requires a constant balance between innovation and respect for our heritage.

It is surely not easy to recognize the grave threat posed by nuclear weapons to international security and stability. The catastrophic consequences of their use are unfathomable and can never be justified. It is an even harder task to take responsibility to work together toward their elimination and the establishment of a world free from the threat of nuclear war when the political climate is antagonistic.

Yet, not so long ago, in the aftermath of the Cuban Missile Crisis of October 1962, Latin America and the Caribbean countries took the long view and advocated for the prohibition of nuclear weapons on their soil and the establishment of the first nuclear-weapon-free zone, free from the threat of nuclear war. The symbol of this success has been celebrated ever since 14 February 1967, for the entry into the signature of the Treaty for the Prohibition of nuclear weapons in Latin America and the Caribbean, the Treaty of Tlatelolco.

Many supported our regional commitment; many others criticized it for being insufficient.

If you allow me to refer to a parable from the Quechuan people, an indigenous population in South America, which is often used in the climate change and environmental sphere, but I believe it is also applicable to nuclear disarmament:

*“According to the Flight of the Hummingbird tale, a great fire ravaged a forest, and all the animals fled in fear. However, a tiny hummingbird kept flying back and forth to the river, picking up water droplets with its beak and dropping them onto the flames. The other animals mocked the hummingbird, saying that its efforts were pointless and that it was too small to make a difference. But the hummingbird continued to tirelessly fly back and forth, doing what he could to extinguish the fire. While the end of the tale varies across the region, it is our responsibility to choose to contribute to a better narrative and inspire others to promote it.”*

Accordingly, the Treaty of Tlatelolco set a precedent and inspired four other regions – and Mongolia – to prohibit nuclear weapons and aim toward a world free of nuclear weapons. Cooperation reunited all regions several times, and in 2017 it allowed the opening for the signature of an ambitious project: the Treaty for the Prohibition of Nuclear Weapons (TPNW).

Latin America and the Caribbean remain proud to be the region counting the most signatories and state parties to this new international venture, in line with our historic tradition in nuclear disarmament and non-proliferation.

Every action matters, and we understand the weight and efforts our ambitions demand. The Summer School on Nuclear Non-Proliferation and Nuclear Disarmament for Diplomats in Latin America and the Caribbean is an important opportunity to exchange ideas, share experiences, and strengthen our collective efforts toward achieving a more peaceful and secure world, emphasizing the necessity for fair and inclusive agreements to create a safer and more secure world for everyone.

I encourage you all to engage in thoughtful and productive discussions and work towards finding innovative solutions to the challenges we face. And I would like to extend my sincere gratitude to all of you for your commitment to this important cause.

I am confident that we can progress together toward a world free of nuclear weapons.

I thank you.