



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

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PANEL SESSION (3 minutes)

The significance of Nuclear-Weapon-Free Zones: by Ambassador Bonzanini

Why are nuclear-weapon-Free zones important?

Thank you very much for the invitation to participate in this panel. So, following with the recommendation of our moderator, I will try to be very brief:

As the Secretary-General of OPANAL created by the Treaty of Tlatelolco which established the first zone of its kind -on 14 February 1967-, I would say that the importance of nuclear weapons free zones resides in the fact that it was -and certainly it still is [emphasis added]- an innovative approach to achieving common security region-by-region.

Moreover, these zones set important milestones for the nuclear nonproliferation regime like:

- the first time a group of states decided to join in such initiative and agreed to pursue general and complete disarmament;
- the first time an explicit reference of a prohibition of nuclear weapons was included in a multilateral treaty;
- the first time a verification mechanism was created; and, certainly not less important [emphasis added],
- the first time the inalienable right of all nations to use nuclear energy to meet their development needs was also included.

Nowadays, the five nuclear weapons free zones and one state self-proclaimed free of these weapons (Mongolia) -which represent 115 countries- share the goal of the total elimination of these weapons of mass destruction.

However, more collaboration and information exchange among the zones is needed.

That is why I welcome initiatives like this panel.

Thank you and I look forward to our dialogue session.

Q&A session (30 minutes)

Possible questions asked by either the panelists or the audience:

1. Difference between Nuclear-free zones and nuclear-weapons-free zones?

Thank you. It is actually a very interesting and relevant question. In fact, the nuance resides in the fact that in the first category (NFZs) there is literally an absence of any nuclear activity including civilian and peaceful activities; while the second category (NWFZs) establishes prohibitions on activities related to nuclear weapons. In the latter category, peaceful uses of nuclear energy are also encouraged and promoted.

2. Is there any cooperation among nuclear-weapon-free zones?

Thank you. For several years, we have developed a close relationship with most of the other four NWFZs. However, it has been developed and we are now currently exploring other joint initiatives.

For instance, last year I had the fortune to issue a joint communiqué on the entry into force of the Treaty on the Prohibition of Nuclear Weapons (TPNW) with my African counterpart.

Likewise, I had the honor to be invited to deliver a video message on the occasion of the First Meeting of States Parties to the Treaty of Rarotonga, in which I offered all my support and of OPANAL to provide assistance and share lessons learned with our good friends of the South Pacific to develop the institutional and procedural framework of the Treaty.