



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

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First session of the Preparatory Committee for the 2026 Review Conference of the Parties to the Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons (NPT)

Report by the Secretariat

The First session of the Preparatory Committee for the Review Conference of the Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons (NPT) was held in Vienna, from 31 July to 11 August 2023, and was chaired by Ambassador Jarmo Viinanen of Finland. OPANAL participated in the work of the Committee in its role as an observer Agency.

Given the failure of the 2022 NPT Review Conference and the failure to adopt a final document, State Parties have agreed on the urgency to strengthen the treaty review process and to improve its working practices.

In this respect, on the week prior to the Preparatory Committee, the meeting of the Working Group on further strengthening the review process of the Treaty was held, with the intention of discussing and recommending the Committee measures aimed at improving the effectiveness, efficiency, transparency, accountability, coordination and continuity of the review process of the Treaty.

While the various delegations agreed that it was a positive exercise, derived from the level of interaction and exchange of views on different topics, it ended with State Parties being unable to adopt recommendations.

On the other hand, after two weeks of work, the Preparatory Committee concluded its activities without fulfilling the mandate of its first session, that is, the adoption of a factual document of the discussions. Although the President of the Committee presented a draft document, some delegations, including Iran, Russia and Syria, expressed their disagreement and rejection of the proposal, arguing that this was document that presented a single opinion, which ultimately resulted in the inability to achieve its adoption.

(a) General Debate

The General Debate took place during the first three days of the Committee's work, with the participation of State Parties, international organizations and representatives of civil society.

Unlike other NPT review processes and resulting from the diligent efforts of two OPANAL Member States (Brazil and Mexico) before the secretariat of the Preparatory

Committee, the Secretary-General, Ambassador Flávio Roberto Bonzanini, delivered his intervention during the first day of the General Debate, as the representatives of other international organizations such as the Preparatory Commission for the Comprehensive Nuclear-Test-Ban Treaty Organization (CTBTO).

This joint action resulted not only in allowing OPANAL to intervene on the first day of the debate, but also in a defense of impartiality and equity in the treatment of all international organizations, regardless of their size or structure.

In his statement (**ANNEX I**), the Secretary-General addressed three thematic areas that are priorities for OPANAL Member States, namely: (i) nuclear-weapon-free zones; (ii) interpretative declarations to Protocols I and II to the Treaty of Tlatelolco; and (iii) complementarity of other instruments with the NPT.

i. Nuclear-Weapon-Free Zones

The Secretary-General appealed to State Parties to the treaties that establish these zones to agree on the date for convening the IV Conference on of Nuclear-Weapon-Free Zones and to jointly elect a new coordinator of the process, before the next NPT Review Conference.

ii. Interpretative declarations to Protocols I and II to the Treaty of Tlatelolco

The Secretary-General emphasized that nuclear-weapon-free zones must be respected by all States, without reserves or limitations. In particular, the Secretary-General called upon State Parties to the additional protocols to treaties establishing Nuclear-Weapon-Free zones to seek a solution to existing disputes arising from interpretative declarations that affect the effectiveness of such zones and to provide full and unequivocal security assurances to States belonging to such zones. To this end, the Secretary-General highlighted OPANAL's interest in establishing a dialogue mechanism with the United States, France, the United Kingdom and Russia to find a mutually agreed solution to this matter.

iii. Complementarity of other multilateral instruments with the NPT

The Secretary-General recalled the accession of the Treaty on the Prohibition of Nuclear Weapons (TPNW), the Treaty of Tlatelolco and the NPT, on the road to the elimination of these weapons of mass destruction in a transparent, verifiable and irreversible manner.

Overall, the General Debate proceeded without major variations in the positions of the nuclear-weapon States and the major regional groups or coalitions of non-nuclear-weapon States.

However, one significant aspect of the General Debate needs to be highlighted: the growing number of delegations that not only make explicit mention of the importance of nuclear-weapon-free zones and the Treaty of Tlatelolco, in the context of the international nuclear non-proliferation and disarmament regime, but also emphasize the urgent need for the nuclear-weapon States to withdraw or modify the denominated interpretative declarations to the additional protocols to the treaties that establish these nuclear-weapon-free zones.

These reiterated references to the matter of interpretative declarations and the importance of obtaining unconditional negative security assurances contribute to an increased visibility on both matters and to reaffirm the importance of finding a joint solution between nuclear-armed States and those belonging to nuclear-weapon-free zones. including OPANAL Member States.

(b) Bilateral meetings

In parallel, and considering the vast attendance of delegations within the framework of the Preparatory Committee, the Secretary-General had the chance to hold various bilateral meetings with representatives from State Parties to Additional Protocols I and II to the Treaty of Tlatelolco, as well as other delegations upon request.

In this regard, and in accordance with resolution **CG/E/Res.03/2022** of the XXVII Special Session of the General Conference: "*To invite the Council to take the necessary measures to engage in a constructive dialogue with the States Party to Additional Protocols I and II to the Treaty of Tlatelolco, so that they may positively consider the proposed adjustments to the Interpretative Declarations [...]*" and instructs *the "the Secretary-General to provide the necessary support to the Council to fully comply with this resolution [...]*"; the Secretary-General held meetings with the United Kingdom, France and Russia.

United Kingdom

On Tuesday, 1 August 2023, the Secretary-General met with the United Kingdom Delegation led by Ambassador Rebecca Sagar, Head of the Proliferation Security and Arms Control Centre (FCO); Claire Smark, Ministry of Defence; Claudia Blair, Nuclear Non-Proliferation Officer (FCO); and Greg Thomas, Permanent Mission of the United Kingdom. During the meeting, the Secretary-General was accompanied by representatives of Brazil, Costa Rica, Guatemala and Mexico.

The meeting is the first time that OPANAL Member States have the opportunity to establish direct contact with the United Kingdom to address the issue of its interpretative declaration to Protocol II to the Treaty of Tlatelolco, which constitutes a reserve that conditions the guarantee of non-use of nuclear weapons against the States of the region. Ever since the study was prepared in 2015, representatives of the Council attempted to make a

démarche before the *Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Office*, in 2017, in order to present the memorandum with the proposed Adjustment contained in document **C/22/2017Corr**. To address the issue of the interpretative declaration of that country, there had been no exchange of views.

The Delegation of the United Kingdom was receptive to the request and proposal of OPANAL Member States. It stated the shared interest to continue dialogue and that it would seek to study the proposal in more detail in order to find possible ways for mutual understanding, although it was also noted that the United Kingdom was unlikely to consider amending or withdrawing its declaration.

On the contrary, the United Kingdom expressed its intention to seek to better reflect the priority that nuclear-weapon-free zones represent and the respect to its denuclearized status in its nuclear position and to reiterate that its nuclear weapons only serve for defensive purposes and do not threaten non-nuclear-weapon States belonging to free zones with their use, in particular, to the State Parties to the Treaty of Tlatelolco.

The Secretary-General extended an invitation to the United Kingdom to visit the headquarters of OPANAL in Mexico City and recalled that the Government of the United Kingdom, in its observer role, is invited with the agreement of the Member States, to participate in the General Conference, in accordance with rule 17 of the Rules of Procedure of the General Conference, which states that "*Any State Party to either of the Additional Protocols may take part in the debates of the General Conference, without the right to vote, when it is considered that the matters being discussed are of particular concern to the interest of the State in question, or that their participation could be particularly useful to the purposes of the Agency*". The Secretary-General therefore hoped that, if that was the case, the United Kingdom would be able to attend.

France

On Tuesday, 1 August 2023, the Secretary-General met with the French Delegation led by Ambassador Camille Petit, Permanent Representative of France to the Conference on Disarmament. During the meeting, the Secretary-General was accompanied by the Heads of Delegation of Brazil, Honduras and Mexico; as well as representatives of Costa Rica and Guatemala.

The Representative of France thanked the interest of OPANAL Member States in establishing a dialogue with her country to address the matter of its interpretative declaration to Protocol I to the Treaty of Tlatelolco, which constituted a reserve that conditioned the zone of application of the Treaty that included areas of the high seas and which, in France's opinion, represented a claim to sovereignty.

Ambassador Petit stated that her country's position has not changed and that it was unlikely to undergo any changes. He also recalled that since 1992 her country has maintained a policy of non-use or threat of use of nuclear weapons, which was formulated within the framework of the Conference on Disarmament; which was reconfirmed through three separate resolutions in 1995 adopted by the United Nations Security Council, which are

legally binding to all Member States. However, she indicated that her country shared an interest in continuing the dialogue in future opportunities and fora, and assured that it would send to the *Quai d'Orsay* the informative dossier with the proposal of the Member States for a detailed study and analysis.

The Secretary-General extended an invitation to the Representative of France to visit the headquarters of OPANAL in Mexico City and recalled that the Government of France, in its observer role, is invited with the agreement of the Member States, to participate in the General Conference, in accordance with rule 17 of the Rules of Procedure of the General Conference, which states that *"Any State Party to either of the Additional Protocols may take part in the debates of the General Conference, without the right to vote, when it is considered that the matters being discussed are of particular concern to the interest of the State in question, or that their participation could be particularly useful to the purposes of the Agency"*. The Secretary-General therefore hoped that, if that was the case, France would be able to attend.

Russian Federation

On Thursday, 3 August 2023, the Secretary-General met with the Russian Delegation led by Mikhail Kondratenkov, Deputy Head of Delegation, Deputy Director of the Department of Arms Control and Non-Proliferation; Emilia Sidorova, Senior Counsellor; Vassily Khlebushkin, Counsellor; and Nikita Striganov, Third Secretary. During the meeting, the Secretary-General was accompanied by the Heads of Delegation of Guatemala and Honduras; as well as representatives from Brazil, Costa Rica and Mexico.

The representative of the Russian Federation thanked the interest of OPANAL Member States in continuing dialogue. However, it was very difficult for his country to suggest any changes to its interpretative declarations and considered them to be very current considering the deteriorating context surrounding international security and the continuing mistrust that exists amongst States, particularly among nuclear-weapon States.

In this regard, the Representative of the Russian delegation requested information on the reaction of the other State Parties to Additional Protocols I and II that held interpretative declarations. The Secretary-General shared that in the framework of the Preparatory Committee, OPANAL Member States met with France and the United Kingdom, and that although they have been receptive to the idea of engaging in further dialogue, they remain sceptical about the possibility of modifying or withdrawing their interpretative declarations.

The Russian Delegation thanked the information and expressed its commitment to maintain dialogue and hold annual meetings to address issues of common interest and explore options that would satisfy both parties on the issue of interpretative declarations.

The Secretary-General extended an invitation to the Russian Federation to visit the headquarters of OPANAL in Mexico City and recalled that the Russian Federation, in its observer role, is invited with the agreement of the Member States, to participate in the General Conference, in accordance with rule 17 of the Rules of Procedure of the General Conference, which states that *"Any State Party to either of the Additional Protocols may take*

part in the debates of the General Conference, without the right to vote, when it is considered that the matters being discussed are of particular concern to the interest of the State in question, or that their participation could be particularly useful to the purposes of the Agency". The Secretary-General therefore hoped that, if that was the case, the Russian Federation would be able to attend.

Other meetings:

Australia - Upon request of the Government of Australia, the Secretary-General met with the new Ambassador for Arms Control and Counter-Proliferation, Vanesa Wood, to exchange views on the various issues of the NPT review process. She also shared information on the status of the discussions held with the IAEA on the AUKUS matter and nuclear naval propulsion. On this point, the representative of Australia requested information on the treatment of this matter among OPANAL Member States.

The Secretary-General noted that all Member States are following the issue closely and with interest and that Brazil even made a presentation in the framework of the XXVII Special Session of the General Conference of OPANAL with the aim to present factual and updated information on Brazil's respective talks with the IAEA.

(c) Side events

The Secretary-General participated as a panellist in the side event co-organized by the International Campaign to Abolish Nuclear Weapons (ICAN), Ireland, Thailand and the African Nuclear Energy Commission (AFCONE), on the complementarity of the TPNW with the NPT, as well as contributions from other instruments, including nuclear-weapon-free zones and the Comprehensive Nuclear-Test-Ban Treaty. (**ANNEX II**).

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**FIRST SESSION OF THE PREPARATORY COMMITTEE FOR THE
2026 REVIEW CONFERENCE OF THE PARTIES TO THE TREATY
ON THE NON-PROLIFERATION OF NUCLEAR WEAPONS**

Statement by:

Ambassador Flávio Roberto Bonzanini

Secretary-General

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

July-August 2023

Vienna, Austria

Mr. Chair,

In my capacity as the Secretary-General of Agency for the Prohibition of Nuclear Weapons in Latin America and the Caribbean (OPANAL), I extend my heartfelt congratulations to you, Ambassador Jarmo Viinanen, on your election as Chairman of this Preparatory Committee.

I also convey warm greetings from OPANAL to the esteemed members of the Bureau and the Secretariat. As Secretary-General of OPANAL, I am pleased to reaffirm our unwavering commitment to support and contribute to a successful outcome under your capable leadership.

Mr. Chair,

The failure of the 2022 NPT Review Conference to adopt a final consensus document reflects the complex geopolitical landscape that poses significant challenges to international efforts towards nuclear disarmament and non-proliferation.

The absence of a substantive outcome underscores the urgency and complexity of the issues at hand. This challenging environment demands renewed political will, cooperation, commitment, and visionary leadership from all the State Parties to the NPT to overcome these obstacles and work towards a safer, more stable world for current generations and generations to come.

While the lack of a consensus document adopted at the 2022 NPT Review Conference was discouraging, it also highlighted the need for renewing our efforts and commitment to dialogue and cooperation. Although current regional conflicts and a renewed global arms race continue to cast a shadow over the

prospects for meaningful progress, OPANAL, through its Member States and the Secretariat, is committed to work collectively to contribute meaningfully to this review cycle.

Mr. Chair,

Latin America and the Caribbean is proud to be the first region in the world to establish a nuclear-weapon-free zone in a densely populated area, inspiring other regions to follow suit. The Treaty of Tlatelolco stands as a testament to our collective commitment to nuclear disarmament and non-proliferation.

With all 33 countries from the region having signed and ratified the Treaty, and the five nuclear-weapon states and the Netherlands signing and ratifying its two Additional Protocols, the Treaty of Tlatelolco is fully effective. Nonetheless, the interpretative declarations made by France, Russia, United Kingdom, and the United States to the Additional Protocols of the Treaty of Tlatelolco represent reserves that may undermine the denuclearized status of the region.

OPANAL has been seeking to establish a dialogue mechanism with these States to find mutually agreed solution to this issue. We hope that this PrepCom will serve as a platform for further discussions on this matter.

During the next two weeks, the NPT through the focused work of its three committees, -disarmament, non-proliferation, and peaceful uses of nuclear energy-, must be reinforced. This critical undertaking demands serious discussions and pragmatic cooperation to advance our common objectives. We hope this task is approached with determination and a sense of urgency, recognizing the challenges ahead as we strive for a safer global landscape.

Mr. Chair,

The Treaty of Tlatelolco, the NPT through its three pillars, and the Comprehensive Nuclear-Test-Ban Treaty (CTBT), establish norms of International Law, providing a suitable legal basis for the imperative process aimed at completely eliminating all nuclear weapons in a transparent, verifiable, and irreversible manner, once and for all. Notably, the Treaty on the Prohibition of Nuclear Weapons (TPNW) complements the prohibition norm set forth by the Treaty of Tlatelolco and serves as an effective measure to implement Article VI of the NPT.

The 33 OPANAL Member States, in their joint statements, have noted that *the TPNW has joined the Treaty of Tlatelolco and the NPT, on the path towards the elimination of these weapons of mass destruction in a transparent, verifiable and irreversible manner and*¹ highlighted the importance of the entry into force of the Treaty on the Prohibition of Nuclear Weapons (TPNW)².

It is unfortunate that unlike previous NPT Review Conferences, the last one was not preceded by a Conference of Nuclear-Weapon-Free Zones and Mongolia. The convening of periodic conferences of the States belonging to the Nuclear-Weapon-Free Zones and Mongolia holds paramount importance for the robust strengthening of such Zones and the potential creation of new Nuclear-Weapon-Free Zones, particularly in regions like the Middle East.

¹ Joint Communiqué on the occasion of the 56th Anniversary of the Treaty of Tlatelolco.

<https://www.opanal.org/wp-content/uploads/2023/02/Comunique-56-Eng.jpeg>

²Declaration of the Member States of OPANAL on the occasion of the "International Day for the Total Elimination of Nuclear Weapons issued on 26 September 2022". https://www.opanal.org/wp-content/uploads/2022/09/Inf_30_2022Rev.4_eng.-Dec.26sept.2022.pdf

Thus, I earnestly urge all States belonging to Nuclear-Weapon-Free Zones to come together and agree on the dates for the IV Conference. Furthermore, I call upon them to collectively designate a coordinator for this pivotal gathering. While the current atypical situation should not set a precedent, it is imperative that we maintain continuity and progress in our efforts.

Our expectation is that prior the next Review Conference the IV Conference of Nuclear-Weapon Free Zones has been convened. This coordinated approach will not only strengthen existing Zones but also pave the way for the establishment of new ones, fostering global peace and security.

Mr. Chair,

Esteemed delegates,

As we deliberate during the next two weeks, let us approach our work with determination, pragmatism, and a sense of urgency, recognizing the importance of regional efforts towards nuclear disarmament. Together, through open dialogue and cooperation, a safer, more stable world, free from the threat of nuclear weapons, and ensure a sustainable future for all humankind, must be assured.

I thank you.

**FIRST SESSION OF THE PREPARATORY COMMITTEE FOR THE 2026
REVIEW CONFERENCE OF THE PARTIES TO THE TREATY ON THE NON-
PROLIFERATION OF NUCLEAR WEAPONS**

Side-event organized by Ireland, Thailand, AFCONE, and ICAN

*"Complementarity of the TPNW with the NPT, with a specific focus on the role of
NWFZ's"*

Remarks by:

Ambassador Flávio Roberto Bonzanini

Secretary-General

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

OPANAL

July-August 2023

Vienna, Austria

INTRODUCTORY REMARKS (5 minutes)

Thank you very much for the kind introduction.

First, I would like to thank the Governments of Ireland and Thailand, as well as to our dear friends from ICAN and AFCONE for co-organizing this timely side-event on the complementarity of the TPNW with the NPT, with a specific focus on the role of nuclear-weapon-free zones.

It is a pleasure and an honor to share the table with such great panelists and to have the opportunity to offer the regional perspective of the Member States of OPANAL.

I will start my introductory remarks by recalling the fact that Latin America and the Caribbean take immense pride in being the first region in the world to establish a nuclear-weapon-free zone in a densely populated area, and inspiring other regions in the world to pursue similar endeavors.

The Treaty of Tlatelolco is a landmark treaty that reflects our collective commitment to nuclear disarmament and non-proliferation, fostering peace and stability in our region.

The treaties establishing the nuclear-weapon-free zones; the NPT through its three pillars -nuclear disarmament, non-proliferation, and peaceful uses of nuclear energy-; the CTBT and the TPNW, institute norms of International Law, and provide a suitable legal basis for the imperative process aimed at eliminating all nuclear weapons in a transparent, verifiable, and irreversible manner, once and for all.

The TPNW complements the prohibition norm set forth by the Treaty of Tlatelolco, more than fifty years ago, and serves as an effective measure to implement Article VI of the NPT.

The pivotal role played by the Member States of OPANAL in the negotiation, adoption, and entry into force of the Treaty is no mere coincidence. It reflects their continued political will and unwavering historic commitment to nuclear disarmament. With more than 80% of OPANAL Member States signing and ratifying the Treaty, their dedication to the cause of disarmament is undeniable. Notably, the last year's universalization of the TPNW in the Central American region, triggered by the ratification of Guatemala, further exemplifies their steadfast determination to work towards a nuclear-weapon-free world.

I would like to recall that on 22 January 2021, OPANAL and AFCONE issued a joint communique welcoming the entry into force of the TPNW, and thus marking the first time that the two nuclear-weapon-free zones speak jointly on the issues of common relevance.

In strengthening cooperation with other nuclear-weapon-free zones, OPANAL has consistently fostered dialogues and partnerships with other regions. We acknowledge the collective impact of nuclear-weapon-free zones and their shared objectives, aligning with the principles of the NPT and the TPNW. By joining forces, we reinforce the message of disarmament and create a united front to address the challenges posed by nuclear weapons.

Since the beginning of my tenure, fostering cooperation between OPANAL and other existing nuclear-weapon-free zones has been a top priority. Since 2003, OPANAL has had such an agreement with the Pacific Islands Forum, responsible for implementing the Treaty of Rarotonga. In 2021 we were

pleased to sign the Memorandum of Understanding with AFCONE, further enhancing our collaborative efforts.

Currently, we are engaged in negotiations to solidify an MoU with our colleagues in Central Asia. Moreover, we have recently reached an agreement with ASEAN on a series of cooperation activities, with the aim of eventually formalizing an MoU between our two zones. These cooperative endeavors underscore our commitment to strengthening the bonds between nuclear-weapon-free zones, facilitating interregional cooperation, and fostering information exchange, as well as collectively working towards a world free from the menace of nuclear weapons. Through enhanced collaboration, we aim to amplify our impact and pave the way for a more secure and peaceful future for all.

In conclusion, our regional perspective underscores the essential role of the NPT and the TPNW in complementing the nuclear disarmament and non-proliferation regime, particularly through the Treaty of Tlatelolco. The Member States of OPANAL remain committed to strengthening the disarmament regime through regional cooperation and engagement with other nuclear-weapon-free zones. Together, we strive for a world where the dangers of nuclear weapons are eliminated, ensuring a safer and more peaceful future for all humanity.

Thank you for your attention and I look forward to our discussion.