



# OPANAL GENERAL CONFERENCE

## XXIV Regular Session

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### **Report of the Secretary-General**

The year about to conclude, when nuclear weapons completed their 7<sup>th</sup> decade, has not produced so far any new developments worth commemorating. It is a fact that no attack using such an unsurpassable means of mass destruction took place, neither was there any report on a nuclear explosion, either accidental or experimental. Nevertheless, it is difficult to assert that there was no threat of use, given that the some 16 thousand nuclear weapons, both those deployed and those kept in silos, exist to produce fear and to impose political pressure. At least since the end of the bilateral confrontation known as the “cold war”, it is inappropriate to class nuclear weapons as defensive devices, though there are still some that insist in doing so. The concept of deterrence may perhaps be more precise, meaning basically that the possession of nuclear weapons serves to avoid being attacked by others possessing them. Those States that do not possess nuclear weapons have nothing to do with that hypothetical defence strategy or with the logic of deterrence, except that as objects of menace or defenceless victims.

It is worth noting the good news that during this year no new States, beyond the nine that already possess them, acquired nuclear weapons. The deal reached with Iran is certainly a positive development as it opens up a window of opportunity for other agreements in a region of the world which experienced a significant growth in unrest in 2015. It is also positive the continuing implementation of the “Strategic Arms Reduction Treaty” (START) (2010), between the United States of America and the Russian Federation, the provisions of which should be met by 2018, at the latest.

In this year marking the 70<sup>th</sup> anniversary, the multilateral institutions created by the I Special Session on Disarmament of the General Assembly of the United Nations (1978) (SSOD I) - the only universal institutions devoted to nuclear disarmament - remained paralyzed. The Disarmament Commission (UNDC) remains unable to adopt anything since the year 1999. The Conference on Disarmament (CD), the sole forum with a negotiation mandate, was unable to adopt a programme of work, as it has been happening for the last 18 years, thus remaining unable to initiate any negotiations. Some Member States of the CD wish to open negotiations on just one of the items – fissile material – among others that could be included in a possible programme of work. But still, it has not been possible to reach consensus on the matter. Likewise, there is no consensus to open negotiations on issues that some States consider far more urgent or relevant, such as is the case of granting assurances not to use nuclear weapons against non-nuclear weapon States or threaten those States with those weapons. Problems of a structural or political engineering nature, or procedural issues are not sufficient to explain the stalemate. The heart of the matter is that States possessing nuclear arsenals are not prepared to accept the possibility of giving them up by means of an irreversible legally-binding obligation including verification mechanisms and specific deadlines.

This picture is further complicated by the continuing existence of agreements and alliances based on nuclear weapons to which some non-nuclear-weapon States are party.

This year, the situation was equally negative in another global forum that addresses nuclear weapon matters. The IX Review Conference of the Parties to the Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons (NPT) ended without the adoption of any decisions nor a final document. It is especially serious that most of the items agreed upon at the previous Conference in 2010, not to mention the consensus reached in 2000 and 1995 could not be carried out. The failure of the IX Conference cannot be attributed to structural or procedural issues.

The five nuclear-weapon-states recognised in the NPT met this year as they have done yearly since 2011. On the one hand, this initiative probably brings a better possibility of understanding among them, including allowing them to issue documents listing positive statements and goals. On the other hand, it is inescapable with these meetings a forum of nuclear-weapon-states is being created. Despite their possible divergences and the specific strategic aims of each of them, they are now presenting themselves as a group vis-à-vis the non-nuclear-weapon States that do not belong to their alliances.

The III Conference of States Party to Treaties that establish Nuclear-Weapon-Free Zones (NWFZ) and Mongolia was held in April at the United Nations in New York. The two prior Conferences (Mexico, 2005; New York, 2010) adopted final documents that represented initial attempts of communication amongst the 116 States that comprise the NWFZs. The aim was to strengthen the action and influence of the five Zones in the works and negotiations on nuclear disarmament and non-proliferation. The region of Latin America and the Caribbean is the only one that is provided with a functioning agency. Not having an institution makes it difficult for the other four Zones to express themselves collectively. Due to organizational matters, the III Conference did not go beyond a general debate and was unable to adopt a final document. As a result, the continuity of a process that seemed promising for a greater mobilization of the non-nuclear-weapon states comes into question.

In principle, OPANAL would be the foundation for resuming that process and seeking contact with the other Zones with a view to a future IV Conference, which should not necessarily be held in five years' time. The Secretary-General of OPANAL, with the consent of the Council, attempted to organize an informal meeting with Representatives from other Zones with the purpose of informing them about the failure of the III Conference and offer preliminary ideas on possible cooperation between the Zones. This effort did not succeed (see annex - Doc. C/06/2015 "Third Conference of States Parties and Signatories to Treaties that establish Nuclear Weapon-Free Zones and Mongolia").

As in 2014, this year I intervened (Doc. Inf.015/2015) during the general debate at the United Nations General Assembly First Committee. We also approached the Chairman of the I Committee in order to ensure the participation of the Secretary-General in the panel composed of heads of Agencies on “Current state of affairs in the field of arms control and disarmament and the role of international organizations with mandates in this field”. Unfortunately, this attempt faced opposition by some States in spite of the efforts by the Permanent Mission of Mexico to the United Nations, in its capacity as OPANAL Coordinator in New York, together with various Member States to promote the participation of OPANAL in said discussion.

**There are also, however, positive aspects that I should highlight**

This year, the humanitarian movement gained special strength, injecting new momentum to the nuclear disarmament process. Also worth noting is the Humanitarian Pledge, now endorsed by more than 120 States, including the 33 OPANAL Member States. The Humanitarian Pledge emphasises the existence of a legal gap considering that nuclear weapons are the sole weapons of mass destruction that have not yet been prohibited. In particular, the consolidation of the humanitarian initiative was the most important landmark of the IX NPT Review Conference.

Moreover, the fact that the United Nations General Assembly First Committee adopted the resolution “Humanitarian pledge for the prohibition and elimination of nuclear weapons” with 128 votes in favour (77%) represents an unprecedented development. Some other significant resolutions were also adopted, *inter alia*, “Humanitarian consequences of nuclear weapons”; “Ethical imperatives for a nuclear-weapon-free world”; and “Taking forward multilateral nuclear disarmament negotiations”, all of them promoted by a significant group of OPANAL Member States.

**The activities of the Agency during the two-year period covering 2014-2015** are outlined in the document “Activities of the Council in 2015 - Report to the General Conference” (Doc. C/018/2015), which includes administrative and budgetary matters according to reports received throughout the year from the Committee on Contributions and Administrative and Budgetary Matters – (CCAAP).

It is incumbent upon the Secretary-General to render account of the specific tasks entrusted to him by the General Conference by virtue of Resolution CG/E/Res.568, adopted at its XXIII Special Session held in November 2014.

The first task refers to achieving greater participation in the Organs and activities of OPANAL by the eleven Member States that do not have permanent representation in the Host State, those being Caribbean States. It is important to underline that, with a few exceptions, those States comply with their obligations under the Treaty and are not alien to the Agency. The problem arises from their absence in most of the activities and their non-participation in the Organs of the Agency. Correcting this situation requires actions on the part of the Secretariat of OPANAL, the Caribbean institutions, and the Host State of the Agency.

The Secretariat has sought to make contact with the Caribbean Community – CARICOM, specifically offering to attend a meeting, at the appropriate CARICOM level, with the purpose of offering a presentation about OPANAL and to study the means for better participation from those States. On two occasions, the Secretary General met with Missions from the Caribbean at the United Nations Headquarters. However, those initiatives have not, until now, produced results.

This year we presented the proposal of two internship posts a year for two young diplomats or postgraduate students from the Caribbean at the Secretariat of the Agency. I have the honour to confirm that this project will be materialized thanks to the support of the Government of the Kingdom of the Netherlands.

On the part of the Host State, it would be useful to promote contact between OPANAL and the Ambassadors of Caribbean States non-resident in Mexico, in the occasion of their periodical visits, taking also into account that an office for those Chiefs of Mission was recently established in Mexico City, in the Tlatelolco Building.

The second task that I was entrusted with was “to submit to the Member States, for their consideration and approval, a plan of action with a view to achieving the review or withdrawal of the Interpretative Declarations that States Parties to the Additional Protocols to the Treaty of Tlatelolco made to those instruments”. In compliance with this duty, I am submitting to the General Conference Document CG/05/2015, “Memorandum of the Secretary-General on the interpretative declarations made by the States Party to the Additional Protocols to the Treaty of Tlatelolco”, which contains the plan of action. Draft resolution CG/L.10/2015 “Interpretative Declarations made by the States Party to the Additional Protocols to the Treaty of Tlatelolco” presents a possible decision on the subject to be considered by the General Conference.

The third task entrusted to the Secretary-General involved finding a solution for the relocation of the Agency in new headquarters more appropriate to its needs. This task has been fully completed.

The General Conference also encouraged the Secretary-General to organize a solemn session on 16 July 2015, on the occasion of the 70<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the first nuclear weapon explosion. On 16 July 2015, a panel entitled “Commemoration of the 70<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the first explosion of a nuclear weapon and start of the nuclear era” took place within the framework of the second edition of the Summer School on Nuclear Disarmament and Non-Proliferation, at the Headquarters of the Mexican Foreign Affairs Ministry. The Secretary-General participated in said panel. In addition, an article written by the Secretary General was published in the press.

On the Agenda of the XXIV Regular Session of the General Conference are listed some items that I would like to bring to the attention of the Member States.

During this first part of the Session, item 6 – “External relations of OPANAL” – as outlined in Document CG/11/2015, addresses the Agency’s relations with the United Nations and the International Atomic Energy Agency. In addition, it addresses the relation with the other Nuclear-Weapon-Free Zones and offers considerations on the future of the Conferences of the States participating in the Zones. The document also addresses communications with non-governmental organizations devoted to nuclear disarmament and non-proliferation.

It is not very appropriate to include the Community of Latin American and Caribbean States – CELAC – within the context of external relations given that CELAC, the highest-level forum of the Region, is composed of the same 33 States Members of OPANAL. In 2014, in its II Summit Declaration, CELAC designated OPANAL as “the specialized body in the region for articulating common positions and joint actions on nuclear disarmament” (paragraph 72). Nonetheless, we need to identify the most appropriate ways in which OPANAL can support CELAC, including by helping in the preparation of documents for the Summits.

Draft Resolution “External Relations of OPANAL” (Doc.CG/L.11/2015) includes, for the consideration of the Member States’ Delegations, various suggestions on the aforementioned matters.

It is also important to mention the subject of nuclear disarmament and non-proliferation education. The General Conference, at its Special Session held in 2014, adopted Resolution CG/E/Res.576, the provisions of which include, inter alia, the continuation of the Working Group on this subject. I wish to take this opportunity to highlight the value of the activity of this Working-Group, coordinated by Argentina throughout this year.

Draft resolution CG/L.08/2015 includes the proposal of one or two annual courses, organized by OPANAL, to be delivered in different Member States. This would be a concrete contribution of OPANAL in this field which has been identified as a priority by the Member States and by the United Nations. This proposal would add to other initiatives such as the Summer School, organized since last year by the Mexican Foreign Affairs Ministry with the cooperation of OPANAL.

To conclude, I would like to draw your attention to item 15 on the Agenda – “50<sup>th</sup> Anniversary of the Treaty of Tlatelolco”. We are only 15 months away from this memorable celebration, the contours of which must be defined in this Session.

Completing the second year of my mandate, I hope to have been meeting the expectations of the Member States while thanking them for their confidence placed in me.