



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

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Report of the Secretary-General

The 2018 hasn't been a positive year concerning nuclear disarmament. The most recent annual report of 2017 of the Stockholm International Peace Research Institute – SIPRI, published in the spring of this year, registers 14,935 nuclear warheads, of which 4,150 are deployed. Those numbers have not changed.

Considering the qualitative aspect, the situation can be considered even worse. In January, in his speech to the armed forces, the President of France ratified the central position of nuclear deterrence in his country's strategy¹. In February, the Government of the United States published a new version of the Nuclear Posture Review² – the last one was in 2010. It is an extensive and clear document, which among other aspects, expands the hypothesis of the use of nuclear weapons. The Secretariat of OPANAL made a summary of that important report in order to facilitate Member States' appreciation³. Russia did not take long to make a very convincing presentation on the improvements in the use of its nuclear arsenal⁴. I mention these three States as examples, although neither of the other six possessor States have reduced their nuclear power nor have they indicated any change in their policies.

One need not be a professional observer of international relations to perceive that the tension and consequent threat of war have increased. The practical preparations made by possessor States and the speeches made by each of them about the situations in which they find themselves, re-establish the term "war" as a normal designation for international conduct, taking us back to the years before 1914 or 1939.

¹ <http://www.elysee.fr/declarations/article/discours-du-president-de-la-republique-emmanuel-macron-v-ux-aux-armees/>

² <https://media.defense.gov/2018/Feb/02/2001872886/-1/-1/1/2018-NUCLEAR-POSTURE-REVIEW-FINAL-REPORT.PDF>

³ http://www.opanal.org/wp-content/uploads/2018/09/Inf_07_2018_NPR_esp.pdf

⁴ <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=LY99w6Xu4XU>

The mention made by this Secretary-General of nuclear armed States and States which belong to strategic military alliances with them is based on several facts. Possession of nuclear weapons, and the foreign or defence policies which include their use or threat of use, cannot be considered a matter of sovereignty, likewise massive transgressions of human rights or widespread destruction of the environment.

The firm position against nuclear weapons which the majority of the international community and certainly OPANAL Member States sustain does not affect the relations that each State maintains and develops, either in the bilateral or multilateral context, with possessor States and their allies.

There is not, and there has never been, nuclear weapons in our region. Furthermore, no country in our region includes in its defence policy the support of nuclear weapons. Decades have passed without controversies in our region resulting in armed conflicts. There is no uniformity of political or economic views in our region, but this does not prevent common positions from being reached on subjects of global scope. If I allow myself to refer to this well-known landscape, it is in order to underscore the exceptionality of Latin America and the Caribbean. Should this be considered a divine gift? A trace of our peaceful nature? Nobody around this table would be so ingenuous to answer affirmatively. Nevertheless, I think that nobody would deny the result of a secular intellectual effort, of a constant diplomatic practice and of a continuous enhancement of International Law between ourselves, Latin Americans and Caribbeans, as a basis for justice and peace.

I make these considerations because we must have a clear vision about the environment in which OPANAL and its Secretariat conduct their activities. The Treaty of Tlatelolco prohibits nuclear weapons in its zone of application, meaning: our region and a somewhere beyond. This has been unfailingly complied with for more than 50 years. On the other hand, as we all know, the Treaty, although simple, is ingenious and absolutely innovative. Tlatelolco is a legal instrument, but also a political document. A Treaty must not be confused with a simple regulation, with a set of rules for practical purposes. The Treaty of Tlatelolco, as an international instrument, aims at changing the political reality, an intention clearly expressed in its preamble, which is an organic part of the Treaty.

The Secretariat has sought to act as a catalyst of the intentions and positions of Member States, taking into account its various nuances, in order to achieve consensual expressions that produce an impact beyond our region, on those who think differently and, on the other hand, that encourage those who think like us but do not have an instrument such as OPANAL. What I am saying is concretely demonstrated by the joint manifestations of OPANAL Member States on two opportunities this year: on 14 February, the anniversary of the Treaty of Tlatelolco and on 26 September, International Day for the Total Elimination of Nuclear Weapons. In no other region of the world do States make joint statements on a matter so serious and complex as the existence and possession of nuclear weapons, the most powerful weapon of mass destruction.

After almost 50 years since the first General Conference in 1969, OPANAL continues to exist and operate at the regional and international levels. Our Agency is present and visible at the United Nations by means of its coordinations in New York, Geneva and Vienna and the Secretary-General's participation in some of its most important meetings.

Another example of OPANAL's action is the initiative to convene, in 2020, the Fourth Conference of Nuclear-Weapon-Free zones. Some 20 years ago we launched this idea for the first time which was realized by the convening of the I Conference, in Mexico, in 2005. This year, our Members States drafted at OPANAL a Resolution, which, was adopted by the I Committee of the United Nations General Assembly, on 8 November by an expressive majority of 171 votes in favour, 0 against and 5 abstentions. It is worth mentioning that it is not an easy process and that to convene, at the United Nations, a Conference that is not part of its regular calendar constitutes a difficult task that demands capacity of convergence and leadership.

The Report of the Council, in document CG/E/12/2018, registers all its activities and also those of the Secretariat, which carries them out under the direction and control of the Council. At this point, I wish to thank the delegations of the Member States of the Council for the support given to the Secretariat.

The Report of the Secretary-General is presented in compliance with Article 11, paragraph 4 of the Treaty of Tlatelolco and is contained in this brief exposition on the status of OPANAL.

As can be seen from the observations just made, the Agency's situation is very positive from a political point of view, in the sense that it acts through the participation of its Members States and that it is recognized and influential on the international arena.

On the other hand, the Treaty of Tlatelolco commands the Secretary-General, as an agent of the Council, to ensure the proper functioning of the Control System. On this central element of the Treaty, the Secretary-General cannot say that, from the legal view point, OPANAL's state situation is really positive, since Article 14 of the Treaty is not being fully complied with by all Member States. The fulfilment of Article 14 is neither optional nor simply desirous; it is mandatory. On this matter, the Conference will deliberate in Agenda Item 8 (document CG/E/05/2018Rev. and draft Resolution CG/E/L.02/2018).

The Treaty confers a number of competences to the Secretary-General besides that of ensuring compliance with the Control System. There can be added those coming from the instructions that the Secretary-General receives from the General Conference. Besides these functions, he has the duty to keep OPANAL and its organs functioning. It belongs to the General Conference to evaluate the performance of the Secretary-General. However, from his part, the person in charge of the Secretariat has to truthfully inform Member States that, from the administrative point of view, the situation of OPANAL does not prove to be positive. Arrears amounting to 189% of the budget, the Agency not disposing of a permanent headquarters, it is not possible to consider it in a positive situation. Administrative matters are not accessory, without them legal and political work cannot be performed.

I address now a matter of fundamental importance for our Agency. This is the fact that one third of the membership does not have a resident representation in the Mexico City. All these 11 Member States are Caribbean. The participation of those States is consequently limited. Nevertheless, they are not alien to our work and initiatives. All OPANAL documents are translated into English and sent to non-Spanish-speaking Member States. All proposals are submitted to them and they are given a period of time to react. Of the 11 Member States mentioned, only 3 are not up to date with their financial contributions. On the other hand, it is necessary to mention that 8 among them are not complying with Article 14, the central element of the Control System.

Fortunately, we permanently have in our midst three States of the Caribbean Community and it is a happy opportunity to have here today at the General Conference the Delegation of Saint Lucia.

Since the beginning of my term as Secretary-General, I have been seeking ways of further involving CARICOM States in OPANAL's activities. I wish that CARICOM itself, could contribute to solve the problem, while Member States not belonging to CARICOM may also collaborate on the matter. It is my intention to present to the Council, in 2019, new ideas for building the bridge that we lack.

OPANAL is small and not so well known, even in the city where it has its seat. None of us ignore the political value of its existence and singularity. OPANAL is a means of union of all the States in our region. That was perceived by the Community of Latin-American and Caribbean States - CELAC, when, in diverse declarations, designated OPANAL as "*the specialized organ of the region to articulate common positions and joint work on nuclear disarmament*".

In 2019, OPANAL will celebrate 50 years of existence and constant work. The XXVI Session of the General Conference will be an occasion not only for the commemoration of the time lapsed, but also of the fact having achieved, as we all expect, full juridical force, political efficiency and administrative health in our international institution.