**Statement by Chile**

**XXVI Special Session of the OPANAL General Conference**

Mr. President of the OPANAL General Conference, Mr. Vice President, Esteemed Ambassadors, Mr. Secretary-General of this Agency, members of the diplomatic corps accredited to this Agency, friends,

It is an honour for me to have the opportunity to address you here, my first presentation at the General Conference as the representative of Chile to the Agency for the Prohibition of Nuclear Weapons in Latin America and the Caribbean (OPANAL).

And it is because of the value and importance that the Treaty for the Prohibition of Nuclear Weapons has had, since 1967, in the establishment of the First Nuclear-Weapon-Free zone in a densely populated area.

The Treaty of Tlatelolco is a clear proof of the effectiveness and validity of multilateral agreements. Its essence is clear: no State, however powerful, can pretend to impose its will against the principles forged by the international community.

Further, the establishment of this zone has served as a stimulus for the creation of other nuclear-weapon-free zones that emerged later, namely: (Treaty of Rarotonga, 1985); (Treaty of Bangkok, 1995); (Treaty of Pelindaba, 1996); (Treaty of Semipalatinsk, 2006). Thus, we should be proud of what we have created, and how it has been a real contribution to international security and the protection of the inhabitants of this planet.

For Chile, Nuclear Weapon Disarmament and Non-Proliferation occupies a prominent place in its policy, in full accordance with the principles of preservation of international peace and security, which forms the first of the three pillars that sustain the United Nations system. The other two are development and human rights. They are all interdependent and feed into each other.

In this line, the total eradication of nuclear weapons represents a commitment to Disarmament and Non-Proliferation, expressed in the distinct treaties and multilateral instruments that we have subscribed to, such as the Non-Proliferation Treaty (NPT), Comprehensive Nuclear-Test-Ban Treaty (CTBT) and recently the Treaty on the Prohibition of Nuclear Weapons ( TPNW).

In the case of this last international agreement, the Government of Chile, from its position as Vice-President, actively participated in the United Nations Conference negotiations, to negotiate this legally binding instrument that prohibits nuclear weapons and leads to its total elimination, concluding with the adoption of the Text of the Treaty on the Prohibition of Nuclear Weapons. These negotiations were held in New York between 27 and 31 March and between 15 June and 7 July.

This is a historic event since it was the first treaty to outlaw the only weapons of mass destruction that had not been explicitly banned, creating a norm that stigmatizes its possession and lays the foundations for future negotiations that will allow for their total elimination in a verifiable and irreversible manner.

Chile reaffirms its conviction that coexistence in a world free from nuclear weapons is possible and that maintaining international peace and security without recourse to nuclear deterrence is, in addition to being an ethical imperative, an attainable goal and consistent with the international protection system of human rights. My country reiterates its commitment to general and complete disarmament, always privileging the debate in a broad, transparent and democratic multilateral space.

We highlight, therefore, the role that OPANAL has played, not only in the effective implementation of the Treaty, but also as a support instrument for disarmament education, whose importance has been repeatedly highlighted by the United Nations General Secretary. Likewise, its establishment has contributed to the preservation of international peace and security and to building trust measures at a regional and global level.

In the same way, and as it was highlighted at the 50th Anniversary of the Treaty of Tlatelolco in 2017, the challenge that decades ago was the establishment of a nuclear-weapon-free zone, is today renewed through the challenge that the member states of Tlatelolco have assumed, a world totally free of nuclear weapons.

We underscore the deep concern that prevails over the catastrophic effects of nuclear weapons, whose very existence threatens international peace and security. In this regard, and in order to advance the disarmament and Non-Proliferation, initiatives that contain Special Declarations adopted by CELAC in the past Summits of Quito and Santo Domingo should be considered.

Friends, the vision of a world free of nuclear weapons is not an idealist’s dream: despite the advances made after the end of the Cold War, in particular the Comprehensive Nuclear-Test-Ban Treaty, atomic threat is still present.

It is estimated that there are still 17,000 nuclear weapons in the globe, of which some one thousand eight hundred are still on maximum alert, ready to be launched between five to fifteen minutes from the fateful order.

It is because of this real risk that we must strengthen the leadership that Latin-American countries have demonstrated in promoting the first nuclear-weapon-free zone. It must be expressed again through persistence and conviction, to actively promote the elimination of nuclear weapons and the prevention of nuclear terrorism in all possible multilateral instances.

Therefore, Mr. President, permit me to conclude by noting that the Chilean delegation fully supports the work of OPANAL, and we emphasize the importance that its work has had in the promotion of a disarmament culture and its contribution in bringing positions on disarmament and non-proliferation closer to the regional level.

Thank you.