



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

General Conference

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Statement by Ecuador

Mr. President,

Allow me to congratulate you and the members of the Board on your election. I would also like to acknowledge the efforts carried out by the Secretariat to convene this Conference -as well as all for the management of past meetings- during the difficult circumstances of the Covid-19 pandemic.

For Ecuador it is very important to be an active member of the Agency. Our presence here corroborates it. And this has been demonstrated for 54 years, since the sign of the Treaty of Tlatelolco, when it was part of that group of visionary Latin Americans who understood at early stage that the impact of nuclear weapons is global and, therefore, the response to that threat also had to be global. This early commitment of Ecuador was reflected in the performance of Leopoldo Benítez Vinueza, as the first Secretary-General of OPANAL.

Our commitment has also been expressed through the fulfillment of the obligations with the Agency. Financial and non-financial. We are up to date on all of them. Following this line, I am pleased to announce Ecuador's desire to continue to lead the coordination of OPANAL in Geneva, during the next year.

Mr. President,

The Treaty of Tlatelolco preceded the Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons (NPT) and it undoubtedly strengthens the non-proliferation regime.

Ecuador considers that Nuclear Disarmament and Non-Proliferation must advance simultaneously, interrelated and confluent. Compliance with Nuclear Non-Proliferation

obligations corresponds to all States. In this regard, we regret to note the lack of compliance with nuclear disarmament by the armed States.

Ecuador, as part of the first densely populated zone free of nuclear weapons, has urged all States to join efforts to consolidate Nuclear-Weapon-Free Zones in all regions of the world.

Ecuador also reiterates its firm position on the urgent need for the full implementation of the three pillars of the Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons (NPT).

My country remains firmly committed to promoting and supporting all actions aimed at strengthening the disarmament and non-proliferation regime. We have permanently reaffirmed that the only effective guarantee against the use or threat of use of nuclear weapons is their total elimination and prohibition.

A few days ago, we remembered, still with horror, the nuclear attacks on Hiroshima and Nagasaki. The best tribute that as States we can pay to the victims of these attacks, as well as to the victims of nuclear tests, is by signing and ratifying the Treaty on the Prohibition of Nuclear Weapons. In this regard, allow me to remind you, Mr. President, that Ecuador actively participated in the negotiation and adoption of this Treaty and on 25 September 2019 deposited its corresponding instrument of ratification. Since then, perhaps even more strongly, if possible, we have called for the complete elimination of nuclear weapons and we condemn more strongly their use or threat of use, as well as their very existence, because it challenges the very survival of humankind.

Ecuador also considers that the Treaty on the Prohibition of Nuclear Weapons strengthens the IAEA safeguards system. It reaffirms the rule enshrined in Article III, and obliges States that already have a high level of safeguards to maintain them, while encouraging all Parties to further increase their level of commitment in this matter.

With the deposit of this instrument, Ecuador ratified its commitment to peace, global security and the prohibition of nuclear weapons, in short, it reaffirmed its advocacy for the preeminence of the human being in international relations, since we consider that nuclear weapons contradict international humanitarian law and human rights per se.

However, we are convinced that we have to go further, that nuclear disarmament requires a paradigm shift, a much more extensive effort and commitment than a single document or treaty. It requires a movement that generates a lasting global shift in consciousness.

In this sense, my country considers necessary for a peaceful world, a change in the approach of the security doctrines of the States that possess Nuclear Weapons and in that of those concerned by the so-called nuclear protection.

Mr. President,

At this point, Ecuador considers pertinent to highlight the important role that OPANAL has as an Agency that is always relevant and present in the main fora devoted to disarmament and non-proliferation. OPANAL is a small organization in terms of resources and infrastructure but with an important multilateral impact. Event though we, its members, do not possess weapons of mass destruction - or perhaps rather because of the moral authority that not possessing them gives us; through the agency we have the opportunity to actively promote the cause of nuclear disarmament and non-proliferation, as a principle to be defended in an unrestricted manner.

On its website, the United Nations underlines that achieving nuclear disarmament in the world is one of its oldest objectives, as it was the purpose of the first resolution approved by its General Assembly in 1946, after World War II. However, it recognizes that today there are approximately 13,800 nuclear weapons and those who possess them have long-term programs to modernize their arsenals.

In this sense, I would like to conclude with the concern about the renewal and increase in nuclear stockpiles, in the midst of the pandemic. This expenditure could be invested in health, in the development of new vaccines or medicines against Covid-19. The cost of maintaining nuclear weapons in one year represents more than 30 years of the budget of the World Health Organization. The current rate of spending on nuclear weapons is \$ 138,000 dollars per minute.

We believe that this news, far from discouraging us in our fight for nuclear disarmament, should commit us even more as a region to intensify and unite our best efforts leading to peace, which at the end seeks the preservation of security and a full life, which, at least in recent times, has been so elusive.

Thank you very much Mr. President and representatives of the member countries.