**Intervention by Ecuador at the XXVI Special Session of the OPANAL General Conference**

Mr. President,

On behalf of my delegation, I would like to express my gratitude for hosting this XXVI Special Session at the Embassy of Argentina in Mexico. It is a gesture that Ecuador appreciates.

Likewise, I would like to acknowledge the incessant and enduring work done by the Secretary-General of OPANAL and his entire team to preserve the prestige that the Organization holds, not only in Latin America, but in the main multilateral forums where OPANAL is always present.

Ecuador firmly, actively and permanently supports OPANAL, as has been done historically as an unobjectionable demonstration of its total commitment to nuclear disarmament and non-proliferation.

Indeed, since its inception, we have been a Contracting Party to the Treaty on the Prohibition of Nuclear Weapons -Treaty of Tlatelolco-, which established the first densely populated weapon free zone and whose fiftieth anniversary we celebrated here in Mexico City last year. Although I have already done so many times in this forum, I would like to recall that the first Secretary-General of OPANAL, Dr. Leopoldo Benites, was an Ecuadorian whose action was key in the negotiation and adoption of the Treaty.

In this spirit of commitment, Ecuador has urged all States, in the corresponding forums, to deploy their efforts in establishing and consolidating other Nuclear-Weapon-Free Zones in all regions of the planet, as the process conducive to the superior objective of general and complete nuclear disarmament.

For Ecuador, it is unacceptable that nuclear weapons still exist and it is concerning that there is the possibility that nuclear explosive devices will be used again either intentionally or accidentally, due to the immense human risks and consequences that they cause. Further, we believe that States should eliminate from their military doctrines any reference to nuclear deterrence and abstain from making military preparations that imply the possibility and, therefore, the advancement of the use of nuclear weapons, whether their own or in the framework of extended alliances.

Ecuador considers, like the majority of States, that Nuclear Disarmament and Non-Proliferation are and should be parallel, interrelated and confluent processes. My country, a non-possessor State of nuclear weapons, has complied and will continue to comply, as it corresponds, with its international obligations with respect to Nuclear Non-Proliferation. In this regard, it supports all the ongoing efforts aimed at ensuring that States possessing nuclear weapons fulfill their commitment to nuclear disarmament, a situation that, to date, we have not been able to witness.

We believe that nuclear non-proliferation is threatened by three factors: the risk of disruption of strategic stability provoked by the action of countries seeking to establish or maintain an advantage in strategic areas; the debilitation or weakening of the effectiveness of multilateral diplomacy as a result of the lack of political will and flexibility of the main international actors to negotiate on the basis of common understanding and objectives; and, the challenges presented by the lack of progress and the emergence of a vacuum in the establishment of a Nuclear-Weapon-Free Zone and other Weapons of Mass Destruction in the Middle East, given the great differences and complexities of the region.

In the context of nuclear disarmament and non-proliferation, we also express our support for a soon entry into force of the Comprehensive Nuclear-Test-Ban Treaty. Ecuador reiterates its rejection of any nuclear test and as a demonstration of its commitment it has put into operation the IS20 infrasound station and the RN24 radionuclide station in the Galápagos Archipelago.

Mr. President,

Last year we participated in a transcendental moment in the search for a nuclear-weapon-free world. Finally, after several decades, the Treaty on the Prohibition of Nuclear Weapons was adopted, weapons that are now prohibited in the framework of a legally binding international instrument and that also establishes a path towards its total elimination. Ecuador, which is advancing in the process of ratification, reaffirms its commitment and highlights the importance of this international agreement.

Ecuador, faithful to its tradition of defending universal disarmament, was an important actor in the negotiation process that led to the concretion of this long-awaited goal, to ensure the very survival of humanity through the adoption of this instrument. Ecuador reaffirms its “vocation for peace and the pre-eminence of human beings in international relations”.

Ecuador firmly believes that the only effective guarantee against the use or threat of use of nuclear weapons, is their total elimination and prohibition.

**If the mere existence of approximately 15,800 nuclear weapons was not enough to recognise the importance of a binding instrument for the prohibition of nuclear weapons, this delegation would like to recall the following:**

* **Nuclear weapons were the only weapons of mass destruction that had not been expressly prohibited under international law. These weapons cause indescribable suffering and indiscriminate destruction in time and space. These are the same reasons that justified the ban on chemical and biological weapons and other types or weapons.**
* **The necessity to negotiate a binding treaty to prohibit nuclear weapons responded to the inability of the States possessing nuclear weapons to comply with their international commitments and the genuine and legitimate claim of the rest of the States, and the rest of humanity.**
* **In accordance with Article VI of the NPT, all States Party are legally obligated to enter into negotiations in good faith to achieve nuclear disarmament.**
* **The Treaty on the Prohibition of Nuclear Weapons in essential to create the conditions for a nuclear-weapon-free world. This is a concrete step towards the fulfilling the obligations established by Article VI of the NPT, as the International Court of Justice affirmed in 1996.**
* **While the total elimination of nuclear weapons is agreed and implemented, the Prohibition Treaty will reinforce and consolidate the sigma against its use and is a determining factor to discourage its proliferation.**
* **The Treaty on the Prohibition of Nuclear Weapons does not intend, in any way, to undermine or replace the TNP. The new international instrument complements the NPT and seeks to practically implement the stipulation in Article VI.**
* The new treaty strengthens the IAEA safeguards based on the NPT. It reaffirms the standard enshrined in Article III and obligates States that have already reached a high level of safeguards to maintain them, while encouraging all Parties to further increase their level of commitment on safeguards.

Mr. President,

For Ecuador, dialogue presents the only form of international coexistence. For this, we ask the questions that have recently been heard against the multilateral system and the unilateral actions that put at risk not only the commitments made but also the international security regime as a whole.

As mentioned in days passed by the Ecuadorian Chancellor, José Valencia “Cooperation between States through multilateral forums and through the renunciation of the use of force, is a vital principle that belongs to all of us”.

Finally, we have no doubt that disarmament and development are intimately related and we are convinced that this vision must be strengthened. In line with the premise contained in the report of the UN Secretary-General on this subject, we are certain that “there can be no development without peace or peace without development”. We must redouble our efforts to achieve the Sustainable Development Goals and the 2030 Agenda, which without a doubt, goes hand in hand, with the intensification of these same efforts to advance the objectives of nuclear disarmament.

Thank you Mr. President and delegates.