



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

General Conference

XXVIII Session
3 November 2023
Agenda item 6

Original: Spanish

Courtesy translation

Statement by the Argentine Republic

First of all, I would like to thank the Republic of Guatemala for offering to host this meeting, anticipating the support of the Argentine Delegation for what is sure to be a successful Conference.

I would then like to thank the Secretary-General, Ambassador Flávio Roberto Bonzanini, the team of the OPANAL Secretariat and the members of the Council for their hard work this year.

This year, the Treaty of Tlatelolco reached 56 years since it was opened for signature. This is no small milestone in this instrument that established the first Nuclear-Weapon-Free Zone in a densely populated region of the world, such as Latin America and the Caribbean.

We are going through a complex period full of challenges at the international level, in which we are witnessing a deterioration of the disarmament and non-proliferation architecture, as well as the escalation of armed conflicts and even the increase in nuclear rhetoric. It is in this context that the work of OPANAL is presented as an asset of great value, and the fulfilment of commitments by Member States is its fundamental basis. Despite all these challenges, we must never lose sight of the goal of general and complete disarmament, which is internationally verifiable and whose irreversibility is achieved with a constructive approach and on the basis of broad consensus.

Mr. President,

Argentina is a nuclear country with 73 years of experience in this field and is one of the few in the world that has mastered the entire nuclear fuel cycle. On the basis of a nuclear programme for exclusively peaceful purposes, we maintain a strong conviction in nuclear disarmament and non-proliferation, all in the strictest respect for the norms enshrined in the Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons (NPT) and the standards of existing initiatives in this area.

For Argentina, the NPT continues to be the cornerstone of the global disarmament and non-proliferation regime, and the importance attached to it has been demonstrated by presiding over the

Tenth Review Conference in 2022. We reaffirm our commitment to the next review cycle, culminating in the Eleventh Review Conference in 2026.

At the regional level, Argentina signed the Treaty of Tlatelolco on 27 September 1967 and ratified it on 18 January 1994. It is in that spirit that we have submitted the candidacy to the Council for the period 2024-2027, in which we will work to further strengthen the Agency.

I would also like to highlight a fundamental component of our nuclear programme, which has become key to peace in our region: the Brazilian-Argentine Agency for Accounting and Control of Nuclear Materials (ABACC). It has been 32 years since Argentina and Brazil renounced the development, production, acquisition and use of weapons and decided to build on the basis of mutual trust, a system of safeguards and verification unique in the world, recognized by the United Nations General Assembly through Resolution 76/52.

Mr. President,

Argentina strongly supports the establishment and consolidation of Nuclear-Weapon-Free Zones, which it considers to be an important contribution to peace and security for the States that are party to them.

In this regard, the contribution of the Treaty of Tlatelolco has been real and effective, since it strengthened our regional commitment to non-proliferation and disarmament and managed, through its system of Protocols, to bind the nuclear-weapon countries so that they do not violate the nuclear-weapon-free status of our region.

Those commitments must be honoured and strengthened, particularly with regard to the interpretative declarations of the nuclear-weapon States that have signed the Additional Protocols to the Treaty, which are contrary to the aim and purpose of the instrument and undermine legitimate assurances that our region is and will be a zone of peace. We must continue to work for the withdrawal or revision of interpretative declarations to the Protocols, in accordance with the text of the instrument, and we support the initiatives of the Technical Group on Declarations to Protocols I and II of the Secretariat, as well as the intensive efforts of the Council during the current year.

Linked to the effective implementation of the Treaty, there is an issue of the utmost relevance for my country, and that is that part of the Argentine national territory, specifically the Falkland

Islands (Malvinas)¹, South Georgia, the South Sandwich Islands and the surrounding maritime areas, is illegally occupied by the United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland. As a result, the Argentine Republic is effectively prevented from accessing that portion of its territory and, consequently, does not know whether the Treaty is effectively being complied with in that part of its national territory.

This situation has an impact on our region, since the United Kingdom neither confirms nor denies the presence or absence of nuclear weapons in a particular place, at a given time, as a means of sustaining its illegitimate occupation of the Falkland Islands (Malvinas), South Georgia and South Sandwich Islands and the surrounding maritime areas, territories that form an integral part of the Argentine Republic and in respect of which the United Nations has recognized in numerous forums. Resolutions, that there is a sovereignty dispute between those two States that must be resolved peacefully and negotiated.

My country has expressed its concern about these practices by the United Kingdom and has stressed that they entail a lack of guarantees of transparency about the presence or absence of nuclear weapons in the South Atlantic.

That is why my country has requested the Agency's cooperation in ensuring that no activities in violation of the Treaty are carried out in the Falkland Islands (Malvinas), South Georgia, the South Sandwich Islands and the surrounding maritime areas, which affect not only Argentina but the entire region.

Mr. President,

In conclusion, I would like to say that our region is privileged to be a nuclear-weapon-free zone and to have a specific agency such as OPANAL for its preservation. In these tense times, let us continue to work to protect this legacy and send a clear message of peace to the world. Count on Argentina for this.

Many thanks.

¹ ST/CS/SER.A/42