



OPANAL

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

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Anniversary Meeting of the States Parties to the Treaty on a Nuclear- Weapon-Free Zone in Central Asia

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Statement by

H.E. Ambassador Flávio Roberto Bonzanini

Secretary-General of the Agency for the Prohibition of Nuclear Weapons in
Latin America and the Caribbean (OPANAL)

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- *H.E. Mr. Ahmed Gurbanov, Deputy Minister of Foreign Affairs of Turkmenistan,*
- *Distinguished representatives from the States Parties to the Central Asian Nuclear-Weapon-Free Zone Treaty,*
- *Distinguished representatives of International Organizations, other nuclear-weapon-free-zones, and Mongolia,*

Excellencies, ladies and gentlemen

I would like to take this opportunity to extend my heartfelt gratitude to the Government of Turkmenistan for organizing this important event and to congratulate all the States Parties to the Central Asian Nuclear-Weapon-Free Zone Treaty on the 15th anniversary of its establishment. It is a great honor for me to deliver my statement on this meaningful occasion. Also, I would like to thank you for your participation in the XXVIII Special Session of the General Conference of OPANAL, which took place last week, on behalf of the States Parties to the Central Asian Nuclear-Weapon-Free Zone Treaty.

Ladies and gentlemen,

We are alarmed and dismayed by recent threats to use nuclear weapons, the increased operational alertness of nuclear arsenals, and an increasingly strident nuclear rhetoric. Any use or threat of use of nuclear weapons is a violation of international law, including the Charter of the United Nations. We, therefore, unequivocally condemn all nuclear threats—explicit or implicit—regardless of the circumstances.

The establishment of nuclear-weapon-free zones represents a regional effort aimed at strengthening the global nuclear non-proliferation and disarmament regime, thereby reinforcing collective endeavors for peace and security. They serve as a powerful reminder to those who view nuclear threats and deterrence as legitimate strategies for preserving national security, often neglecting the security interests of the vast majority of the international community.

Moreover, the protocols to the treaties establishing such zones represent a mechanism through which the nuclear-weapon-states undertook a legally binding commitment to respect

the denuclearized status of such zones and not to use or threaten to use nuclear weapons against States Parties to such treaties.

Thus, it is of the utmost importance that nuclear-weapon-states engage in fruitful dialogue with all the nuclear-weapon-free zones in order to review pending signatures and ratification processes, as well as their so-called interpretative declarations to the protocols that represent reservations.

Ladies and gentlemen,

It is unfortunate that unlike previous years, the 2022 NPT Review Conference was not preceded by a Conference of Nuclear-Weapon-Free Zones and Mongolia. The convening of periodic conferences of the States belonging to the Nuclear-Weapon-Free Zones and Mongolia holds paramount importance for the robust strengthening of such Zones and the potential creation of new nuclear-weapon-free zones, particularly in regions like the Middle East.

Thus, I earnestly urge all States belonging to Nuclear-Weapon-Free Zones to come together and agree on the dates for the IV Conference. Furthermore, I call upon them to collectively designate a coordinator for this pivotal gathering. While the current atypical situation should not set a precedent, it is imperative that we maintain continuity and progress in our efforts, and even considering exploring other venues.

Our expectation is that prior to the next Review Conference the IV Conference on Nuclear-Weapon Free Zones has been convened. This coordinated approach will not only strengthen existing Zones but also pave the way for the establishment of new ones, fostering global peace and security.

Despite the aforementioned, there is an initiative that is worth mentioning and that is the adoption of the UN General Assembly resolution on a new “*Comprehensive study of the question of nuclear-weapon-free zones in all its aspects*”, which was widely supported by the UN Membership, including countries from all existing nuclear-weapon-free zones and Mongolia. We believe that second comprehensive study will greatly contribute to promote the full implementation of the principles and objectives of the existing treaties that establish

nuclear-weapon-free zones, as well as to support the creation of other zones in regions where they do not exist.

Ladies and gentlemen,

Before concluding my remarks, I would like to express my gratitude to the Government of Turkmenistan for allocating time in today's anniversary agenda for the signing ceremony of the Memorandum of Understanding between the Central Asian Nuclear-Weapon-Free Zone and OPANAL. Over the past three years, OPANAL has worked closely with the Central Asian States to finalize this cooperation agreement, which will strengthen our regions' collaboration and facilitate valuable information exchange.

I would like to reiterate the commitment of Latin America and the Caribbean to international peace and security, underscoring the fact that nuclear-weapon-free zones are a crucial step towards global disarmament. We will continue working together to ensure a world free from the nuclear threat for today's generation and those to come.

Thank you.
