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**Third Meeting of States Parties to the Treaty on the Prohibition of Nuclear Weapons**

*High-Level Session*

**OPANAL Statement**

Statement by\* **Ambassador Flávio Roberto Bonzanini**

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

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*Mr. President,*

*Distinguished Delegates,*

In my capacity as the Secretary General of the Agency for the Prohibition of Nuclear Weapons in Latin America and the Caribbean (OPANAL) it is an honour to address this Third Meeting of the States Parties to the Treaty on the Prohibition of Nuclear Weapons (TPNW). Before I begin with my remarks, I would like to extend my heartfelt congratulations to Ambassador Akan Rakhmetullin, on your election as President of this crucial meeting.

I am convinced that, under your leadership, the States Parties to the TPNW will take the necessary decisions to advance the implementation of the Treaty. In this regard, Mr. President, you can count on the full support of OPANAL in all your activities.

*Mr. President,*

OPANAL constitutes a pioneer operative specialized regional agency dedicated entirely to the achievement of nuclear disarmament and the non-proliferation of nuclear weapons in the thirty-tree Latin American and Caribbean countries. Created by the Treaty of Tlatelolco in 1969, the Contracting Parties committed to the peaceful use of the nuclear material and facilities under their jurisdiction and to prohibit and prevent the testing, use, manufacture, production or acquisition, receipt, storage, installation, deployment and any form of possession of any nuclear weapons directly or indirectly in their respective territories. Its principles and objectives complement and reinforce the provisions of the Treaty on the Prohibition of Nuclear Weapons (TPNW) building upon Tlatelolco’s legacy by advancing the global commitment to eliminating nuclear weapons, highlighting the shared objectives of the two treaties and their mutually reinforcing contribution to the global nuclear disarmament regime. For a further comprehension of the synergies and complementarities between both instruments, States Parties to the Treaty for the Prohibition of Nuclear Weapons in Latin America and the Caribbean submitted a working paper on the matter to this Third Meeting.

*Mr. President,*

*Distinguished Delegates,*

Increasing resort to the threat of using nuclear weapons have shaped today’s defying geopolitical scenario, posing complex obstacles to international efforts towards nuclear disarmament and non-proliferation. Amidst this deteriorated context, the Treaty on the Prohibition of Nuclear Weapons sets a cornerstone legal instrument to strengthen the prohibition norm established by the treaties that created nuclear weapon-free zones and the first non-proliferation regime.

In this sense, universality challenge still surrounds the Treaty on the Prohibition of Nuclear Weapons. Please, let me trace back the Treaty of Tlatelolco’s gradual universality process. Initially, the broader Cold War geopolitical setting and the complexities of achieving regional consensus on nuclear disarmament hindered the path. Nevertheless, decades of diplomatic efforts, confidence-building measures and regional cooperation became landmarks enabling us to overcome universality obstacles and solidifying its legacy as an adaptable model for regional nuclear disarmament. Nowadays, OPANAL member states joint declarations and continuous international engagement in global disarmament conferences serve as a valuable model for advancing article 12 of the TPNW. Therefore, I would take this opportunity to invite all States Parties in a position to do so to conclude their ratification processes and adhere to the TPNW, recalling that an early universalization of the Treaty will contribute to strengthening the global prohibition norm.

*Mr. President,*

*Distinguished Delegates,*

The First Meeting of the States Parties fostered procedural and institutional decisions for the Treaty’s effectiveness. The Second Meeting of the States Parties consolidated an intersessional structure for its implementation through thematic join informal working groups and further discussions on victim assistance, environmental remediation and international cooperation. For this Third Meeting, OPANAL renews its support to the important decisions the States Parties have to make with regards to the designation of a competent international institution designated to ensure compliance and remains committed to a world free of nuclear weapons, through general, complete, transparent, irreversible and verifiable disarmament. Long and sustained OPANAL institutional memory and experience on nuclear disarmament, places the Agency in a suitable position to support States Parties in this endeavor.

We recognize the pivotal role played by Kazakhstan and Kiribati as standing members of Nuclear-Weapon-Free-Zones and their continued efforts to support nuclear testing victims in Central Asia and the South Pacific, nationally through measures for their treatment, health improvement rehabilitation, social protection of the population and socioeconomic development of the territory; and internationally through the joint initiative on an International Trust Fund for Victim Assistance and Environmental Remediation. To deepen these efforts, epistemic nuclear justice constitutes a promising policy approach to ensure nuclear testing-affected communities their health issues are taken seriously by the right authorities and any environmental harm is recognized. By achieving epistemic nuclear justice, deprivation of access to historical and scientific data on nuclear testing could be remedied and strengthen any State effective implementation of its rehabilitation and remediation efforts.

*Mr. President,*

*Distinguished Delegates,*

This year marks the 80th anniversary of the atomic bombings of Hiroshima and Nagasaki, an unfortunate episode in our history that reminds us of these weapons’ devastating and dehumanizing effects. Only a year ago, the Japanese organisation Nihon Hidankyo, the Hibakusha, received the Nobel Peace Prize for its grassroots movement’s efforts to achieve a world free of nuclear weapons and for demonstrating through witness testimony that nuclear weapons must never be used again.

In this line, it is pivotal to keep up with the momentum and redouble our efforts that have led up to the TPNW signature and ratification status. For this reason, I would like to recall the key role of all States Parties, Signatory States, Observers, and civil society organizations in joining efforts towards the strengthening, consolidation, and universalization of the Treaty. The endeavor ahead is not of a simple nature, but I am convinced that our true shared commitment to a world free of nuclear weapons will ease our path to the Treaty’s advancement.

*Thank you.*

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