

Welcome Address

Angel Gurría

Secretary of Foreign Affairs of Mexico

On this day we have gathered on the occasion of a unique fact: the commemoration of the 30th anniversary of the opening for signature of the Treaty that established the first Nuclear-Weapon-Free Zone in a densely populated region, as a result of a genuine Latin American effort.

While the “missile crisis” was still fresh in our memory, this effort was initiated by the Joint Declaration made by the Heads of State of Bolivia, Brazil, Chile, Ecuador and Mexico in April 1963, which proclaimed their willingness to sign a multilateral Latin American agreement that would oblige them not to “manufacture, receive, store nor test nuclear weapons or nuclear launching devices”.

Four years of preliminary work led to unanimous approval of the Treaty for the Prohibition of Nuclear Weapons in Latin America, better known as the Treaty of Tlatelolco, which was opened for signature on 14 February 1967.

The Treaty of Tlatelolco made different contributions to the law of Treaties. Among others, it established a verification and control regime carried out by a permanent supervision agency, and the acquisition of security guarantees by the nuclear weapon States.

Amendments made in the original text have made it possible for the evolution of this instrument as required, and enabled its full adherence by all the States in the region.

That is why we affirm with great satisfaction that the 33 States of Latin America and the Caribbean are committed to the spirit and the goal of this instrument, and I am sure that the ratification of the two States that are not yet members will soon take place. Mexico will keep promoting the total consolidation of the regime established by the Treaty of Tlatelolco. In this way, Latin America sends to the world an explicit message showing its steady commitment to peace and security, real security, on Earth.

This instrument has also been an example for initiatives that have borne their fruits in the South Pacific, Africa and South-East Asia, as we can see in the map. Last year, the President of Russia proposed the creation of a denuclearized zone in Central and Eastern Europe and in the Baltic region. We

believe in the advancement and proliferation of this kind of instrument in all the zones of the world.

The multiplication of nuclear-weapon-free zones constitutes a method for reaching the goal of general and complete disarmament, since it delimitates its existence geographically, makes the possibility of its use more remote, and strengthens peace and security all over the world.

That is why Mexico supports and promotes more coordination between the existing nuclear-weapon-free zones, and makes its best effort to reinforce this statute in the whole southern hemisphere and the adjacent areas.

In the Treaty of Tlatelolco, the member States renounced the option of producing, possessing or using nuclear weapons, and we committed ourselves to the use of atomic energy only for peaceful purposes.

The Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons (NPT) established a basic agreement: the non-nuclear States would withdraw from the nuclear option and the nuclear weapon States would seek nuclear disarmament and the total elimination of this kind of weapon. The latter statement gave a provisional character to the difference between the nuclear States and the non-nuclear ones.

Nevertheless, in terms of the Cold War, the basic agreement of the NPT was not honoured. In the early 1990s, when we reviewed the functions of the Treaty, we observed that other States, the so-called “nuclear weapon threshold States”, which had material and technological resources to be able to make these war devices, had joined the five States’ Nuclear Club. Despite the commitments undertaken, there were and still are a greater number of nuclear weapons, more sophisticated and more destructive than in 1970.

The Cold War demonstrated that merely possessing, and still more, developing nuclear weapons, only leads to a negative spiral of mutual distrust between the States, which endangers the proper existence of the human race. The first real sign of globalization was the fact that we realized that we could be wiped off the face of the Earth altogether, because of an unintentional mistake or a unilateral decision, by simply pressing a button.

Today more than ever we must take the opportunity that history gives us. The end of bipolarism allows us to glimpse the possibility of fulfilling our commitments completely and creating necessary institutions and undertakings so as not to commit suicide as a species.

Although it has a limited range, the Comprehensive Test Ban Treaty (CTBT), which opened for signature five months ago, constitutes an important step towards the elimination of nuclear weapons. The five State possessors of

these kinds of armaments have committed themselves to the purpose and the spirit of this instrument.

In 1995, the NPT Conference prolonged the state of distinction or of privilege for the nuclear nations with respect to the other ones. Mexico invites these nations to show their political stature by means of negotiating a programme for the elimination of nuclear weapons stage by stage and with definite terms. This should be a step to be taken after the Comprehensive Test Ban Treaty, in a process leading to the goal of general and complete disarmament.

As well as weapons of mass destruction, such phenomena as drugs and crime engendered by them—terrorism, deterioration of the environment, extreme poverty and lack of access to development—are challenges for the preservation of peace and security in the world. That is why the whole international community must determine the course of action in order to face them. Globalism can be a wonderful means to survival and stability, but if misused or misunderstood, it can generalize the most harmful trends of humanity.

For Mexico, the States' greatness is shown in their ability to turn poverty into welfare, not in their ability to destroy. Strength is demonstrated by building up consensus, not by imposing unilateral criteria. For Mexico, indispensable values are those that reinforce peace, stability, cooperation, international security and respect for the principles of international law.

The Treaty of Tlatelolco is a Latin American contribution to the peaceful understanding of this international security we have mentioned, and to a civilized and humanist order that prohibits the use of force in our region.

That is the reason that I feel a great satisfaction today opening this Seminar whose contributions will help consolidate our joint effort for the sake of the total elimination of nuclear weapons, in favour of a future of peace and trust in the preservation of mankind's loftiest values.

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

*Enrique Román-Morey**

It has been said that in the lives of human beings and institutions there are memorable moments and then there are all the rest. Today, 14 February 1997, is one of those moments for the Treaty for the Prohibition of Nuclear Weapons in Latin America and the Caribbean, internationally known as the Treaty of Tlatelolco. Today, our regional Treaty and the Agency for the Prohibition of Nuclear Weapons in Latin America and the Caribbean (OPANAL), which I proudly represent, are celebrating 30 years of very fruitful efforts in favour of regional and universal peace, as well as the socioeconomic development of the peoples of the States that are part of the Treaty and members of the Agency.

Consequently, on this memorable occasion, I wish to pay due homage to the people and institutions who have made this possible. I must begin with those who formulated the fundamental idea and are not with us here today: Ambassador Alfonso García Robles, Ambassador Emeritus of Mexico, represented by his wife, Mrs. Juanita Zsyslo de García Robles; and Ambassador Leopoldo Benites Vinuesa from Ecuador, the first Secretary-General of OPANAL, both esteemed members of the drafting committee of the Treaty of Tlatelolco. To those who are here with us today, former Secretaries-General of OPANAL: Héctor Gros Espiell, Ambassador of Uruguay; Ricardo Martínez Cobo, Ambassador of Ecuador; and the Venezuelan jurist, Antonio Stempel Paris. Of course, I include on this list—which will inevitably be incomplete as all lists acknowledging merit are—all the Latin American diplomats and thinkers who participated from the time the Treaty was drafted until it became consolidated in the region. Many of them are here in this room today and I pay sincere homage to them and a distinguished word to William Epstein. I cannot fail to mention the present and past faithful and dedicated staff of OPANAL, without whose support, these successful results would not have been possible.

* Secretary-General of OPANAL.

As for the institutions, I must begin by giving special recognition to the host Government, the Government of Mexico and its diligent leaders, who have always believed and supported the just causes of Tlatelolco; to the Governments of our region who stood by the first initiative to bring the Treaty of Tlatelolco to life: the Governments of Brazil, Bolivia, Chile and Ecuador; and to the remaining Governments of Latin America and the Caribbean, who gradually joined one by one, Tlatelolco's ideals of peace and development. Without their faith, their political determination and continuous support, the Agency I head would not be celebrating today its 30 years in such a special way.

The path has been long and difficult. Having emerged in the midst of the Cold War and having been successful in spite of the circumstances, the Treaty clearly demonstrates what our region is capable of when there is a will to relinquish individual interests in favour of the common good; when there is firm faith in humanity and its future, and when suitable and timely political decisions are adopted.

At the outset, we were alone and it seemed that we could make more rapid progress. Nevertheless, now that we are together, we will unquestionably get farther and make greater strides in working towards the spiritual ideals of those who drafted the Treaty of Tlatelolco—that is, in enjoying a world of peace free from nuclear weapons.

In fact, when the Treaty opened for signature, 18 countries of the region signed it. Only three years ago, when I assumed this honorable post in January 1994, our Agency had 25 member States. Today, we are not only celebrating the signing of the Treaty of Tlatelolco by all 33 States of the region, but also witnessing the expansion of our initiative beyond our borders. Less than two years ago, only one other inhabited region in the world had adopted a regime of military denuclearization—that is, the South Pacific with the 1985 Treaty of Rarotonga. Today, there are two more regions: South-East Asia, by means of the 1995 Treaty of Bangkok, and the African continent through the 1996 Treaty of Pelindaba.

Today is a memorable day for we can clearly state that the spirit of our regional treaty, our Treaty of Tlatelolco, has expanded beyond its own zone of implementation and gained international stature for the benefit of the community of nations as a whole. Proof of this—which may sound somewhat optimistic and even presumptuous—is this distinguished gathering of absolutely all 33 States in the region and of the 6 States entailed to the Treaty through the Additional Protocols. To these, we should add the observers from 40 States outside the region from the five continents of the world and the

representatives of the other three nuclear-weapon-free zones and of those other regions working towards the establishment of such zones to whom we offer our most decisive support and collaboration whenever required; furthermore, representatives of international organizations, including the honorary presence of the Secretary-General of the Organization of American States (OAS) and the Director-General of the International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA). This is the first occasion in the history of OPANAL that a general conference gathers representations from 88 countries and organizations. Once again, I reiterate that today is a memorable day which should fill us with Latin American and Caribbean pride.

We can thus see that the Treaty of Tlatelolco and OPANAL have attained the political objective for which they were designed 30 years ago. Nevertheless, I believe that the task has just begun with new and more demanding obligations. In order to meet them, OPANAL and its leaders must be able to continue relying on the ongoing political support of the Parties to the Treaty, which should result in all of them honouring their urgent financial commitments to the Agency.

A clear example of this modern OPANAL, of this OPANAL now consistent with current international circumstances, is the extremely important international seminar on “Nuclear-Weapon-Free Zones in the Next Century”, which we have been conducting since yesterday in Mexico City under the joint auspices of your distinguished Government and the United Nations Institute for Disarmament Research (UNIDIR), which has brought together the most distinguished personalities and experts in the field of nuclear disarmament from all over the world.

Examples of this modern OPANAL are other events carried out recently, such as the OPANAL seminar on “Nuclear Non-Proliferation: Points of View of Latin America and the Caribbean,” held in Cancún in 1995, and the seminar on “IAEA Safeguards: Verification of Fulfilment of Non-Proliferation Commitments,” which OPANAL and the IAEA held in Kingston, Jamaica in 1996. Both events included the participation of all the Member, Entailed and Observer States of the Agency entrusted to me.

Another example of this modern OPANAL is the participation of its Secretary-General in all the international forums related to the topic, particularly in the General Assembly of the United Nations, the Non-Proliferation Treaty (NPT) Review and Extension Conference, the General Assembly of the OAS, the General Conference of the IAEA, and other important forums. In brief, this is the modern OPANAL the Parties want in order to benefit the governments and peoples of the region.

Finally, this modern OPANAL is waiting for the decision of its Parties to carry out new tasks, which have already been designed by the report of the Ad Hoc Working Group for the strengthening of OPANAL.

As Secretary-General of OPANAL, I reaffirm my faith in the mandate of the Treaty of Tlatelolco and my confidence that its distinguished Parties will continue providing me with their indispensable support in order to best achieve the objectives of peace and development in Latin America and the Caribbean.

I cannot conclude without extending a vote of recognition to your distinguished country, the vigorous and modern Mexico that is hosting this seminar, for its continuous support and dedication. Allow me, therefore, to quote one of your predecessors, Gustavo Díaz Ordaz, who in 1969, in his message to the First Ordinary Session of the General Conference of OPANAL, stated:

As the Presidents of the Americas expressed at Punta del Este in 1963, I hope that the Agency whose life begins today will very soon be able to bring together all the countries of our area.

That dream has been fulfilled! And on that same occasion, Ambassador Alfonso García Robles stated:

When the Treaty of Tlatelolco covers all the territories in the area, the statute absolutely prohibiting nuclear weapons will apply to an area of more than 20 million square kilometres . . . such a feat will certainly make all the Latin American nations and Governments that have worked together with perseverance to achieve it, worthy of the gratitude of posterity.

In thanking you on behalf of OPANAL, for your distinguished presence and participation at this 30th anniversary of the opening for signature of the Treaty of Tlatelolco and in renewing my request for ongoing support for the noble causes of the Treaty of Tlatelolco, I wish to quote U Thant, the former Secretary-General of the United Nations, who on the first day of formal work at the General Conference in 1969, stated:

In a world that all too often seems dark and ominous, the Treaty of Tlatelolco will shine like a beacon. This Treaty is a practical demonstration to all humanity of what can be accomplished when sufficient dedication and the necessary political will exist.

Only the dedicated efforts of you all, combined with the work of OPANAL, will ensure that the light from the beacon of the Treaty of Tlatelolco

will continue to illuminate the path leading to peace, development and well-being, not only of our own region, but of all the nations of the world.