

**The Latin American and the Caribbean Experience in the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons, the Limitation of Expenditures on Nuclear Armament, and Confidence-Building Measures**

By

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I am very grateful indeed for this opportunity to participate in this seminar. It is always a pleasure to visit the beautiful city of Lima—which also happens to be the proud home of the UN’s Regional Centre for Peace, Disarmament and Development in Latin America and the Caribbean.

I thank the Peruvian authorities, and particularly the Ministry of External Relations, for inviting me to join you today. And I also wish to express my appreciation to our hosts—the Government of Peru, the Pontifical Academy of Social Sciences of Santa Sede, and the Peruvian Centre of International Studies—for their fine work in organizing this event. I am also very pleased to be here working together with my good friend, Ambassador Luzmila Zanabria, currently Under-secretary for International Organizations at Torre Tagle, who was serving in Beijing as Peruvian Ambassador at the same time I was Ambassador of Brazil to China.

No discussion about the efforts of the States of Latin America and the Caribbean in nuclear disarmament and non-proliferation would be complete without reference to the importance of that Treaty. It is fortunate that we have in this panel the Secretary General of OPANAL (the Agency for the Prohibition of Nuclear Weapons in Latin America), Ambassador Gioconda Ubeda.

It is often assumed that the Treaty was a product of the Cuban Missile Crisis of October 1962. But I think a more correct reading of its history would be that this crisis served more as a catalyst than a cause of efforts to establish a nuclear-weapon-free zone in this region. Costa Rica, for example, had presented a draft resolution for such a zone to the Council of the Organization of American States in 1958. And just weeks before the Cuban Missile Crisis, Brazil had introduced a resolution—which was later withdrawn—in the General Assembly with a similar goal.

Yet the missile crisis obviously served to focus the attention of the public and governments in the region on the desirability of pursuing such a nuclear-weapon-free zone and unquestionably gave a strong impetus to the efforts of several States to pursue this goal. On an initiative of the President of Mexico, the Presidents of Bolivia, Brazil, Chile, Ecuador, and Mexico, signed a Joint Declaration on 29 April 1963, setting forth a process that led to the opening for signature of the Tlatelolco Treaty in 1967.

I would like to point out, in this context, that Latin American States share a common Iberian heritage which is also an important part of the Caribbean history and experience. Our region can easily be described as the most peaceful in the world and our tradition of mutual respect and cooperation for economic and social development is certainly another factor that made the Treaty of Tlatelolco possible in the uncertain times of the 1960’s. Superpower mistrust and rivalry was then easily transplanted to other regions. It seemed that stability could only be predicated on a balance of terror, the most frightening expression of which was the concept of “mutual assured destruction”—aptly nicknamed MAD. Part of that scenario was the assumption that if the two giants were

battling for supremacy in the world, inevitably there would be regional pairs of countries with similar designs and adversarial relationships. Not a few analysts and commentators seemed to take for granted that such a situation would fatally be repeated in our region. Those assumptions of course, proved wrong, as the whole community of Latin American and Caribbean States found constructive ways to give political expression and legally binding form to their aspirations.

For instance, it should be highlighted that Tlatelolco is the only instrument of its kind that takes the question of peaceful uses in a positive manner, by affirming in its Article I the resolve of Parties to use nuclear energy exclusively for peaceful purposes. The renunciation to the exercise of the nuclear-weapon option stems directly from that basic political decision. After the historic conclusion of the Treaty, countries in the region continued to work for its entry into force for all Parties, which was finally achieved in 2002 when Cuba deposited its instrument of ratification.

It is especially noteworthy that the Norwegian Nobel Committee—in its press release announcing that Alfonso García Robles had been awarded the Peace Prize—stated that “he has helped to open the eyes of the world to the threat mankind faces in continued nuclear armament.”

That press release was significant, because it quite properly framed the significance of his work in a global context. It was clear that the creation of this zone was not only significant for the national security interests of the individual States of the region, and for all such States in the region collectively. Its significance was truly global, as events would later indicate.

The Tlatelolco Treaty established not just the first nuclear-weapon-free zone in a populated area, but set a model that would later inspire the creation of such zones in the South Pacific, Southeast Asia, Africa, and most recently Central Asia, while other States (Austria and Mongolia) have launched their own initiatives to declare their own nuclear-weapon-free status.

And this is not all—there are today some 113 States Parties to treaties establishing such zones worldwide, and these States have now met twice in a collective effort to promote the implementation and expansion of the application of such zones worldwide. At the 2010 Review Conference of the States Parties to the Nuclear Non-Proliferation Treaty, the UN Secretary-General—in consultation with the Russian Federation, the United Kingdom and the United States, and the States in the region—was asked to help in organizing a conference in 2012 to consider ways to establish a nuclear-weapon-free zone in the Middle East.

It is impressive that the world community recognized at the outset the significance of the Tlatelolco Treaty. In his statement of 2 September 1969 to the first General Conference of OPANAL, then-Secretary-General U Thant said that the Treaty would “be of benefit to

the people of the world as a whole by eliminating the threat of a nuclear arms race and of nuclear war from an important area of the world, and thus help to promote the cause of disarmament and of international peace and security.” He added, “In a world that all too often seems dark and foreboding, the Treaty of Tlatelolco will shine as a beacon light.”

Speaking personally, I am proud that my country and my region played an active and pioneering role in promoting this great initiative. And I am also proud that the United Nations also provided technical assistance and political support throughout the negotiating process. In 1967, the General Assembly adopted resolution 2286 welcoming “with special satisfaction” the opening for signature of the Treaty, which the Assembly described as an “event of historic significance.” Secretary-General Thant’s statement of 13 February 1967 cited the Treaty’s imminent opening for signature as “an important milestone in the long and difficult search for disarmament.”

In terms of the general context for the negotiation of this Treaty, I believe it is very important to remember that it was regarded at the time as what was called a “partial measure” or stepping stone to a much larger goal—the goal of “general and complete disarmament under effective international control”, a goal that encompasses both the global elimination of all nuclear weapons and other weapons of mass destruction and the regulation of conventional armaments.

Collectively, we still have a long way to go in achieving these aims, but the effort will be significantly improved if the States comprising these regional nuclear-weapon-free zones can maintain their solidarity in the pursuit of a world free of nuclear weapons. There is still much to be done to achieve the total absence of nuclear weapons in the area covered by the Treaty. Its Parties are working to persuade the five nuclear-weapon countries recognized by the NPT to revise the terms of their adherence to Protocol II in order to bring them more in line with the objectives of the Treaty and with the legitimate security concerns of the Parties.

I note that other States from this region—led by Costa Rica and Uruguay—are participating in an effort inside the United Nations to promote the Secretary-General’s five-point nuclear disarmament proposal, which includes the goal of negotiating a nuclear weapons convention, or a framework of separate, mutually-reinforcing instruments with the same goal. Once again, the disarmament theme found in the text of the Tlatelolco Treaty continues to echo globally and I hope it will continue to grow.

Fortunately, I have less to say today about limiting expenditures on nuclear armament, since the level of such expenditures in our region has been zero. Sometimes we in this region forget to be grateful for the vast financial sums and technical resources that we have not wasted by investing in such weapons. The total historical expenditures worldwide on nuclear weapons has amounted to several trillion dollars—enough to create a stack of dollar bills going to the moon and almost all the

way back. Latin America and the Caribbean have not added to that stack and I am sure they never will. But we have not been free from growing expenditures on conventional arms. According to the latest Yearbook published by the Stockholm International Peace Research Institute (SIPRI), “World military expenditure rose in 2009, reaching an estimated \$1,531 billion, an increase of 5.9 per cent in real terms compared with 2008, and 49 per cent higher than in 2000.” Needless to say, this also reflected a growth in the region of Latin America.

Now, I cannot possibly do justice to the numerous confidence-building measures that have been launched to avert arms races and to reduce the risk of armed conflicts in this region. We have made significant advances in excluding not only nuclear weapons but all weapons of mass destruction from our neighbourhood, and have no interest in acquiring long-range missiles to deliver such weapons. In the interest of time, I will only mention in passing the creation by Brazil and Argentina of a unique and effective bilateral accountability and control mechanism in the nuclear field. Incidentally, the understanding arrived at between the two largest nations in the South American continent in the nuclear field in the mid 1980’s was instrumental for the success of subsequent efforts toward economic integration in MERCOSUR.

Continent-wide, we have also taken steps to promote military-to-military cooperation, as well as cooperation involving police and customs authorities, to curb the illicit trade in small arms and light weapons—cooperation that the UN’s Lima Centre has been working hard to promote. And we are also working to help implement UN Security Council Resolution 1540, which is intended to halt the proliferation and terrorist acquisition of weapons of mass destruction.

This is the kind of “confidence” we should all be pursuing in this region—confidence in the fact that none of our immediate neighbours will be developing weapons of mass destruction or threatening to use them against us; confidence in the understanding that our military expenditures are not intended to constitute a threat to any country; and confidence that we have lessons to teach the world in how to resolve difficult political disputes without the use of force, while pursuing disarmament.

This is the course we must follow in the years ahead, in the interests of peace and prosperity for all.