

Opening Remarks to Panel I

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*Academic Seminar on the Occasion of the 40th Anniversary of the Adoption and Opening for
Signature of the Treaty for the Prohibition of Nuclear WEaons in Latin America and the
Caribbean (Treaty of Tlatelolco)*

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Before we begin our discussion today, I would like to thank the Government of Mexico – not just for inviting me to join in commemorating the 40th anniversary of the Treaty of Tlatelolco, but also for its long and impressive record of support for disarmament initiatives both at the United Nations and throughout the world.

In these troubled times, when significant progress on nuclear disarmament is so rare and setbacks so frequent, it is well worth recalling what the peoples and states of Latin America and the Caribbean have accomplished in establishing the world's first nuclear-weapon-free zone over an entire populated continent. This achievement has had not just regional, but global implications.

The success of this treaty has already helped to inspire the creation of similar zones throughout the southern hemisphere – first in the South Pacific, then in Africa, and Southeast Asia. I credit the Government of Mexico for hosting here in 2005 the first Conference of States Parties and Signatories to Treaties to Establish Nuclear-Weapon-Free Zones, an inspired effort to promote the collaboration both within and between all such zones.

The United Nations has a long history of supporting efforts to create nuclear-weapon free zones, and specifically lent its strong support for efforts to create one in Latin America and the Caribbean. In November 1963, the General Assembly adopted Resolution 1911, which welcomed this initiative and recognized its relevance to the principles of the UN Charter. Among my predecessors in the UN Secretariat many years ago was Alfonso García Robles, whose later work on behalf of this Treaty earned him the Nobel Peace Prize. Another disarmament official, William Epstein -- who served as the UN's Technical Advisor to the Treaty's Preparatory Commission – also assisted in concluding this historical treaty.

To demonstrate further the global implications of this treaty, I ask you all to recall what happened at the United Nations in 1999, when the Disarmament Commission adopted a set of Guidelines on the establishment of nuclear-weapon-free zones. These international Guidelines drew heavily upon the great precedent set by the Tlatelolco Treaty, especially in stressing that initiatives for establishing such zones must come from the local countries themselves, and in underscoring the importance of security assurances from the nuclear-weapon-states.

As a citizen of the only country that has been the target of nuclear weapon attacks, I am deeply impressed with this great collective accomplishment, and pleased that the United Nations had the opportunity to assist this initiative. The Tlatelolco Treaty stands as a living symbol of how

regional arrangements can substantially advance the global norms of the Charter.

Before I allow the other panelists to elaborate on many of these themes, let me conclude on a cautionary note – together, we have much work to do on the road to a nuclear-weapon-free world. In my opinion, two tasks deserve special priority.

First, the process of making the entire southern hemisphere a nuclear-weapon-free is not yet complete. In Africa, the Pelindaba Treaty – signed over a decade ago -- has still not entered into force because it has not yet obtained a sufficient number of ratifications. Also, the nuclear-weapon states have still not ratified the relevant protocols to the Bangkok Treaty, nor have all such states ratified the protocols to the Pelindaba and Rarotonga Treaties.

The second great challenge is to advance the growth of nuclear-weapon-free zones in the northern hemisphere. Last September, a treaty establishing a Central Asian Nuclear-Weapon-Free Zone was signed, creating the first such zone entirely north of the Equator. Yet the nuclear-weapon-states have not agreed to the protocol to this treaty. I remain hopeful that consultations between the parties and the nuclear-weapon states will eventually yield an agreement that will enable this zone to gain the recognition and security assurances it needs. The Middle East, South Asia, and Northeast Asia are other sub-regions where nuclear-weapon-free zones have been proposed – though they will be difficult to achieve, they will undoubtedly offer concrete security benefits and remain initiatives worthy to pursue.

I hope speakers at this seminar will offer some constructive ideas on how to move forward in all these areas.

Though many challenges lie ahead, the disarmament community also has much upon which to build, thanks in large measure to the vision and concrete achievements of the Tlatelolco Treaty. Working both regionally and globally, we can together advance toward our great common destiny: a world without nuclear weapons.
