



BRAZIL

United Nations General Assembly
High-level informal plenary meeting to commemorate and promote
the International Day for the Total Elimination of Nuclear Weapons

Statement by H. E. Ambassador Fernando Simas Magalhães,
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(check against delivery)

Mr. President,

Let me join previous speakers in thanking the President of the General Assembly for convening this meeting to mark the International Day for the Total Elimination of Nuclear Weapons.

Brazil aligns itself with the statement delivered by the Dominican Republic on behalf of the Community of Latin American and Caribbean States and supports the Declaration of the Agency for the Prohibition of Nuclear Weapons in Latin America and the Caribbean (OPANAL), which has been uploaded to Papersmart and will be circulated as a General Assembly document.

Mr. President,

Nuclear disarmament is a widely shared objective of the international community, dating back to the very inception of nuclear weapons and to the creation of the multilateral system. While progress has been lacking in many fronts, the global call for renewed action in this regard is growing stronger. The celebration of this international day is a testament to that call and to our collective demand that never again humanity shall suffer and wane under the destructive power of nuclear weapons.

During the past few years, a growing consensus has emerged among governments, civil society and academia on the unacceptability and illegitimacy of those weapons of mass destruction, the only ones yet to be outlawed. Nuclear weapons foster distrust and instability, drain the wealth of peoples and nations, and are utterly incompatible with international humanitarian law.

Furthermore, the continued reliance on nuclear weapons by some States not only contradicts their stated objectives and legal commitments on nuclear disarmament, but also undermines international efforts regarding non-proliferation. Extolling the virtues and importance of nuclear weapons hardly seems the best way to stop them from spreading.

The recent and regrettable events in the Korean Peninsula have showcased just how dangerous it is to treat nuclear weapons as international policy tools. Such weapons are destabilizing in any situation and can make already tense situations spiral out of control in suicidal stand-offs. We therefore urge the Democratic People's Republic of Korea to abandon its nuclear weapons programme and exhort all actors involved to show restraint and responsibility and resume the six-party talks on the denuclearization of the Peninsula.

Mr. President,

Notwithstanding the challenges and risks, there are also reasons for some optimism. The year of 2016 has witnessed the most comprehensive debate on nuclear weapons in the past decades, in the context of the Open Ended Working Group on nuclear disarmament. After frank and thorough discussions on the different approaches to take forward nuclear disarmament, an overwhelming majority of countries decided that the time is ripe to pursue multilateral negotiations on nuclear disarmament and made a strong recommendation in this regard to the United Nations General Assembly First Committee.

The First Committee, which shall begin its deliberations a week from now, faces a tall task to translate that recommendation into concrete action and convene a negotiating Conference in 2017, under the auspices of the United Nations General Assembly. A prohibition on nuclear weapons would send a powerful signal that the international community does not accept nuclear weapons and nuclear weapons diplomacy as legitimate means of conducting international relations.

A prohibition is not an end in itself, however. Rather, it will have to be complemented by further initiatives, which should be pursued with renewed vigor. In this regard, Brazil has proposed that a prohibition be complemented by protocols on the elimination of existing arsenals, verification and other relevant measures. Ongoing efforts on those issues, such as the International Partnership for Nuclear Disarmament Verification, could make important contributions in this respect.

Mr. President,

I would also like to refer to the Security Council Resolution 2310 (2016) on the Comprehensive Nuclear Test Ban Treaty (CTBT), adopted on September 23rd. The resolution shows complacency with the status quo, by indicating supposed benefits we would be drawing in terms of regional stability and confidence-building, despite the non-entry into force of the Treaty. Also of serious concern is the reference to the Joint Statement on the Comprehensive Nuclear Test-Ban Treaty by China, France, the Russian Federation, the United Kingdom, and the United States of America of September 15, 2016, which affirms, in its second paragraph, that the P5's "nuclear stockpile maintenance and stewardship programs are consistent with NPT and CTBT objectives." That does not reflect the view of the majority of UN Member States.

Mr. President,

In the field of nuclear disarmament, if we are not making progress, we are moving backwards. However comfortable the nuclear status-quo may seem to some, it is unsustainable in the long run, and inaction today will exact its price tomorrow. Let us move resolutely and united towards the total elimination of nuclear weapons and spare future generations from their horrors.

I thank you, Mr. President.