
**STATEMENT BY THE DOMINICAN REPUBLIC ON BEHALF OF THE COMMUNITY OF LATIN AMERICAN
AND CARIBBEAN STATES -CELAC- AT THE SPECIAL MEETING OF THE GENERAL ASSEMBLY TO
COMMEMORATE THE INTERNATIONAL DAY FOR THE TOTAL ELIMINATION OF NUCLEAR WEAPONS**

(September 26, 2016)

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Mr. President,

1. I have the honor to speak on behalf of the Member States of the Community of Latin American and Caribbean States (CELAC).
2. Let me congratulate you, Mr. President, for convening this High Level Meeting to commemorate the International Day for the Total Elimination of Nuclear Weapons. Let me also express CELAC's appreciation to the Secretary- General for his earlier remarks, as well as his efforts to promote nuclear disarmament.
3. For CELAC Member States, the aim of this historic day is threefold: to highlight a collective vision of a Nuclear Weapons Free-World; to mobilize international support and action of governments, civil society, including non-governmental organizations, academia, parliamentarians and the mass media, in advancing the objective of nuclear disarmament, for realizing this vision, and to intensify the call on States to commence negotiations as a matter of highest priority, for the prohibition and total elimination of nuclear weapons.
4. At the Founding Summit of CELAC in December 2011, held in Caracas, Venezuela, our Heads of State and Government adopted a Special Communiqué on the Total Elimination of Nuclear Weapons, in accordance with the region's long-standing position supporting a world free of nuclear weapons. This Declaration reaffirmed that complete and verifiable nuclear disarmament is of the highest priority and also reiterated our commitment to nuclear non-proliferation. In each subsequent Summit, 2013 in Santiago, Chile, 2014 in Havana, Cuba, 2015 in Belén, Costa Rica, and in the recent Summit celebrated in Quito, Ecuador on January 27, 2016, the Heads of State and Government have reiterated this same commitment to a nuclear weapons free world through Special Declarations.
5. Our region, declared as a zone of peace, has always strived to advance nuclear disarmament and achieve the complete elimination of nuclear weapons in the world. In this regard, CELAC welcomes

with appreciation the decision of the General Assembly to hold a High Level Conference no later than 2018 to identify measures and actions to eliminate nuclear weapons at the shortest possible term and reaffirms its decision to join the efforts of the international community towards the urgent commencement of negotiations of a legally binding instrument prohibiting the possession, development, production, acquisition, testing, stockpiling, transfer, use and threat of use of nuclear weapons within a multilaterally agreed timeframe.

6. The humanitarian impact of nuclear weapons raises grave concerns in our Community. CELAC calls on all States to address this issue whenever nuclear weapons are discussed. We therefore commend the organization of the Conferences on the Humanitarian Impact of Nuclear Weapons held in Oslo, Nayarit and Vienna for their deliberations and contributions to the global discourse in achieving a nuclear weapons free world. As demonstrated by the testimonies of survivors, evidence and scientific data, nuclear weapons constitute a serious threat to security, the development of peoples and to civilization as well as the planet as a whole irrespective of the region in which a nuclear weapon detonation takes place. Such risk continues to exist mainly because a few countries still regard nuclear weapons as legitimate guarantors of stability and security.¹ Furthermore, it has been ascertained that no state or international organization has the capacity to successfully address and provide humanitarian assistance and protection in case of a nuclear blast. These conferences also highlighted the ongoing risk of the detonation of nuclear weapons, either by accident or design.
7. The Community believes that a global prohibition on nuclear weapons can contribute to attain and maintain a world without nuclear weapons. For the majority of the international community, there is no reason why a universal prohibition of nuclear weapons should not be pursued immediately. We must not wait to witness once again the catastrophic consequence of a detonation of a nuclear weapon before we decide to start negotiations on a treaty prohibiting nuclear weapons.²
8. CELAC Member States have decided at the level of Head of States and government, to join the efforts of the international community for the commencement of a multilateral diplomatic process for the negotiation of a legally binding instrument for the prohibition and total elimination of nuclear weapons in a transparent, irreversible, and verifiable manner and within a multilaterally agreed timeframe, as proposed at the Third Conference on the Humanitarian Impact of Nuclear

¹ Proposal by the Community of Latin American and Caribbean States (CELAC) on effective legal measures to attain and maintain a world without nuclear weapons, A/AC.286/wp.15, para 3

² Proposal by the Community of Latin American and Caribbean States (CELAC) on effective legal measures to attain and maintain a world without nuclear weapons, A/AC.286/wp.15, para 8

Weapons, held in Vienna in December 2014. This instrument is a necessary measure to achieve nuclear disarmament and would fulfill the obligation of all States Parties to the NPT as expressed in article VI of the Treaty.

9. The Community welcomes the discussions held this year of the three sessions of the Open Ended Working Group (OEWG) established by the General Assembly resolution A/Res70/33 to develop proposals to substantively address concrete effective legal measures, legal provisions and norms that would need to be concluded to attain and maintain a world without nuclear weapons. CELAC further welcomes the recommendation of the Working Group to the 71st General Assembly, to convene a conference in 2017 open to all States to negotiate a legally binding instrument that prohibits nuclear weapons leading to their total elimination. In this regard, we reiterate our commitment to work actively and constructively during the 71st session of the General Assembly towards the fulfillment of this Group's recommendation.
10. As an interim measure, and while pending the prohibition and total elimination of nuclear weapons, it is a legitimate interest of the non-nuclear weapons States, that nuclear weapon States give unambiguous and legally binding guarantees to not use nor threaten to use such weapons. CELAC reiterates its call to the international community to commence the negotiations and adoption of a universal and legally binding instrument on negative security assurances within the shortest possible timeframe. It is a legitimate interest of all non-Nuclear Weapon States, including all 33 CELAC Member States, to receive unequivocal and legally binding assurances by Nuclear-Weapon States against the use or threat of use of such weapons. CELAC reiterates its urgent call to Nuclear Weapons States to withdraw all interpretative declarations to the Protocols I and II of the Treaty of Tlatelolco, and to respect the denuclearized character of Latin American and the Caribbean.
11. Many of these weapons are on high alert status. CELAC urges those States with nuclear weapons on high alert to decrease the operational readiness of their systems.

Mr. President,

12. CELAC regrets the failure to implement the agreement arrived at the 2010 NPT Review Conference to hold the International Conference on the establishment of a Middle East zone free of nuclear and all other weapons of mass destruction. Besides being an important contribution to the achievement of the goal of nuclear disarmament, CELAC is strongly convinced that the establishment of such zone would be a significant step in the peace process in the Middle East region. In this regard, CELAC deeply regrets that no agreement was found on this issue at the 2015 NPT Review Conference and reminds all NPT Parties that the creation of this zone is an essential

component of the decisions that led to the indefinite extension of the NPT, in 1995, which should be fulfilled.

13. At the same time, we reiterate that the indefinite extension of the NPT agreed at the 1995 Review Conference does not entail the right to indefinitely possess nuclear weapons by any State.
14. The Community reiterates on the twentieth anniversary of the Comprehensive Nuclear Test Ban Treaty (CTBT), the vital importance and urgency of the early entry into force of the Comprehensive Nuclear Test Ban Treaty and urges those States in Annex II of the Treaty whose ratification is essential for its entry into force to accelerate the process of signing and/or ratifying this important international instrument as soon as possible. We also underline the urgent need for progress on this and other effective measures of nuclear disarmament, so to give effect to Article VI of the NPT.³ Also calls upon all States to refrain from carrying out nuclear weapon test explosions, other nuclear explosions or any other non-explosive relevant experiment, including subcritical experiments, and those performed by supercomputers for the improvement of nuclear weapons. Such actions are contrary to the objective and purposes of the CTBT, as well as to the spirit of the Treaty, thereby undermining the desired impact as a nuclear disarmament measure. In this regard, CELAC welcomes the holding of the Conference on facilitating the entry into force of the CTBT, convened under article XIV of the Treaty.
15. CELAC rejects the assertion present in the Joint Statement on the Comprehensive Nuclear Test Ban Treaty by the Nuclear Non Proliferation Treaty Nuclear Weapon States, issued on 15 September 2016, whereby these States noted that their "nuclear stockpile maintenance and stewardship programs are consistent with NPT and CTBT objectives". This affirmation is incorrect as neither Treaty grants any State the right to indefinitely possess nuclear weapons.
16. To conclude let me express that CELAC Members States are convinced that the only effective guarantee against the use or threat of use of nuclear weapons is their complete and total prohibition and elimination. Our Community has acted upon its responsibility in building a peaceful and safer world. We encourage others to join us on this path.
17. I thank you, Mr. President.

³ On the commitment to advance in the multilateral negotiations on nuclear disarmament, Special Declaration, Quito Summit, para 10