



High Level Plenary Meeting of The UN General Assembly to Commemorate and Promote the International Day for the Total Elimination of Nuclear Weapons

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Statement by the Delegation of Brazil

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Mr President of the UN General Assembly, Tijjani Muhammad-Bande,
Mr. Secretary-General,
Distinguished Foreign Ministers and Heads of Delegation,
Ladies and Gentlemen,

The International Day for the Elimination of Nuclear Weapons was established by the UN General Assembly in 2013, and six years later, the objectives and purposes of this commemorative date remain as important as ever, and their urgency has steadily increased.

Nuclear weapons remain the single greatest existential threat to the survival of humankind. And yet, despite notable reductions in the number of warheads since the height of the cold war, chiefly due to bilateral initiatives by the United States and Russia, nearly 14.000 nuclear weapons remain operational, a sizable portion of them in high alert and ready to be used in anger.

How are we, the community of Nations, to address this existential threat?

Part of the answer lies, without a doubt, on the need to protect and reinforce the existing nuclear disarmament and non-proliferation regime, centered on the Nuclear Non-Proliferation Treaty (NPT) and supported by bilateral, regional and international instruments. In recent years, this regime has started to show dangerous signs of structural stress. Not only have we witnessed the collapse of some of the most important agreements inherited from the final years of the Cold War, but also within the NPT itself some have begun to question the unequivocal undertaking to eliminate those weapons once and for all.

NPT Member States must seize the opportunity offered by the 2020 Review Conference to reaffirm and reinforce the fundamental bargain upon which the Treaty rests: the commitment of Non-Nuclear-weapon States not to seek to acquire those weapons, combined with a commitment by Nuclear-Weapon-States to negotiate nuclear disarmament in good faith.

While the NPT has succeeded in preventing the uncontrollable horizontal proliferation of nuclear weapons over its nearly 50 years of existence, it has failed to deliver the ultimate objective of the total elimination of nuclear weapons. In fact, the Treaty is often used as a thinly veiled justification for the indefinite maintenance of existing arsenals.

This fundamental shortcoming of the NPT regime can only be addressed through further delegitimization of nuclear weapons – by reinforcing the stigma that these weapons were born with and that they duly deserve.

The international community has already succeeded in banning and eliminating several categories of weapons, including chemical weapons, biological weapons and anti-personnel landmines. These prohibitions have one thing in common: they all stem from the assessment that these weapons have unacceptable humanitarian consequences, which far outweigh any security benefits that may derive from their possession and use.

This assessment applies even more strongly to nuclear weapons. Even the most limited use of such weapons, whether accidental or deliberate, would provoke catastrophic, indiscriminate and long-lasting consequences, to which no country can be prepared to respond.

This is why the adoption of the Treaty on the Prohibition of Nuclear Weapons (TPNW), in 2017, represents an evolutionary leap for the disarmament and non-proliferation regime. While the TPNW will not bring about the elimination of nuclear weapons on its own, it has significantly raised the moral barrier against these weapons.

Mr. President,

Let us not forget the issue of nuclear tests. These regrettable experiments have produced enduring, indiscriminate and unacceptable effects both to human health and to the environment, which are still being felt and will continue to affect generations to come. Only through the long

overdue entry into force of the Comprehensive Nuclear-Test-Ban Treaty (CTBT) can we be assured that such experiments will never again be carried out.

Mr. President,

Brazil is a proud Member of the Treaty of Tlatelolco, which established the first nuclear-weapon-free zone in a permanently inhabited area. The strengthening of existing NWFZs and the creation of new zones – on the basis of agreements freely arrived at by all States of the region concerned – will be a crucial step towards the total elimination of nuclear weapons.

In this regard, I take this opportunity to announce that the Member States of the Agency for the Prohibition of Nuclear Weapons in Latin America and the Caribbean (OPANAL) have adopted a declaration on the occasion of the International Day for the Total Elimination of Nuclear Weapons. In our capacity as coordinators for OPANAL in New York, the Delegation of Brazil is honored to distribute the statement at this session, which will also be circulated as an official document of the 74th Session of the General Assembly.

Thank you for your attention.