



**STATEMENT BY THE HON. DR. KAREN CUMMINGS, MINISTER OF FOREIGN
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AT THE

**HIGH LEVEL PLENARY MEETING TO COMMEMORATE AND PROMOTE THE
INTERNATIONAL DAY FOR THE TOTAL ELIMINATION OF NUCLEAR
WEAPONS**

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UNITED NATIONS HEADQUARTERS, NEW YORK

Mr. President,

I thank you for organizing this High-Level Plenary Meeting to Commemorate and Promote the International Day for the Total Elimination of Nuclear Weapons. The meeting gives Member States, Observers and civil society the opportunity to have a frank debate on an issue that poses an existential threat to the security of our peoples and our planet, given the indiscriminate and unparalleled destruction that nuclear weapons can cause.

Mr. President,

Guyana is firmly committed to a world free of nuclear weapons. To this end, it recently hosted representatives of the CARICOM Member States of Antigua and Barbuda, Belize, Grenada, Guyana, Haiti, Jamaica, Saint Lucia, Saint Kitts and Nevis, Saint Vincent and the Grenadines and Trinidad and Tobago in Georgetown, Guyana on 19-20 June at a regional meeting of experts to discuss the Treaty on the Prohibition of Nuclear Weapons (TPNW) from a regional perspective and to assess its prospects for advancing nuclear disarmament, global security and humanitarian norms, while canvassing progress toward its entry into force.

The meeting took place at a time of heightened risks for the deliberate or accidental detonation of nuclear weapons, the highest since the Cold War and a major cause for concern globally and for the Caribbean region. The effects of a nuclear fallout cannot be constrained by national borders and will cause severe damage and widespread destruction to States far beyond any target area, one of the most vulnerable being the Caribbean region which, under the Treaty of Tlatelolco, is a nuclear weapon-free zone.

Given the world's fragile eco-system and our changing climate and the risks to human health and well-being, socio-economic development, trade and the global social order,

we cannot afford for our planet to be used as a nuclear playground. The International Committee of the Red Cross (ICRC) has underscored that no adequate humanitarian response would be possible in the aftermath of a nuclear attack.

Mr. President,

Guyana has always taken a progressive approach to the elimination of nuclear weapons and is a State party to all of the major international legal instruments that together comprise the nuclear disarmament and non-proliferation regime. We have long advocated for a holistic approach to addressing matters of peace and security, fully recognising the intrinsic link between peace, security and development. There can be no development without peace and the existence and potential use of nuclear weapons are a threat to international peace and security and therefore to development.

Guyana will continue its active engagement in the negotiating process that resulted in the adoption in 2017 of the TPNW, which is the first legally binding international instrument for the prohibition of nuclear weapons. We possess no nuclear weapons nor do we claim to be protected from them by the nuclear weapons of an ally. This is consistent with our full compliance with the prohibitions contained in Article 1 of the TPNW, which aims to transform the regional norm of the Caribbean against the possession of nuclear weapons into a global norm. The elimination of nuclear weapons would support progress toward the achievement of the 2030 Agenda and its Sustainable Development Goals. The approximately US\$2 trillion in current expenditure on nuclear weapons by nuclear weapon States reduces funding for development and for the achievement of the SDGs. As a small developing country, Guyana remains concerned about this diversion of economic resources to the maintenance of nuclear weapons and modernization of nuclear weapon stockpiles and their delivery systems. These resources could be better invested in the economic and social development of our peoples.

Mr. President,

Member States must have a principled and common approach to confronting the multiple security challenges currently faced by the international community. Maintenance of nuclear weapons is inconsistent with the principles and purposes of the Charter, which calls upon Member States to promote international peace and security. Our planet and our peoples expect and deserve no less. This is our opportunity to deliver. For its part, Guyana recommits to being an active and committed partner in the global effort to realize a nuclear-weapon-free world.

I thank you.