SURINAME

Statement on behalf of the Union of South American Nations (UNASUR)

by H.E. Kitty Sweeb
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on Nuclear Disarmament in the Thematic Debate of the First Committee, 68th Session of the United Nations General Assembly

October 18, 2013
Mr. Chair,

Suriname has the honor to speak on behalf of the Member States of the Union of South American Nations (UNASUR), in its capacity of Pro Tempore President.

I would like to take this opportunity to congratulate you and the members of the Bureau on your election; we are looking forward to successful meetings under your leadership.

In this regard, UNASUR joins the efforts of the international community in moving towards the negotiation of a universal and legally binding instrument that prohibits nuclear weapons, considering that their total elimination is the only guarantee against the use or threat of use of nuclear weapons, and that their very existence diminishes the security of all States, including those who posses them. While nuclear weapons exist, there will be a real risk of their use and proliferation.

UNASUR expresses its deep concern about the catastrophic humanitarian consequences of nuclear weapons. We welcome the results of the Oslo Conference on the Humanitarian Impacts of Nuclear Weapons, held in March 2013, and call upon all States to participate in the Second Conference, to be hosted by Mexico in February 2014.

Mr. Chair,

UNASUR reiterates its commitment to the NPT and to the balanced implementation of its three pillars: disarmament, non proliferation and peaceful use of nuclear energy.

UNASUR States’ aspirations for this review cycle of the NPT is that new and concrete measures in favor of nuclear disarmament are adopted in the next Review Conference, to be held in 2015; for example, the adoption of a legal commitment for the elimination of all nuclear weapons, with clear benchmarks and timetables.

Mr. Chair,

We believe that it is a legitimate interest of Non-Nuclear Weapon States -- including all UNASUR members -- that Nuclear-Weapon States provide unequivocal and legally binding guarantees of not using or threatening to use
those weapons. Therefore, we call for work in the negotiation and adoption, in the shortest possible time, of a universal and legally binding instrument on negative security assurances.

Likewise, we call upon Nuclear-Weapon States to eliminate the role of nuclear weapons in their doctrines, security policies and military strategies, in order to reach the complete elimination of these lethal weapons, regardless of their type or location.

Mr. Chair,

Our countries will continue to support the efforts aimed at reviving the works of the Conference on Disarmament, as the single multilateral negotiating body on disarmament, and that there is an urgent need to begin the negotiations of new international legal instruments governing fundamental issues for disarmament and non-proliferation that will favor international peace and security.

Mr. Chair,

We reaffirm the need for all States that have not yet signed or ratified the Comprehensive Nuclear-Test Ban Treaty, particularly those in Annex 2, to do it as soon as possible, as a sign of their political will and their commitment to international peace and security. On this point, we welcome the ratification in the past year of Brunei Darussalam, the Republic of Chad, the Republic of Guinea Bissau and the Republic of Iraq.

Pending the entry into force of the Treaty, the Member States of UNASUR reiterate the importance of maintaining a moratorium on nuclear testing.

Mr. Chair,

As members of the first nuclear-weapon-free zone in a densely populated area, the States of UNASUR urge all Nuclear-Weapon States to withdraw all interpretative declarations to the Protocols of the Treaty of Tlatelolco, which will help to eliminate the risk of use of nuclear weapons against the countries of the region.

The States of UNASUR welcome the decision adopted by the VIII Review Conference of the NPT to promote the establishment of new nuclear-weapon free
zones, on the basis of freely concerted agreements among States of each region. On this point, it is important to note that UNASUR regrets the non-compliance with the agreement achieved on holding in 2012 an “International Conference for the Establishment of a Middle East Zone Free of Nuclear Weapons and All Other Weapons of Mass Destruction”. We urge the convening of this Conference as soon as possible, considering that the agreements that may be reached in it will be an important contribution to achieving the objective of nuclear disarmament and a momentous step for the peace process in the Middle East.

Mr. Chair,

The Member States of UNASUR would also like to avail of this important occasion to underline the essential contribution of the IAEA in common efforts to establish a more secure world. In this regard, UNASUR is pleased that Peru and Venezuela, members of this Union, are part – since last September and for a period of two years – of the Board of Governors of that Agency, along with Argentina and Brazil. Also, we would like to underline the importance of the Brazilian-Argentinean Agency for Accounting and Control of Nuclear Materials, the only binational organization of safeguards in the world, which is an initiative of two of our Member States.

Mr. Chair,

Finally, we would like to express our satisfaction for the recent Latin American initiatives in favor of nuclear disarmament: the Meeting of Senior Officials of CELAC on Nuclear Disarmament, held in Buenos Aires, on August 20th; and the XXIII Session of the General Conference of OPANAL, held in the same city from August 21st through 22nd. Likewise, we thank the organization of the High Level Meeting of the General Assembly on Nuclear Disarmament, held on September 26th.

We hope that all these initiatives can soon achieve their goal, so that humanity can direct resources devoted to the maintenance and modernization of nuclear arsenals to the social and economic development of the peoples.

I thank you, Mr. Chair.