
(October 7, 2016)

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Mr. Chairman,

1. I have the honor to speak on behalf of the Member States of the Community of Latin American and Caribbean States (CELAC).

2. At the outset, we wish to congratulate you on your election as Chairman of the First Committee for the 71st Session of the General Assembly as well as to the other members of the Bureau. We would also like to express our appreciation to Ambassador Van Oosterom, of The Netherlands for his tireless work as Chairman of this Committee during the previous Session.

3. Our region has a long-standing tradition of promoting disarmament, non proliferation and arms control. We consider them to be priority issues on the agenda of the United Nations, as well as essential components for the maintenance of international peace and security. At the same time, we reiterate our firm conviction and commitment to continue promoting full and verifiable nuclear disarmament, as the highest priority of the Community, and the urgent need to achieve total elimination of nuclear weapons.

4. Today, CELAC reaffirms the need to advance towards the primary objective of nuclear disarmament and to achieve and sustain a world free of nuclear weapons. In this context, we express our opposition to the enhancement of existing nuclear weapons and the development of new types of these weapons, which is inconsistent with the obligation of nuclear disarmament. We also reiterate the need to eliminate the role of nuclear weapons in strategic doctrines and security policies.

5. The Community welcomes the discussions and conclusions of the three sessions of the Open Ended Working Group established by the General Assembly resolution A/Res/70/33 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.

6. We are committed to the commencement of a multilateral diplomatic process for the negotiation of a legally binding instrument for the prohibition and 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 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. CELAC further welcomes the report of the last session of the OEWG last August, in which the group recommended the 71st General Assembly to convene a conference in 2017 open to all States, international organizations and civil society, to negotiate a legally binding instrument to prohibit nuclear weapons, leading towards their total elimination which remains the Community’s highest aspiration. 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.
7. The Community is fully aware that prohibiting all nuclear weapons will not automatically eliminate them. Nevertheless, their absolute prohibition will set a norm, currently lacking, which will constitute the basis of further efforts and negotiations towards the achievement and maintenance of a world without nuclear weapons as soon as possible. Furthermore, it would have a political as well as legal impact on nuclear disarmament.

8. 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. In this regard, 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, which is an incorrect affirmation.

9. 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 that 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. CELAC 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.

10. We celebrate the twenty-fifth anniversary of the Brazilian-Argentine Agency for accounting and control of Nuclear Materials (ABACC) and stress the importance and pioneering of this initiative of transparency and confidence building whose effectiveness is reflected with its close cooperation with IAEA, with led, in the last 25 years, to more than 2500 inspections in both countries.

11. We commend the Joint Comprehensive Plan of Action between Iran and the P5+1 and urge the continued engagement of all parties, as well as of the IAEA, towards its full implementation CELAC underlines that this Agreement showed once again that dialogue and negotiations are the only effective ways to resolve differences among States. At the same time CELAC ratifies the inalienable right of all states in accordance with the provisions of NPT, to develop, research, produce and use of nuclear energy for peaceful purposes without discrimination.

Mr. Chairman,

12. CELAC emphasizes that work must continue at the multilateral level in the framework of the UNPoA, in a transparent and non-discriminatory manner, advancing towards the adoption of legally-binding instruments on, marking and tracing, and illicit brokering, in order to prevent the diversion of small arms and light weapons to the illicit market. We take note of the outcome of the Sixth Biennial Meeting of the UNPoA, held in June 2016, and thank Jamaica for its role as Chairman of that process as well as of the outcome of the second Open ended Meeting of Governmental Experts, in June 2015. We will continue participating actively in the current UNPoA cycle 2014-18. As we look ahead to the 3rd Review Conference to be held in 2018 to
address persistent challenges to the implementation of the UNPOA and the ITI, including the need for enhanced international cooperation and assistance, as well as the implications of new developments in small arms and light weapons manufacturing, technology and design; the inadequate management of stockpiles of small arms light weapons, and the attendant risk of diversion to illicit markets.

13. CELAC Member States acknowledge that the illicit manufacture, transfer and circulation of small arms and light weapons, their parts, components and ammunitions. Their excessive accumulation and their uncontrolled spread in many regions of the world, which have a wide range of humanitarian and socio-economic consequences and pose serious threats to peace, reconciliation, safety, security, stability and sustainable development in many levels.

14. CELAC expects that the Arms Trade Treaty (ATT), the first legally binding instrument on the arms trade, can contribute to provide an effective response to the serious consequences that the illicit and non-regulated trade in arms for many people and States, in particular through the diversion of arms to non-State actors or unauthorized users, often linked to transnational organized crime. We further hope that this Treaty can contribute to prevention of armed conflict, armed violence, and violations of human rights and international humanitarian law. At the same time, in light of the entry into force of the Treaty in December 2014, we call for the treaty to be applied in a balanced, transparent and objective manner, respecting the sovereign right of all States to ensure their self-defense, in accordance with Article 51 of the United Nations Charter. We take note of the convening, at the end of August of this year in Geneva, Switzerland of the Second Conference of States Parties (CSP2) of the Arms Trade Treaty.

15. The issue of anti-personnel mines continues to demand the attention of the international community. CELAC recalls with appreciation the Declaration of Central America as a mine-free zone. Likewise, CELAC recognizes the value of the assistance of the United Nations Mine Action Service (UNMAS). Our group stresses the importance of cooperation for humanitarian demining and assistance to victims and hopes that the successes achieved in recent years will continue. We also take note of the Declaration of Maputo+15 adopted at the Third Review Conference of the Anti-Personnel Mine Ban Convention in June 2014. We take note of the convening of the 15th Meeting of States Parties to the Anti-Personnel Land Mines Convention to be held in Santiago, Chile from 28th November to 2nd December of this year.

16. CELAC supports international efforts to reduce the suffering caused by cluster munitions and by their use against civilian populations, in clear violation of international humanitarian law. It also recognizes and values the wish of any State to take multilaterally agreed actions regarding the humanitarian problems caused by cluster munitions. Likewise, we recognize the ratification by Colombia on September 2015 to the Cluster Munitions Convention and the deposit by Cuba of its instrument of accession on April 6th 2016, as well as the establishment of Central America as a cluster munitions free zone during the Fifth Meeting of States Parties to the Convention on Cluster Munitions, held in San José, Costa Rica, in September 2014. The Community takes note
of the outcome of the First Review Conference of States Parties of this Convention, held in Dubrovnik, Croatia, from 7 to 11 of September 2015.

Mr. Chairman,

17. CELAC stresses its firm conviction that the complete elimination of chemical and biological weapons constitutes a priority in the field of disarmament and non-proliferation. In this regard, CELAC emphasizes the importance of universal adherence by all States to the Convention on the Prohibition of Chemical Weapons, and to the Convention on the Prohibition of Bacteriological (Biological) and Toxin Weapons, and the importance of full compliance by all State Parties to all its provisions and requirements. The community welcomes the convening of the Review Conference of the Biological Weapons Convention to be held in Geneva in November 2016, and for which we look forward to having successful outcome.

Mr. Chairman,

18. CELAC Member States share a common interest in promoting and expanding the exploration and use of outer space only for peaceful purposes for the benefit and interest of all States and as the province of all humankind irrespective of the degree of their social, economic or scientific development.

19. In this regard, we favor the strengthening of international norms and principles applicable to States in the field of information and telecommunications in the context of international security, by promoting actions and strategies to strengthen cyber-security and prevent cyber-crime and taking into consideration that open, secure, stable, accessible, and peaceful ICT environment is essential for all.

20. We salute the convening of the two sessions of the Open Ended Working Group (OEWG) to discuss the agenda and the possibility of establishing a Preparatory Committee for the IV Special Session of the General Assembly devoted to Disarmament (SSOD-IV). We also welcome the election of Ecuador as Chair of this OEWG. We hope to conclude the three Substantive Sessions of this Working Group with a positive outcome, given that the previous two Working Groups established could not reach any agreement.

21. In closing, CELAC reaffirms the role of the Conference on Disarmament (CD) as the single multilateral negotiating body on disarmament. The Community once again deeply regrets that the CD has not yet been able to fulfill its mandate in two decades. CELAC urges all members of the CD to show the political will in order to ensure the commencement without delay of its substantive work through the adoption and implementation of a balanced and comprehensive program of work that advances the agenda of nuclear disarmament, including through negotiations on a comprehensive Nuclear Weapons Convention, on a universal, unconditional and legally binding instrument on Negative Security Assurances to Non-Nuclear Weapon States, as well as on the Prevention of Arms Race in Outer Space and, on a non-discriminatory and multilateral Treaty Banning the Production of Fissile Material for nuclear weapons or other nuclear explosive devices that serves both non-proliferation and disarmament purposes.
22. The Community regrets that the Disarmament Commission has been unable to make recommendations in 17 years. It is important for the Commission to fulfill its mandate as expressed by the First UN Special Session on Disarmament in order to advance our goals. CELAC reaffirms its readiness to cooperate with the members of the Commission in achieving concrete results during the current cycle. The Community calls on all delegations to show the necessary political will to enable this UN deliberative body to fulfill its mandate and formulate substantive recommendations to the General Assembly.

23. Furthermore, the Community would like to recognize with gratitude the important work undertaken by the United Nations Regional Centre for Peace, Disarmament and Development in Latin America and the Caribbean (UNLIREC), in providing assistance to the countries of the region for the implementation of disarmament measures in various areas. As part of our commitment to the work done by UNLIREC, the region will present during the 71st session of the General Assembly, the resolution entitled “United Nations Regional Centre for Peace, Disarmament and Development in Latin America and the Caribbean” facilitated every year by Peru.

Thank you.