
STATEMENT BY THE DOMINICAN REPUBLIC ON BEHALF OF THE COMMUNITY OF LATIN AMERICAN & CARIBBEAN STATES- CELAC- ON THE UNITED NATIONS DISARMAMENT COMMISSION IN ITS 2016 SUBSTANTIVE SESSION

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 2016 Substantive Session and extend it to the other members of the Bureau. We would also like to express our appreciation to Ambassador Fodé Seck of Senegal for his tireless work as Chairman of the Disarmament Commission last year.
3. CELAC reaffirms the importance of the Disarmament Commission as the specialized, deliberative body within the United Nations multilateral disarmament machinery that allows for in-depth deliberations on specific disarmament issues, leading to the submission of concrete recommendations to the General Assembly, and reiterates its willingness to work constructively to fulfill the tasks entrusted to this Commission.
4. The Community proudly recalls the historic decision made by the Heads of State and Government of the Member States of the CELAC gathered in Havana, Cuba, on the occasion of the II Summit of the Community, on 28 and 29 January 2014, to formally declare Latin America and the Caribbean as a Zone of Peace, and reaffirmed the CELAC's permanent commitment to solve disputes through peaceful means with the aim of uprooting forever threat or use of force in our region. This decision was reiterated during each subsequent Summit, 2015 in Belén, Costa Rica, and the recent Summit held in Quito, Ecuador on 27 January 2016.

Mr. Chairman,

5. CELAC members reaffirm 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.
6. We express our strong support to the conclusion of a universal legally binding instrument that leads to effective, irreversible and verifiable nuclear disarmament, in order to achieve the goal of complete elimination of all nuclear weapons, under a multilaterally agreed timetable. We reiterate our proposal to start negotiations and subsequent adoption of a legally binding instrument for the prohibition and total elimination of nuclear weapons. In this regard, we highlight that during the Community's Summit held in Belén, Costa Rica, on 28 and 29 January 2015, the Heads of State and Government of CELAC endorsed the Austrian Pledge, now The Humanitarian Pledge, which has been endorsed by 127 States. The Community also supports

related General Assembly resolutions entitled: The Humanitarian Pledge for the prohibition and elimination of nuclear weapons, The Humanitarian Consequences of Nuclear Weapons and the Ethical Imperatives for a nuclear weapons free world which were adopted during its 70th Session.

7. CELAC Member States call for negotiation and adoption, as soon as possible, of a universal and legally binding instrument on negative security assurances. 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.
8. The Community commends the creation of the Open Ended Working Group established by the General Assembly resolution A/Res/70/33 to develop proposals to take forward multilateral nuclear disarmament negotiations, to substantively address concrete effective legal measures, legal provisions and norms that would need to be concluded to the urgent adoption of a legally binding instrument for the prohibition and total elimination of nuclear weapons to attain and maintain a world without nuclear weapons. CELAC reiterates its commitment to actively participate in the OEWG and welcomes the convening of its First Session held in Geneva from 22nd to 26th of February 2016. The Community expects the OEWG to yield concrete results and make substantive recommendations to the 71st United Nations General Assembly on the issues under its consideration and pledges to work constructively towards this end.
9. While recalling the 1996 Advisory Opinion of the International Court of Justice, CELAC members reaffirm that the use or threat of use of nuclear weapons constitutes a crime against humanity and a violation of international law, including international humanitarian law, and of the Charter of the United Nations. The Community reiterates that the only effective guarantee against the use or threat of use of nuclear weapons is their complete elimination and prohibition.
10. CELAC Member States express our greatest concern at the humanitarian impact and global long-term consequences of any accidental or intended use of nuclear weapons. We believe this issue should be raised 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 in general. 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.
11. At the time of establishing the Community of Latin American and Caribbean States, we confirmed the pride of our region in being the first densely populated area in the world declared as a Nuclear-Weapon-Free Zone (NWFZ), through the Treaty for the Prohibition of Nuclear Weapons in Latin America and the Caribbean (Treaty of Tlatelolco). We wish to reiterate that the establishment of internationally recognized Nuclear-Weapon-Free Zones, on the basis of arrangements freely arrived at among the States of the region concerned, strengthens

international peace and security, as well as the non-proliferation regime, and constitutes an important contribution to the achievement of nuclear disarmament.

12. We urge the Nuclear-Weapons States to review and withdraw all reservations to the Protocols of the Treaty of Tlatelolco, and to respect the denuclearized character of Latin America and the Caribbean, thus helping to eliminate the possible use of nuclear weapons against the countries of the region.
13. The Treaty of Tlatelolco and the Agency for the Prohibition of Nuclear Weapons in Latin America and the Caribbean (OPANAL), have been a political, legal, and institutional reference point in the creation of other nuclear-weapon-free zones in different regions of the world. OPANAL's experience is also an important legacy of the international community for inspiring the establishment of new Nuclear-Weapon-Free zones.
14. We express our grave disappointment at the lack of consensus, at the 2015 Review Conference of the NPT which ultimately prevented the adoption of the draft outcome document. At the same time, the provisions on nuclear disarmament in the last draft outcome document did not satisfy the expectations of the Member States of CELAC. We viewed these provisions as a step back from the outcome documents of previous Review Conferences. The failure of this Review Conference should serve as further impetus for those of us who truly believe in the need for the early prohibition and total elimination of nuclear weapons to renew the efforts towards this objective.
15. CELAC regrets the failure to implement the agreement of 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 achieved on this issue at the 2015 NPT Review Conference and reminds all NPT States 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 at the earliest possible date.

Mr. Chairman,

16. We reaffirm the commitment of our States to the NPT, and to the full implementation of its three pillars: nuclear disarmament, non-proliferation, and peaceful uses of nuclear energy. We also reaffirm the inalienable right of States to develop research, production and the peaceful use of nuclear energy without discrimination, and in conformity with Articles I, II, III and IV of the NPT. The Community also reaffirms the commitment of all Parties to the Treaty to facilitate the participation in the fullest possible exchange of equipment, materials and scientific and technological information for the peaceful use of nuclear energy.
17. CELAC emphasizes the importance of achieving the universality of the NPT, and therefore urges States that have not yet done so to accede to this Treaty as Non-Nuclear States, and calls on Nuclear-Weapon States to comply with their commitments under Article VI of the Treaty, and to advance towards the complete elimination of those weapons. We urge them to fully and

immediately implement the 13 practical steps towards nuclear disarmament agreed at the 2000 NPT Review Conference, as well as the Action Plan adopted at the 2010 Review Conference.

18. The Community reiterates, on the twentieth anniversary of the Comprehensive Nuclear- Test-Ban Treaty (CTBT), the vital importance and urgency of the entry into force of that Treaty and urge those countries listed in Annex II that have not done so, to sign or ratify 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. In this regard, call the Provisional Technical Secretariat of the CTBTO to foster communication channels that allow the States of the region to address matters related to the entry into force of the instrument and the functioning of the organization, dealing with the manifestations that have been made in that regard, protected by the law of treaties, especially the Vienna Convention of 1969.
19. The community recalls that during the IV Summit held in Quito, Ecuador, on January 2016, the Heads of State insisted that all States shall refrain from carrying out nuclear tests, other nuclear explosions, or any other relevant non explosive testing, including sub-critical experiments and those conducted through simulations aiming to develop and improve nuclear weapons and other weapons of mass destruction. CELAC reiterates its strongest condemnation of the conduct of any type of nuclear test anywhere in the world. Such actions are contrary to the object and purpose of the nuclear disarmament and non-proliferation regime: to the obligations, and provisions contained in the Treaty on the Non Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons and against the spirit and the letter of the CTBT, thereby undermining its impact as a measure of nuclear disarmament.¹
20. CELAC Member States urge to maintain all current moratoria on test explosions of nuclear weapons, pending the entry into force of the CTBT, and at the same time reiterate that these measures do not have the same permanent and legally binding effect that could be achieved with the entry into force of the CTBT to put an end to all nuclear weapons tests and any other type of nuclear tests or relevant non-explosive tests.²
21. While recalling the holding for the first time of the United Nations High Level Meeting on Nuclear Disarmament of September 26, 2013, CELAC highlights its intention to ensure proper follow-up to resolution A/RES/68/32 of the General Assembly entitled “Follow-Up to the 2013 High Level Meeting of the General Assembly on Nuclear Disarmament”, and welcomes with appreciation the decision of the UN General Assembly to hold a High Level Conference no later than 2018 to identify measures and actions to eliminate nuclear weapons at the shortest

¹ n.7 on the 20 years of the opening for signature of the Comprehensive Nuclear Test-Ban Treaty CTBT, Special Declaration, Quito Summit.

² n.8 on the 20 years of the opening for signature of the Comprehensive Nuclear Test-Ban Treaty CTBT, Special Declaration, Quito Summit.

possible term, aiming at adopting a treaty banning the development, production, procurement, testing, stockpiling, transfer, use or threat to use of nuclear weapons, and providing for their destruction within a multilaterally agreed timeframe.

22. We salute the creation 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 could not reach any agreement.
23. The Community also welcomes with appreciation the celebration of September 26 as the International Day for the Total Elimination of Nuclear Weapons, highlights the events around the world to commemorate the first observation of this day, and calls on governments, parliaments and civil society to take further action annually to commemorate the day.
24. We commend the implementation of the Joint Comprehensive Plan of Action between Iran and the P5+1 and the continued engagement of all parties, as well as of the IAEA, towards the full resolution of this issue. CELAC underlines that this Agreement showed once again that dialogue and negotiations are the only effective way to resolve differences among States.

Mr. Chairman,

25. CELAC is convinced that practical confidence-building measures in the field of conventional weapons play an important role in contributing to the promotion of understanding, transparency and cooperation among States and to the enhancement of stability and security, in strict observance of the purposes and principles of the UN Charter, abiding by their voluntary nature and the specific security concerns, and situations of States. It is worth recalling in this regard the relevant resolutions of the General Assembly, which were adopted by consensus. Our region has taken significant steps towards the implementation of confidence-building measures in the field of conventional arms, which contribute to the enhancement of international peace and security. We therefore encourage Member States to strengthen, improve and extend the measures of confidence-building at all levels, as appropriate.
26. In this regard, the Community welcomes all transparency and confidence-building measures in the field of conventional arms already voluntarily undertaken by concerned States in their respective regions or sub-regions, as well as the information on such measures provided on a voluntary basis to the United Nations Register of Conventional Arms and to the United Nations Report on Military Expenditures.
27. The Community also reaffirms the crucial importance of the UN Programme of Action to Prevent, Combat and Eradicate the Illicit Trade in Small Arms and Light Weapons in all its aspects (UNPoA), and recognizes its significant contribution to efforts carried out on this matter, as well as it stresses the need for its full and effective implementation. CELAC underscores that the adoption of the outcome document of the Second Review Conference of the UNPoA in 2012, gave the international community a clear goal and timeline to strengthen its efforts to prevent, combat and eradicate the illicit trade of small arms and light weapons. CELAC reiterates

the importance of the International Instrument to Enable States to Trace, in a Timely and Reliable Manner, Illicit Small Arms and Light Weapons.

28. 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 Fifth Biennial Meeting of the UNPoA, held in June 2014, and look forward to continue participating actively in the review cycle of the UNPoA for 2014-2018. In this regard, the Community expresses its commitment to making progress on these issues during the Sixth Biennial Meeting to consider the implementation of the PoA, to be held in June of this year.
29. The Community, in reaffirming the importance of regional and international cooperation to prevent, combat and eradicate illicit trade in small arms and light weapons and their ammunition, agreed to establish a Working Group to study the crime of illicit trade in small arms and light weapons and their ammunition. This Working Group has the mandate to study comprehensively this issue, in order to generate proposals for mechanisms and procedures that will allow us to better coordinate our efforts in a more effective way, on the basis of full respect for international law and principles enshrined in the United Nations Charter, to strengthening the prevention and combat of illicit traffic in this category of weapons, for the benefit of the citizen security.
30. CELAC expects that the Arms Trade Treaty (ATT), the first legally binding instrument on 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, we call for a balanced, transparent and objective implementation thereof and to respect 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 outcome of the First Conference of States Parties (CSP1) of the Arms Trade Treaty held in Cancun, Mexico, from 24th to 27th August 2015, which included decisions for the implementation of the Treaty and would like to highlight Mexico's leadership during the preparatory process and organization of this Conference.
31. The issue of anti-personnel mines continues to demand the attention of the international community. CELAC welcomes 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 demining and assistance to victims and hopes that the successes achieved in recent years will continue. We take note of the Declaration of Maputo+15 adopted at the Third Review Conference of this Convention in June 2014. We also 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.

32. 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 immediate steps regarding the humanitarian problems caused by cluster munitions. Likewise, we recognize the accession of Guyana on October 2014 as well as the ratification of Colombia on September 2015 to the Cluster Munitions Convention and the establishment of Central America as a cluster munitions free zone. We also take note of the First Review Conference of States Parties to the Convention on Cluster Munitions held in Dubrovnik, Croatia from 7 to 11 of September 2015.

Mr. Chairman,

33. In closing, CELAC reaffirms the role of the Conference on Disarmament (CD) as the single multilateral negotiating body on disarmament. CELAC regrets that the CD hasn't 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 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.
34. Furthermore, the Community would like to point out 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.
35. 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 this Commission in achieving concrete results during this session. 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.

Thank you.