

**70 UNITED NATIONS GENERAL ASSEMBLY-FIST COMMITTEE
STATEMENT DELIVERED BY THE DELEGATION OF MEXICO AT THE
THEMATIC DEBATE ON NUCLEAR WEAPONS**

New York, 19 October 2015

Mr. President,

Year after year Mexico has the honor of being the first delegation to speak in its national capacity at the thematic debate on nuclear weapons. This is, no doubt, in recognition of its historical commitment to nuclear disarmament, an issue of the highest priority for my country.

When speaking during this debate, my delegation traditionally condemns the existence of more than 16,000 nuclear weapons, questions that these weapons are the basis for security of some countries and reiterates its tireless commitment to a world free of nuclear weapons. Such pronouncements are as relevant and valid today as ever.

But this is a different session of the General Assembly. On the one hand, because of the symbolic weight of the 70 Anniversary of the Nuclear Age, the establishment of the United Nations and the nuclear attacks on Hiroshima and Nagasaki. It also takes place under the shadow of the failure of the Ninth Review Conference of the Treaty on the Non-Nuclear Proliferation Treaty (NPT), held just a few months ago.

At the same time, we meet encouraged by the undeniable success of the Humanitarian Initiative which, placed at the center of any debate on the existence and elimination of nuclear weapons with the support of nearly 80% of the membership, has changed the parameters of the discussion, has generated a new paradigm and has created unprecedented *momentum* to take effective and concrete measures to make a qualitative leap towards a world free of nuclear weapons.

Therefore, on this occasion, I would like to focus the statement of my delegation to respond to some of the arguments we have heard to try to explain the lack of progress in nuclear disarmament and, above all, to justify those who express their will to achieve a nuclear weapons free world but oppose any initiative that could make progress:

"The existence of nuclear weapons has prevented a nuclear war." The deterrence doctrine departs from the presumption that the existence of nuclear weapons is necessary to ensure the safety of nuclear-weapon possessors or those under the umbrella of their protection. However, it is evident that the security of Non-Nuclear Weapon States (NNWS) or those that are not under the shelter of the umbrella is blatantly ignored by the advocates of this doctrine. It is therefore arrogant to say the least to pretend to impose such a doctrine to NNWS. Just weeks ago, Pope

Francis reminded us in this venue that "ethics and law based on the threat of mutual destruction -and possibly the destruction of humanity- are contradictory and an affront to the entire Nations United framework, which will lead to 'nations united by fear and mistrust' ... ". As shown by the disclosure of various near-disasters, if nuclear war has being averted it is despite, not because of nuclear weapons.

"The prevailing security environment is not conducive to general and complete disarmament." As in the case of tobacco addicts, there will never be a good time to quit smoking and there will always be a justification for postponing such a painful decision. Indeed, prevailing tensions are alarming. The escalation in rhetoric, with echoes of the Cold War, is deeply concerning. But for the rest of the world the argument is exactly the opposite: it is precisely because of the growing tensions between nuclear-weapon possessors what justifies, what gives a sense of urgency to renewed action to eliminate nuclear weapons forever. Enough with excuses!

"There is no legal vacuum." Those who argue that there is no legal vacuum are the same who promoted a Treaty Banning Nuclear Tests and are now promoting a fissile material cut-off treaty. Both instruments fill a legal vacuum. The ruling of the International Court of Justice (ICJ) highlights the absence of a legal instrument to prohibit nuclear weapons. Therefore it acknowledges the existence of a legal vacuum. Ultimately, one cannot argue that there is no legal vacuum and at the same time promote instruments to fill a legal vacuum.

"The negotiation of a convention of nuclear disarmament undermines, distracts or is inconsistent with the NPT." Those who argue the above seem to forget their obligation to pursue negotiations on effective measures for a treaty on general and complete disarmament, as established by Article 6 of the Treaty. The NPT regime is vital and will be necessary even after achieving the goal of eliminating all nuclear weapons. The adoption of a Comprehensive Nuclear-Test-Ban Treaty and the eventual negotiation of a fissile material cut-off treaty or a convention on nuclear disarmament are complementary measures and fully consistent with the NPT.

Mr. President,

We cannot understand the failure to advance on the nuclear disarmament agenda without pausing for a moment to assess the tools and fora available to us. I refer to, on the one hand, strange interpretations that some have on Article 6 of the NPT and, on the other, the disarmament machinery, in particular the Conference on Disarmament (CD).

The CD is a product of the Cold War and a bipolar world. It bases its decision-making on the consensus rule that, justified as a protection of national security, guarantees the regular exercise of a veto power, a practice which, as noted in this body just last week, is even used, for example, to prevent the Secretary General of OPANAL from participating in a panel, as if the national security of any nuclear-weapon possessor depended on it. The institutional arrangement of the CD is not accidental. As was the case with the Security Council, the CD was designed to produce results only when the two superpowers would agree to it. Despite the fact that our discussions of the last few years have focused on its paralysis for almost two decades, the reality is that the

CD only fulfilled its mandate at the end of the Cold War and during the few honeymoon years that followed the fall of the Berlin Wall.

Despite the evolution of the United Nations System, the CD remains a closed body, which excludes two thirds of the UN membership, including the vast majority of the members of the Non-Aligned Movement and even emerging powers of Western and Eastern Europe. As if that was not enough, the CD is the last forum, within the UN, free from the scrutiny of civil society and therefore the legal and moral obligation of accountability.

While this was acceptable for a time, it is neither explainable nor acceptable in a very different reality, the one in which we live today. The world changed radically: the Cold War is over, the balance of forces is now multipolar and nuclear weapons have proliferated beyond the five Nuclear Weapon States (NWS). The Humanitarian Initiative has generated a new *momentum* and has given voice to dozens of countries who have waited frustrated, for over 45 years, for NWS to fulfill their part of the agreement resulting from the so-call Great Bargain. In summary, the disarmament machinery no longer reflects a contemporary international community that demands an inclusive participation on any debate or negotiation on the existence and elimination of weapons of mass destruction.

As a result, my delegation, with the support and commitment of a growing number of co-sponsors, registered draft resolution L.13 entitled "Taking forward multilateral nuclear disarmament negotiations." With this resolution, the General Assembly, the universal organ *par excellence*, will establish a Working Group, by definition inclusive, open to the participation of all UN Member States.

This initiative has generated controversy precisely because it seeks to avoid past mistakes and replicate in the General Assembly an outdated and failed *modus operandi*. It has done so because it aims to create a platform for concrete and effective progress on the nuclear disarmament agenda. In other words, because, unlike others, we intend to do precisely what we say we will do.

Mr. President,

Time has come to translate rhetoric into concrete action. It is time to channel frustration into initiatives which will allow for significant progress. It is time to move from complaining to adopting effective measures on nuclear disarmament. This why Mexico is participating, along with a group of like-minded and equally committed countries, as co-author of two draft resolutions on the Humanitarian Initiative and another one on the "Ethical imperatives for a Nuclear-Weapons-Free World." As we have done with other scourges of humanity, it is essential to recover the moral compass. Often we forget that the United Nations was founded on the basis of the wellbeing of humanity, not on national interests.

Mr. President,

Merely the fact that we are marking the 70th anniversary of the attacks on Hiroshima and Nagasaki should impose on us the obligation for this General Assembly to be not just another one. We cannot allow inertia, procedural tricks or the interest of a few to prevent us from making progress. The best legacy we can leave for future generations and the ultimate tribute to the victims of nuclear attacks and tests is to build a peaceful and safe international security system, rooted in the strength of ethics and international law rather than on the threat of nuclear weapons.

I thank you.