

The following is the speech of Ambassador Rafael Ramírez before the Plenary Session of the “Nuclear Non-Proliferation Treaty Review Conference”

Madam President, Ambassador Taous Feroukhi,

My delegation agrees with the statements of Iran on behalf of the Non-Aligned Movement (NAM) and by Ecuador on behalf of the Community of Latin American and Caribbean States (CELAC).

Madam President,

My country is fully committed to the three pillars of the Nuclear Non-Proliferation Treaty: Nuclear Disarmament, Non-Proliferation and the Peaceful Uses of Nuclear Energy, and considers it necessary to move forward comprehensively and simultaneously in the three areas.

Madam President,

In the last five years, since the last Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons (TNP) Review Conference, little or nothing has been done in the field of nuclear disarmament. And future prospects are even more discouraging. In coming years, the nuclear powers will invest hundreds of thousands of millions of dollars in the modernisation of their nuclear arsenals. In open and classified United States Congress reports between 2011 and 2014, President Barack Obama communicated his nuclear modernisation plan which, according to the Congressional Budget Office will cost around 335 thousand million dollars over the next decade.

This policy of perpetuating the possession of nuclear weapons is contrary to the commitment undertaken by the States with nuclear weapons as a part of the TNP to "pursue negotiations on effective measures relating to cessation of the nuclear arms race at an early date and to nuclear disarmament." Fifty years have passed since that promise was made, but little has been achieved. Nine countries still possess 16,400 nuclear weapons. There are 1800 warheads on maximum alert, ready to be launched with only a few minutes' prior notice. The majority of weapons in existence are much more powerful than the weapons that fell on Japan in 1945. How can we move forward with the other pillars of the Nuclear Non-Proliferation Treaty, particularly with the pillar on Non-Proliferation, when the nuclear powers do not fulfil their commitments? The Treaty is based on the balance between the security aspirations and needs of all Party States, not only the States that possess nuclear weapons. Venezuela fervently calls for the nuclear powers to take up negotiations anew – at a multilateral level – to quickly move towards the eradication of these weapons. All countries that possess nuclear weapons should move along this road.

Madam President,

Venezuela is a signatory of the first treaty to establish a Nuclear-free Zone in a densely populated area of the world: the 1967 Treaty of Tlatelolco, and the region to which it belongs, Latin America and the Caribbean, was declared a "Zone of Peace" in 2014.

Yet despite all of the commitments entered into by the States of Latin America and the Caribbean in the areas of peace and nuclear non-proliferation, we feel threatened by the imminent terror of a nuclear attack. In this respect, Venezuela

calls on States with nuclear weapons to, once and for all, unconditionally commit to never using their weapons against a Latin American or Caribbean country, or against any country in the world that does not possess nuclear weapons.

Madam President,

Latin America and the Caribbean have taken major steps in the field of nuclear non-proliferation and in promoting the eradication of nuclear weapons. Now it is the turn of the countries that do not possess nuclear weapons and depend on the nuclear security umbrella of other countries to take the necessary steps along the road to a permanent eradication of these weapons.

Five European countries currently have nuclear weapons in their territories as part of a NATO nuclear cooperation agreement, and at least a dozen nations around the world say that they depend on the protection of the nuclear weapons of other countries for their security.

If these countries that do not possess nuclear weapons renounced forming part of a security doctrine that protects them using the threat nuclear weapon deployment, and forbade the circulation of these weapons in their land, sea or air space, they would be taking a giant step towards nuclear disarmament.

If we have managed to advance along the road in the prohibition of biological and chemical weapons, and certain excessively damaging conventional weapons, why can we not eradicate nuclear weapons once and for all?

Madam President,

Seventy years have elapsed since the horror of the nuclear bombing of Hiroshima and Nagasaki. Explosions aimed at the civil population, which spread indiscriminately in all directions, reaching temperatures of up to 4000 degrees Celsius and vaporising everything in their path: women, children, animals, trees, buildings. Cities with hundreds of years of culture, reduced to dust. 250 thousand people lost their lives as a result of the explosions. Approximately half died on the first day of the explosions. The rest died slowly, in the throes of death over weeks from burns and radiation. The devastating aftereffects of the explosions affected the DNA of the inhabitants of these two cities so much that even today they suffer a higher risk of leukaemia, cancer, infertility and birth defects.

To put into perspective the power of nuclear weapons that are currently active, consider the following information: The bombs that exploded in Hiroshima and Nagasaki (which killed 250 thousand people) had an energy of 15 and 25 kilotons respectively. The energy of some of the bombs detonated in nuclear tests in later decades was 15 thousand kilotons. Imagine the impact that the detonation of a bomb with a destructive capacity 1000 times greater than that of Hiroshima and 600 times that of Nagasaki would have on humanity. Now let us remember that there are still 16400 active nuclear weapons, 1800 of which are ready to destroy the planet several times over in a matter of minutes.

If we know that the detonation of a nuclear weapon, whether by design or accident, can cause biological damage, unleash climate change and unprecedented famine, threatening the human species itself in such a way that nobody and nothing would have the capacity to help, why can we not eradicate nuclear weapons once and for all?

The policy of deterrence that a few actors subscribe to does not justify the risk of the extinction of humankind. The doctrine of security that supports the existence of nuclear weapons is the doctrine of death, in which we are all losers.

Madam President,

My delegation salutes the agreement reached between Iran and the P5+1 group on an action plan as a significant step towards reaffirmation of the sovereign right of all States to develop nuclear energy for peaceful ends.

In this regard, my country highlights the importance of fully implementing Article IV of the Nuclear Non-Proliferation Treaty on “the inalienable right of all the Parties to the Treaty to develop research, production and use of nuclear energy for peaceful purposes without discrimination”. This is one of the fundamental objectives of the Treaty.

Well, we would like the same media attention, diplomatic and political impetus that has been given to the case of Iran, to be focused on the Middle East region, in particular on the creation of a Nuclear-free Zone in the whole region. If the Western Powers are truly committed to nuclear non-proliferation in the Middle East, why then do they not fulfil the commitments acquired in the Review Conferences of 1995, 2000 and 2010, and hold an International Conference to Establish a Nuclear and Weapons of Mass Destruction-free Zone in the Middle East? This Conference should have taken place in 2012; three years have elapsed and we are still waiting. We demand that the Western powers be coherent with their discourse and schedule this Conference without further delay. The selective nature of nuclear non-proliferation policies erodes the foundations of the Nuclear Non-Proliferation Treaty.

In this respect, we make a call to Israel, the only country in the region that is not a signatory of the Non-Proliferation Treaty and has not expressed its desire to become one, to abandon its nuclear weapons, to join the TNP immediately and without preconditions and to place all of its installations under full International Atomic Energy Agency monitoring. The possession of nuclear weapons by Israel represents a serious and continued threat to the security of its neighbouring countries and the region as a whole, propagates suspicion and distrust, and hampers cooperation.

The whole Middle East region is currently in the throes of war and extremism, which makes it a region of maximum politico-military tension. In this context, a clear message needs to be sent and the Conference must be supported as a first, but fundamental step, towards peace in the Middle East.

Madam President,

To conclude, we hope that all of these initiatives achieve their objectives soon. The future of humankind depends on it. A world free of nuclear weapons will be a fairer, more secure, more peaceful, more humane world, but above all, it will be a world free of the constant anxiety that humankind may, at any time, by design or accident of the States who possess nuclear weapons, cease to exist.

Thank you