

INTERNATIONAL DAY FOR THE TOTAL ELIMINATION OF NUCLEAR WEAPONS

Words by H.E. Alicia Buenrostro Massieu

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30 September 2019, Vienna, Austria

Ambassador Thomas Hajnoczi,

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Excellencies, Ladies and Gentlemen,

- Five years ago, compelling evidence was presented during a series of international Conferences – held in Oslo (Norway), Nayarit (Mexico), and here in Vienna – on the catastrophic humanitarian consequences of nuclear weapons.
- The Hibakusha, survivors of Hiroshima and Nagasaki, and victims of nuclear testing took part in these Conferences, bearing witness to the unspeakable suffering that these weapons cause.
- Due to their devastating power, their indiscriminate effect on innocent civilians, and their harmful effects on the health, development and very existence of humanity, nuclear weapons cannot be considered as beneficial in the hands of some, and pernicious in the hands of others.
- This double standard is an incentive for proliferation and is contrary to the letter and spirit of the agreements that the international community has forged in the 74 years since the end of the Second World War.

Ladies and Gentlemen,

- For decades now, Mexico has constantly and actively promoted nuclear disarmament and non-proliferation. It is not only a diplomatic conviction, but also a commitment by Mexico with international peace and security.
- As Mexicans, we are proud to belong to Latin America and the Caribbean, the first densely populated region in the world that, by means of the Treaty for the Prohibition of Nuclear Weapons in Latin America and the Caribbean (Treaty of Tlatelolco), established a nuclear-weapon-free zone.
- I must admit that the current outlook is not encouraging. As the UN Secretary General, Antonio Guterres noted in his address, there are reasons for serious concern: the rhetoric surrounding the use of nuclear weapons is on the rise, a qualitative arms race is underway, and the disarmament and nuclear non-proliferation architecture is fraying.
- And there are still around 14,000 nuclear weapons in existence, many of them on high operational alert.
- In this context, there are ever more urgent ethical imperatives for the total elimination of nuclear weapons. A nuclear-weapon-free world is a global public good of the highest order, serving both national and collective security interests. Moreover, given the existent financial gaps for the achievement of the Sustainable Development Goals, it is immoral to continue allocating vast resources to the upkeep and modernization of nuclear weapon arsenals.
- We must therefore bet on a positive outcome of the 2020 NPT review process, that will enable the full implementation of the Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons, the cornerstone of the nuclear disarmament and non-proliferation regime.
- A positive outcome includes the fulfillment of the disarmament pillar, taking into account the special responsibility of all nuclear weapon states.
- Here in Vienna, we have a significant role to play in order to advance, in good faith, towards general and complete disarmament. This entails:

- Supporting the essential role of the International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA) and of the safeguards agreements in the implementation of the NPT.
 - Persuading the States included in Annex 2 to the Comprehensive Nuclear-Test-Ban Treaty that have not ratified to do so without further delay, while supporting the full development of the Treaty's verification regime, which has been key in detecting and preventing nuclear tests.
 - Remaining vigilant to impede any nuclear test by any State, or any other non-explosive experiment, including subcritical testing for the improvement of nuclear arsenals.
- In the meantime, we cannot stand still. The Treaty on the Prohibition of Nuclear Weapons now has 79 signatories and 32 States Parties, a testimony to the continued concern and commitment by citizens from all around the world to avoid apathy and keep momentum going in order to set an international standard banning all nuclear weapons.
 - At the same time, we must look to young people for inspiration. The CTBTO Youth Group is a great example of young people raising awareness and mobilizing to ensure that citizens have all the facts and that decision-makers make the right decisions.
 - We, too, as diplomats, international civil servants and citizens must renew and energize our struggle for the total elimination of nuclear weapons. We must engage with those who seek to maintain or develop nuclear arsenals with the authority of international law, the scientific evidence on the humanitarian consequences of nuclear weapons, and the ethical responsibility to care for all people and our planet.
 - In this endeavor, my country and I pledge to work and engage in dialogue with citizens, civil society and all States in good faith and as a matter of existential importance.