

**REMARKS BY MR. MANUEL A. GONZÁLEZ SANZ,
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ON THE OCCASION OF THE CONFERENCE
“BUILDING A NUCLEAR – WEAPON FREE WORLD”**

**AUGUST 28, 2016
ASTANA, KAZAKHSTAN**

Mr. Nursultan Nazarbayev, President of the Republic of Kazakhstan
Excellences,

● Distinguished participants,
Dear Friends,
Ladies and gentlemen,

As we meet here today, a great responsibility of colossal human dimensions lies before us. It is a responsibility to the current and future generations; to a world in urgent need of effective measures towards the prohibition of nuclear weapons.

● Let me start by expressing my sincere appreciation for the cordial hospitality with which the people and the government of Kazakhstan have received us today. I also wish to acknowledge the efforts and commitment of all who have made it possible for us to be here at this historic Conference.

Costa Rica, following its traditional policy of promoting international peace and security, joins this emblematic Conference to call on the

international community to renew its efforts and to express its commitments to irreversibly achieve nuclear disarmament and nonproliferation.

Ladies and Gentlemen,

Nearly seventy years ago, my country renounced its army and, since then, our defense doctrines have been based on dialogue and negotiation between States and International Law.

Like Kazakhstan, Costa Rica supports all initiatives aimed at restoring trust in international relations and strengthening peace and security in compliance with international law. This achievement is highly treasured by the Costa Rican people.

The decisions that our leaders are faced with have nothing to do with renewing arsenals or partaking in strategic military alliances; rather, Costa Rica dwells on increasing its education budget and determining the best strategies for reducing poverty.

This allows us to have a maximalist and pragmatic approach regarding the steps that must be taken to achieve total and complete nuclear disarmament.

More than 16,000 nuclear warheads remain in the world, which, instead of being dismantled, billions of dollars are spent on their maintenance every year. This vertical and technological proliferation, far from eliminating the risk of a nuclear catastrophe, further multiplies it.

For our country, it is unacceptable that this threat, which has been declared incompatible with international law, particularly international humanitarian law, continue to loom over all of us. Nuclear weapons are not only ethically unacceptable, they are illegal.

The existence of more than 16,000 nuclear warheads is simply an atrocity. It is also an atrocity that there are States that, shielded under their sovereignty, hide data, store fissile material and reject international verification mechanisms. An even greater atrocity is that nuclear tests of any type continue to be carried out, thus threatening and undermining international security and endangering humanity as a whole.

Furthermore, today we celebrate the 25th Anniversary of Kazakhstan closing its nuclear testing site -the first nation to ever do so- and renouncing its nuclear arsenal, which was then the

fourth largest nuclear arsenal in the world. This has contributed to the creation of a nuclear weapon-free zone in Central Asia, and constitutes an example that we must encourage others to follow, as it would contribute to preventing the terrifying prospect of nuclear devices falling into the hands of violent extremists who would not hesitate to use them.

Proposals like 2045 Global Strategic Initiative Plan and the inspirational Manifesto "The World, The 21st Century", broadly known by the international community, certainly contribute to the purposes and aspirations of nuclear disarmament and non proliferation. For this, I once again congratulate Kazakhstan for its principled and avant-garde positions.

Ladies and Gentlemen,

In this scenario I desire not only to highlight the dedication and commitment of Kazakhstan and of Parliamentarians for Nuclear Non-proliferation and Disarmament (PNND) to this cause, but also of a vast majority of States in the international community. We are undertaking great efforts to advance towards a world free from the threat of nuclear annihilation. It is clear to us that these efforts must be collective and they must be continuous.

It is also clear to us that the nations most interested in establishing the prohibition of nuclear weapons are the ones that do not possess them, as these nations are convinced that peace and security cannot be sustained under the doctrine of nuclear deterrence, i.e., mutual assured destruction.

Today, more than ever, security doctrines based on nuclear deterrence are clearly a threat to humanity. We must not continue to leave nuclear disarmament exclusively in the hands of countries that possess nuclear weapons.

It has not been nuclear weapon States the ones who have advocated for their complete abolition; on the contrary, they have failed to comply with their international obligations in this regard. Rather, non-nuclear weapon States, together with civil society organizations, convinced that we must urgently move towards universal nuclear disarmament, have been the ones to advocate for the complete abolition of nuclear weapons, the implementation of article VI of the Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear weapons, and the universalization of the Comprehensive Nuclear-Test-Ban Treaty.

We insist on compliance of Article 26 of the United Nations Charter, which states that the United Nations Security Council will promote

"the establishment and maintenance of international peace and security with the least diversion of human and economic resources for armaments of the world." We are convinced that a world without nuclear weapons is essential to achieve the priority goals for humanity, namely peace, security and development.

In order to meet the requirements of Article 26 of the Charter, it is necessary to go beyond statements or actions and abstract principles that do not actually demand nuclear disarmament. To effectively build a more secure and equitable world, a universal and legally-binding instrument that prohibits nuclear weapons is required.

Last February, within the framework of the Open-ended Working Group of the General Assembly to advance multilateral negotiations on nuclear disarmament in Geneva, we presented a proposal for the prohibition of nuclear weapons. Through a working paper coordinated by Costa Rica and Malaysia, and endorsed by several other countries, a recommendation was made to convene a Conference in 2017, open to all countries, international organizations and civil society, with a mandate to negotiate a legally binding instrument prohibiting nuclear weapons.

Said Open-Ended Working Group concluded its discussions this month. Its final report, supported by an overwhelming majority of nations, recommends that a conference be held in 2017 to negotiate "a legally binding instrument to prohibit nuclear weapons, leading towards their total elimination". We are immensely pleased with this breakthrough in the discussions on nuclear disarmament and look forward to the General Assembly adopting said recommendation this fall. Furthermore, we call on all States to actively participate in these negotiations next year, even if nuclear weapon States and their allies initially refrain from doing so.

Ladies and Gentlemen,

I conclude my remarks by calling on the international community to muster the political will, leadership and sense of urgency that we require to rid the world of the nuclear nightmare.

Costa Rica is convinced that no force can stop the steady march of those who believe in human security and international law. Peace and security are, indeed, global public goods that must not rely on nuclear deterrence, for nuclear weapons are one of the greatest threats to humankind.