“The Current security doctrines must change”

Irma Argüello, Chair of NPSGlobal Foundation, and the former Minister of Defense, Horacio Jaunarena, are members of the group of Latin American personalities which has just launched an ambitious initiative in pursuit of global nuclear disarmament. In an interview with DEF, they referred to the challenges and threats posed by the existence of these weapons disseminated across the globe.

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"Nuclear disarmament, non-proliferation and the reduction of nuclear threats are a joint responsibility of all States, both those with and without nuclear weapons". The latin Leaders Network of Latin America and the Caribbean for Nuclear Disarmament and Non - Proliferation
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(LALN) is founded on that premise. This network is composed of thirteen former ministers, diplomats and international officials from eight countries in the region. DEF had an interview with the promoter of the initiative, Irma Argüello, and the former Defense Minister, Horacio Jaunarena, instrument signer.

What are the objectives of the Network?

IRMA ARGÜELLO: The main objective is to progress in three specific branches. On the disarmament line, by doing our best to influence the governments of the region and the world and -from the Latin American view- by encouraging nuclear-weapon countries to move towards nuclear disarmament. Another line is the one related to non-proliferation in a broad sense in order to prevent regional nuclear proliferation, and to avoid those countries from getting nuclear armed, either by getting them from a third country or by allowing a third country to place weapons in its own territory. And the third point has to do with the regional security issue. So we say: "No security vulnerability in Latin America and the Caribbean should conduct, whether by act or omission, to increase nuclear risks anywhere in the world." That means that if our borders are permeable and our countries are used as triangulation territories so a terrorist could get a nuclear device, it would be a global threat. Thus, we must influence positively to reinforce regional security in all of its angles, and not only in those which we could intuitively understand as nuclear aspects. We must prevent illicit organized crime networks from intervening in the region to help a non-state actor or a State to proliferate or develop an improvised nuclear device.

How is the Network going to interact with multilateral organizations such as the Agency for the Prohibition of Nuclear Weapons in Latin America and the Caribbean (OPANAL), which is the authority of the Tlatelolco Treaty?

I. A.: There is a strong convergence regarding our objectives. We propose as a final goal to reach a treaty banning nuclear weapons worldwide. Of course, nuclear-weapon states oppose to it. However, just as it was achieved a convention to ban chemical and biological weapons, it should also be achievable the prohibition of nuclear weapons. It would be sad if it happen an incident and, only then, these issues were taken into consideration. We shall take into account that when the Cold War ended everyone thought that the world would be safer then. But it was not. It turned from bipolarity to multipolarity, after a short period of unipolarity. Moreover, after September 11, 2001, the world has become more complex and non-state actors have repeatedly shown interest in acquiring nuclear materials. They have not been able to collect the 50 kilos of highly enriched uranium needed to build an improvised nuclear device, but there has been lower amounts traffic. There is even the possibility to set up what it would be called a "dirty
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bomb" with a radioactive source.

- HORACIO JAUNARENA: The more weapons there are, the more likely there will be incidents. There is a phrase that defines what Irma Argüello pointed out regarding the international situation: to the previously existent international order it succeeded the international disorder, which is by definition more unsafe.

TLATELOLCO, “PIONEERING EXPERIENCE”

- In one of the paragraphs of the opening statement of the Network it was made a reference to “the pioneer experience of the Tlatelolco treaty”. How relevant was this instrument for Latin America and for the rest of the planet?

-I. A.: Indeed, the Tlatelolco Treaty is pioneering because it is the first to define a "nuclear weapon free zone" in a populated region on the planet. Previously there was the Antarctic Treaty. It must be reminded that not all the Latin American countries initially acceded to the Tlatelolco Treaty, even Argentina and Brazil did it only after most of other states in the region had already done it. There, it is being raised the idea of commitment to peace in the region and the objective of creating successively different "nuclear free zones" to reach the ultimate goal of complete disarmament. It should be noted that the Treaty of Tlatelolco is not perfect yet. It has two protocols, the first of them includes those countries from outside the region that have territories, and the second has to do with the commitment of the five nuclear armed states that are in the NPT. The situation is that many of these countries have made use of the so-called "interpretative declarations" and have reserved their rights before a situation of high need. The preaching of the Opanal council is that nuclear countries should remove such "interpretative declarations". The other imperfection of Tlatelolco is that it does not include non NPT signatories such as India, Pakistan, Israel and North Korea (which has unilaterally withdrawn), for which the treaty does not legally exist.

- Why the signing of the Non-Proliferation Treaty (NPT) took so long and what are the differences between it and the Treaty of Tlatelolco?

-I. A.: Actually the origin of the NPT is totally different from that of Tlatelolco. As its name suggests, it is about "non-proliferation", not of "disarmament", and it was proposed by the five countries that possessed nuclear weapons at the time and that currently have a seat in the Security Council as permanent members with veto. The idea was that they were allowed to legally keep their weapons through international law, while others could not. In the midst of the
Cold War, they were unwilling to give up their nuclear weapons. It happens that when they submitted the text to international negotiation -through non-nuclear countries that were allies of them-, many states opposed to this imbalance. That is when negotiations started and the situation was balanced through a second item, disarmament. However, this “disarmament” item resulted to be far more diffuse than the “non-proliferation” one. There have always been wishful thoughts, but the goal of disarmament has never been achieved as it is expected by countries that do not have nuclear weapons. The third pillar of the NPT was the one referred to the "peaceful uses of nuclear energy ", regarded as an inalienable right of all nations joining the treaty.

-H. J.: Experience shows that, on one hand, the treaties are signed, but another matter to be considered is what happens since that moment and the political attitudes of each of the signatory countries. In disarmament matters, one thing is what it is announced and another are the specific attitudes of each one of the countries. I think that part of the work of this Latin American Leaders Network will be to try to bring the agreement to the reality of everyday life.
of what would later become the Mercosur, from the initiative of Alfonsín and Sarney; and on the other, by solving the Beagle conflict. Those are two inflection points that ended with a particular way of facing the relationships between the countries of the region. I was the Defense Minister who withdrew the Argentine troops from the border with Brazil, who did the same with its troops stationed on the border with our country. Regarding the nuclear issue, we need to be Tlatelolco workers so that this spirit could continue. In this regard, an important contribution so we could move along the right path is having people in every country of the region that is committed to these goals, have the same speech and point to the same alerts.

- Analyzing the issue in hindsight, with the return of democracy in the 80s, both Argentina and Brazil delayed the signing of the NPT. Why?

-I. A.: Actually, it was the natural consequence of a process that took from the bottom up. The NPT was imposed to the countries by the major power centers. Instead, the process of increasing confidence between Argentina and Brazil was giving from the bottom up. It was the particular historical and political evolution of these two countries which favored this approach. Thus, once both countries began to find their common points and to analyze the convenience of having a good relationship instead of a distrust relationship, advancing first to the ratification of Tlatelolco and then signing the NPT was the natural consequence, besides it was made according to the rhythms of each country. Argentina signed the NPT in 1995 and Brazil did in 1998.

LATIN AMERICA AND THE EXTRAREGIONAL ACTORS

- What happens to extra-regional actors that bring nuclear materials, as reported by the Argentine government in the British case in the South Atlantic?

-IA: There are several points to discuss in the particular case of the South Atlantic. While Argentina made the complaint, OPANAL - institution providing secretariat of the Treaty of Tlatelolco – did not explicitly denounced this possible intrusion of nuclear weapons. It is important to point out that “nuclear propulsion” does not mean “nuclear weapon” and that it is allowed, even in submarines. What is not allowed by the NPT and Tlatelolco are nuclear weapons. It was never really known if the UK introduced this type of submarine and the most probable thing is that they did not have nuclear weapons but were only nuclear propulsion. That technology is the same that is currently seeking Brazil and will also seek Argentina.

-H. J.: Many times, overacting becomes useless and turns against whom overreacts. In the
case of the South Atlantic, it is clear that the British government, when it suits it, uses the Falklands issue. If we get into that fight, we favor the government of the United Kingdom.

- With regard to Iran and its approach to Venezuela, Ecuador or Bolivia and the last negotiation with Argentina, to what extent could they affect the credibility of the region? Are these topics ranging parallel or it should be paid attention to these situations?

-H. J.: What worries me is the lack of effectiveness of the international community to prevent the proliferation and dissemination of nuclear weapons. Iran’s example is typical. Therefore, as a chapter of our efforts, we must strengthen those policies of states that should prevent the keeping of an unpunished development of nuclear weapons. In the case of Argentina, despite I totally disagree with what was done (Ed: memorandum in AMIA case), I neither agree with mixing that subject with the non-proliferation issue.

-I. A.: There is an international situation that concerns us as a network. There is a little progress in international negotiations to achieve positive results, whether they are preventive or punitive, once the situations had already happened. Regarding Iran and North Korea, the Security Council of the UN has issued several sanctions that, nevertheless, have not stopped nuclear programs yet. The world needs to rethink its means. One of the issues that is going to be worked on from Latin American Leaders Network are the new aspects of the international negotiation, so as to solve these huge deficits of international diplomacy. This kind of think tanks—who are not in the heat of governance but have an extensive local and international experience—can bring creative ideas to face these issues.

- Despite we are referring to Latin America and the Caribbean, an actor who could not be avoided is the U.S. Do you think that there is a political will to make progress in reducing the nuclear arsenal from the Obama administration?

-Latinamericans for disarmament

Who are the members of the Network of Leaders?
The opening statement of the Network of Leaders of Latin America and the Caribbean for Nuclear Disarmament

-I. A.: Notwithstanding that Obama has shown, since 2009 Prague speech, an intention to
deepen into that path, the reality is that he has not made a great progress. He did not get the Senate to ratify the Comprehensive Nuclear Test Ban Treaty (CTBT), nor the 2005 amendment to the Convention on the Physical Protection of Nuclear Material (CPPNM), both of them crucial to the global nuclear safety today. There are still old conceptions and practices which are going to be difficult to eradicate. Even now, there are still leaders in the world who think only in terms of states and do not take into account that the non-state actors cannot be deterred. There is an assumed rationality that non-state actors do not have. Non-state actors are capable of immolating themselves and are not afraid of anything. In this scheme, the current state security doctrines must change. Now, changing a security doctrine like the U.S. one, is not the work of a single person; there are many opinions to take into account and there are lots of interests at stake, such as those from the nuclear industry. Actually, there is a movement, the Nuclear Security Project, emerged on the basis of a series of opinion papers published since 2007 by Henry Kissinger, George Schultz, William Perry and Sam Nunn. The first one was called "A world free of nuclear weapons"; those who made these considerations are just former officials who had been with red-handed in earlier decades. Other leaders have joined to them, such as Mikhail Gorbachev, who realized that at the end of the Cold War the world became more unsafe, more unstable and that nuclear weapons became a real and concrete danger.