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**Remarks by the Director of the International Monitoring  
System Division of the  
Preparatory Commission for the  
Comprehensive Nuclear-Test-Ban Treaty Organization**

**Ms. Vorian Maryssael**

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Thank you for giving me the opportunity to talk on this very important day.

I am the Director of the International Monitoring System Division at the Comprehensive Nuclear- Test-Ban Treaty Organization, or CTBTO for short. At the CTBTO we work for peace at a very technical level where we are constructing a monitoring system all over the globe in order to detect if anybody, at anytime and anywhere is testing nuclear weapons. I am extremely privileged to work for peace in this way, with a good salary and educational grants for my children.

At this very moment, there are hundreds of thousands of women all over the world working in extreme conditions to put food on the table to feed their children. I remember when I worked as a volunteer in Kenya helping rural women to build their microenterprises, how surprised I was that it was actually possible to live with so little. Yet what I remember the most is how inspired I was by all these hard working and intelligent women. How they got together making small businesses and merry-go-rounds to help each other out and improve their everyday living. They were also inspired by us, the female volunteers, who shared our

knowledge and helped improve their businesses. A true inspiration of mutual solidarity and the building of a sustainable future for humanity.

We women need to take part in building a sustainable future on all levels. We cannot only participate at the grassroots level, but need to but need to participate in painting the path to our future. We need to participate in the arena where the decisions are made for our present lives and the future of our children, being this in political roles, corporations or international organizations. Regretfully less than 20% of the people that paint the future canvas and take these decisions are women. Democracy and gender equality are interlinked and form the basis for a sustainable future.

So why don't women make it to the top when they start out so well?

I am a mother of twins and I had them very late in life. They are not even two years old. When they were born my life changed completely and I was living in a bubble of a trillion emotions co-existing in my very being. It was so overwhelming that for a brief moment I thought I needed nothing else in life. But after a few months, when things started to calm down and life went back to routine, I started to remember there was a life outside the bubble. A life where I had been very active, and where I intended to continue being active. I am saying this because I think a lot of women come out of that bubble, just like I did, but to return to the same activity levels as before might not be so easy.

Therefore in modern society there is no longer a place for the polarized roles of mothers and fathers. We should re-think what mother actually means -- that sacrosanct view -- that places an enormous burden and responsibility on women for the upbringing of children.

We should review the role of the father and see that he can do an equally good job as the mother and mean as much as she does to the children. We should give both parents the right to their children, which in turn will give both parents the equal right to actively contribute to building a sustainable future for their children.

For you women who want to contribute on the world arena, make sure your partner is truly a partner and if you choose to have children, a partner who is equally interested in being a father as you are in being a mother.

Make sure your job inspires you, challenges you and that it fulfills you. If you are not passionate about what you do, the desire for the job will not pull you out of that bubble. Your job needs to matter to you, or you will drop out once you have children.

Finally, I would like to say to all women, at all levels, Participate! Be part of the discussions at work and don't give up your seat or voice for anybody else. Make yourself heard. You are important and you make a difference. The best way to honor the rural women I met in Kenya is to use the education and privileges I have received to make a difference, for them, for us, for a sustainable future for all.