



In the spotlight

Why ratify?

United Nations Secretary-General Ban Ki-moon's views on the CTBT

Q: *One of the key objectives of the United Nations is to establish and maintain international peace and security. In the first resolution adopted by the General Assembly in January 1946, Member States agreed unanimously that specific proposals should be made "for the elimination from national armaments of atomic weapons and of all other major weapons adaptable to mass destruction."*

How do you as the United Nations Secretary-General intend to further this goal and to counter the serious threat that nuclear weapons pose to mankind and to international peace and security?

A: I am personally concerned about this issue because nuclear weapons pose a number of threats to international peace and security. Some threats arise from existing arsenals, while others stem from the proliferation or terrorist acquisition of such weapons. I am convinced that these threats are best addressed by multilateral action, emphasizing in particular the goals of disarmament, non-proliferation and collective action against nuclear terrorism.

What is needed most is the entry into force of the Comprehensive Nuclear-Test-Ban Treaty and agreement on a fissile materials treaty. Venerable components of the multilateral disarmament machinery – notably the Conference on Disarmament, the Disarmament Commission and the General Assembly's First Committee – need

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to fulfill their role as crucibles for uniting all nations in this common cause.

While I cannot alone solve all these problems, I can and will use my voice as Secretary-General to underscore the concerns and expectations of the peoples of the United Nations. I specifically intend to strengthen the contributions of the United Nations Secretariat in meeting this challenge. I have established an independent Office for Disarmament Affairs, building on the work of the former Department, which will be headed by a High Representative who will report directly to me.

Q: *With the conclusion of the Comprehensive Nuclear-Test-Ban Treaty (CTBT) more than ten years ago, the political objective to end all nuclear tests had been achieved and the legal framework established. But today, despite nearly universal adherence, the Treaty has yet to enter into force.*

What will you do, as Secretary-General of the United Nations and Depository of the Treaty, to forward the entry into force of the CTBT? What steps do you envisage that the international community, and in particular those States whose ratification is necessary for entry into force, must take?

A: On 17 and 18 September 2007, in my capacity as Depository of the Treaty, I am convening the fifth Conference on Facilitating the Entry into Force of the CTBT in Vienna, at the request of a majority of States that have ratified the CTBT. I support plans for this Conference that would create maximum visibility and encourage high-level representation by all States that have ratified it. Those seeking entry into force of the CTBT should encourage all signatories to ratify as soon as possible.

While the Conference will review a range of important technical issues, the most urgent task would be to reaffirm the States' commitment to the Treaty and to resolve to work for its prompt entry into force. I urge those States that have not yet signed to sign and ratify the Treaty as soon as possible, in particular those States whose ratification is essential for the Treaty to enter into force. I urge participants in the forthcoming Conference to reaffirm the importance of a universal, internationally and effectively verifiable Comprehensive Nuclear-Test-Ban Treaty and to refrain from acts that would defeat the object and purpose of the CTBT pending its entry

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Q: *The global verification regime that the CTBTO Preparatory Commission establishes to monitor compliance with the CTBT must be operational once the Treaty enters into force. On 9 October 2006, the Democratic People's Republic of Korea (DPRK) announced its test of a nuclear explosive device. With less than 60% of the monitoring stations in operation and working in test-mode only, the verification*

system provided States Signatories with reliable and high quality data, assisting them to make their own judgments.

As a former Chairperson of the CTBTO Preparatory Commission, how do you view the work of the PrepCom and its Technical Secretariat, in particular the build up of the verification regime in the wake of the DPRK event?

A: I have a very high regard indeed for the work of the CTBTO Preparatory Commission, based not only on its formal goals, but also on my own personal experience in promoting them. I will continue to do all I can to bring this historic Treaty into force.

The global verification regime is the key for the successful implementation of the Treaty and should be strong enough to detect any nuclear test explosion in a way that would leave no chance that such a test could occur undetected. The verification regime is indispensable in constraining the proliferation of nuclear weapons and the development of new weapons. ■

Biographical note



Mr Ban Ki-moon, a South Korean national, began his five-year term as the eighth United Nations Secretary-General in January 2007. He is a career diplomat with 37 years of service in his Government and on

the global stage, including as Ambassador to Austria and the International Organizations in Vienna (1998-2000), Chef-de-Cabinet to the President of the UN General Assembly (2001-2002) and Minister of Foreign Affairs and Trade (2004-2006). As Foreign Minister he played a leading role in bringing about a landmark agreement aimed at promoting peace and stability on the Korean peninsula.

In 1999, during his assignment to Vienna, he served as Chairman of the CTBTO Preparatory Commission. ■

Notes & quotes

"We need to press on with both the Comprehensive Test Ban Treaty and with the Fissile Material Cut-Off Treaty. Both limit - in real and practical ways - the ability of states party to develop new weapons and to expand their nuclear capabilities. And as such they therefore both play a very powerful symbolic role too - they signal to the rest of the world that the race for more and bigger weapons is over, and that the direction from now on will be down not up. That's why we are so keen for those countries that have not yet done so to ratify the CTBT. The moratorium observed by all the nuclear weapon states is a great step forward; but by allowing the CTBT to enter into force - and, of course, US ratification would provide a great deal of impetus - we would be showing that this is a permanent decision, a permanent change in the right direction."

Margaret Beckett, Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs of the United Kingdom (2006 – 2007) at the Carnegie International Nonproliferation Conference, Washington D.C., 25 June 2007