

## CTBT: going the last mile to banish nuclear weapons testing

by Dr Hans Blix

Over a decade has passed since our leaders came together and promised us, and generations to come, that the testing of nuclear weapons would finally be banished to the realms of history. US President Clinton at the time called the Comprehensive Nuclear-Test-Ban-Treaty (CTBT) the “longest-sought, hardest-fought prize in the history of arms control”.

As it turned out, after the rejection of the Treaty by the United States Senate, and the refusal by other key States to ratify it, the prize was not yet won. The process, already initiated by American Presidents Eisenhower and Kennedy in the 1950s and 1960s, has yet to be pushed that last mile to completion.

It is truly worrying that, while new threats to global and human security are rapidly emerging, the old threats and challenges still linger. One of the main challenges of our time is how to deal with the astounding capacity that mankind has gained for war and destruction – manifested in its worst form by nuclear weapons. It is therefore absolutely necessary to revive disarmament and redouble our efforts to prevent further proliferation of such weapons. No single issue is more urgent, important in substance and in order to provide a new impetus to the general disarmament and non-proliferation agenda, than the entry into force of the CTBT. I believe that the time has come for a renewed serious debate on CTBT, and I do believe that the outlook for success is brighter now than it has been in a long time.

The importance of the CTBT needs no lengthy explanation. The Treaty is vital for efforts to prevent the development of a new generation of nuclear weapons, and to help reduce the reliance on nuclear deterrence in security policies. However, the CTBT also holds great potential as a signal to the world that our leaders, once again, stand firm behind their commitment to disarmament. The entry into force of the CTBT would reset the stage for global nuclear disarmament.

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Despite the reluctance of some key States to ratify the Comprehensive Test Ban, there seems to be an almost global consensus on the duty to abstain from testing. Since the conclusion of the CTBT in 1996, only India, Pakistan and, recently, the Democratic People’s Republic of Korea (DPRK) have conducted tests. The reaction from the international community has been concerted condemnation. Last year, the testing of a plutonium bomb by the DPRK was unanimously condemned by the Security Council – as were the nuclear tests by India and Pakistan in 1998. The North Korean test was explicitly deemed to constitute a threat to international peace and security, and sanctions were imposed.

In view of the Chinese and US support for these condemnations in the Security Council, it seems peculiar that

neither the US nor China have ratified the CTBT. Dare we conclude that it is now the unanimous view of the Security Council that even in the absence of an operative Comprehensive Test Ban Treaty no State may undertake nuclear weapons tests? How could the Council otherwise condemn the DPRK? Whatever the answer, the time seems ripe for renewed efforts to get the Treaty ratified.

On 1 June 2006, the Weapons of Mass Destruction Commission, which I had the honour to chair, presented its Final Report: “Weapons of Terror: Freeing the World of Nuclear, Biological and Chemical Arms.” We highlighted the ratification by the United States as a key

factor to facilitate the entry into force of the Treaty. A ratification by the United States would send a powerful positive signal and give several other States an incentive to join. After a US ratification, pressure would build up for other ratifications required. For example, signatures and ratifications by India and Pakistan might well follow ratification by China. A Chinese ratification would also be important in efforts to influence the DPRK. In the Middle East, ratifications might follow by Israel, Egypt and Iran. The remaining two, Colombia and Indonesia, would also be likely to join – they would surely not want to run the risk of appearing to block the Treaty’s entry into force. The active engagement of the United States would undoubtedly be central in this process.

The major transformation of the international scene during the last decades,



## Biographical note

not least the development towards increasing global interdependence and the revolutionary technological progress in the fields of information and transportation, has fundamentally changed the threats to our security and the means needed for defence against these threats. Nuclear weapons have no meaningful role in the fight against international terrorism or in efforts to stop atrocities in ethnic conflicts. There is no conceivable use for nuclear weapons and their deterrent effect is becoming increasingly ineffective. In regions where deterrence might be a real basis for security, other measures, such as integration into the fabric of the international community, is likely to be more effective.

Recently, former US Secretaries of State Henry Kissinger and George Schultz, together with former US Secretary of Defense William Perry and former US

Senator Sam Nunn, published an article in the *Wall Street Journal*, in which they proposed the initiation of a bipartisan process with the Senate in order to achieve US ratification of the CTBT and to work towards securing ratification by other key States. The article also deemed the reliance on nuclear deterrence to be obsolete. It would be interesting to hear this issue debated in the upcoming presidential elections. The next president of the United States will have an unprecedented opportunity to gain congressional support for an American ratification of the CTBT – and for a return to the driver’s seat of international efforts in arms control and disarmament. Is this something that Democrats Hillary Clinton, Barack Obama or John Edwards, or Republicans John McCain or Rudy Giuliani would be ready to endorse? The world is looking to the United States for leadership – ready to follow. ■



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Agency from 1981 to 1997 and as Executive Chairman of the United Nations Monitoring, Verification and Inspection Commission from 2000 to 2003. Between 2004 and 2006, Dr Blix chaired the independent international Weapons of Mass Destruction Commission. He is the President of the World Federation of United Nations Associations. ■

**“THE CTBT IS AS ESSENTIAL TO NUCLEAR DISARMAMENT AS IT IS TO NON-PROLIFERATION. THE EU BELIEVES THAT A LEGALLY BINDING PROHIBITION OF NUCLEAR WEAPONS TEST EXPLOSIONS AND ALL OTHER NUCLEAR EXPLOSIONS AS WELL AS A CREDIBLE VERIFICATION REGIME ARE VITAL. THE OCCURRENCE OF NUCLEAR TESTS AFTER THE OPENING OF THE CTBT FOR SIGNATURE UNDERLINES THE NEED FOR AS EARLY ENTRY INTO FORCE OF THE TREATY AS POSSIBLE.**

**THE EU REITERATES ITS CALL ON STATES, PARTICULARLY THOSE LISTED IN ANNEX 2, TO SIGN AND RATIFY THE SAID TREATY WITHOUT DELAY AND WITHOUT CONDITIONS AND, PENDING ITS ENTRY INTO FORCE, TO ABIDE BY A MORATORIUM ON NUCLEAR TESTING AND TO REFRAIN FROM ANY ACTION CONTRARY TO THE OBLIGATIONS AND PROVISIONS OF THE CTBT.”**

Statement by the European Union at the first session of the Preparatory Committee for the 2010 NPT Review Conference, 30 April-11 May 2007, Vienna, Austria