



Notes & quotes

2007 Article XIV Conference: sending powerful signals for CTBT's entry into force by Ambassador Jaap Ramaker

In this year's report "Global Risks 2007: A Global Risk Network Report", the World Economic Forum identified 23 core global risks to the international community over the next ten years. The risk posed by the proliferation of weapons of mass destruction ranked second after international terrorism, while nuclear weapons dominated the report's general proliferation concerns. In its analysis, the Forum left no doubt that nuclear weapons are unique amongst weapons of mass destruction in their undescrivable potential for devastation and destruction.

The 1968 Nuclear Non-Proliferation Treaty (NPT) remains the cornerstone of the nuclear non-proliferation and disarmament regime and the main tool by which the international community keeps the dangers posed by nuclear weapons in check. As we approach the fifth Conference on Facilitating the Entry into Force of the Comprehensive Nuclear-Test-Ban Treaty (CTBT), widely known as the Article XIV Conference, it seems important to remember that these two treaties are closely connected, both conceptually and politically.

The preamble of the NPT recalled the determination of all parties "to seek to achieve the discontinuance of all test explosions of nuclear weapons for all time..." The conclusion of the negotiations on the CTBT in 1996 was a significant step forward. A 40 year old vision had come closer to realization. By the same token, the conclusion of the CTBT made good on the commitment that the States Parties to the NPT had made the year before, as part of a package of measures allowing for the indefinite extension of the treaty.

A decade later, not a day goes by without issues relating to nuclear weapons

proliferation appearing in the headlines of the world press. In fact, the nuclear non-proliferation regime – under painstaking construction for many decades but still not completed – seems momentarily to move from crisis to crisis. In the view of many, the NPT has become a treaty under siege.

“The necessary boost to the nuclear non-proliferation regime would, in my view, consist of bringing the CTBT into force. This would restore confidence in the regime and provide it with the ‘blood transfusion’ it so badly needs.”

One of the most recent and perhaps clearest illustrations of this unfortunate state of affairs is the underground nuclear detonation conducted by the Democratic People's Republic of Korea in early October 2006. It was met with world-wide condemnation, which showed that the international community no longer accepts a world in which nuclear weapon tests can take place with impunity. On the positive side, if you wish, it should serve as a wake-up call that the issue of nuclear weapons tests needs far more attention than it has received in the last few years.

The necessary boost to the nuclear non-proliferation regime would, in my view, consist of bringing the CTBT into force. This would restore confidence in the regime and provide it with the 'blood transfusion' it so badly needs.

I believe we are on the right track. With a total of 177 signatures the Treaty could be considered universal already. The number of Ratifying States is steadily growing, standing at the moment at a respectable 138. Of those 44 States whose ratification is required for the Treaty to enter into force, 41 have signed

and 34 have ratified it. Since the Treaty opened for signature in 1996, none of the five nuclear weapons States have conducted a nuclear test explosion. In addition, a robust system that will have to monitor the absence of nuclear test explosions once the CTBT has entered into force is in an advanced stage of development.

I understand the feelings of frustration many have when looking at the slow pace of our efforts to bring the CTBT into effect. But let us not forget: we all knew at the time of the negotiations that bringing a test ban into force, with the

ambitious objective to bind all those in a position to test nuclear weapons, would by no means be an easy job. We all knew that this would take time.

It is precisely for this reason that, after some years, the negotiators of the Treaty decided to convene periodic conferences to take stock of the progress made in bringing the Treaty into effect. These conferences would also give Ratifying States the possibility to discuss ways and means to promote the ratification process of the CTBT.

The 2007 Article XIV Conference will provide an opportunity to send a powerful signal to the world to bring the Treaty into effect. We trust that the Conference's call to end at long last the era of nuclear test explosions and strengthen the nuclear non-proliferation regime will be echoed worldwide.

Obviously, the countries participating in this year's Conference in Vienna cannot help bringing the Treaty into force alone. Each and every member of the international community, with or without a nuclear



History and mechanism of the Article XIV Conferences

by Dr Andrea Wurm

weapons programme, big or small, has to be aware of the consequences if the door to nuclear testing remains open. In particular, each and every country that has yet to sign or ratify the Comprehensive Nuclear-Test-Ban Treaty should realize that each additional signature or ratification adds to the Treaty becoming an international norm, strengthens the nuclear non-proliferation regime and contributes to a safer and more secure world. The 2007 Conference should call upon these States to shoulder their responsibility and take the next step.

Let me conclude with a quote from the report “Weapons of Terror, Freeing the World of Nuclear, Biological and Chemical Arms” from the Weapons of Mass Destruction Commission chaired by Hans Blix:

“The single most hopeful step to revitalize non-proliferation and disarmament today would be ratification of the CTBT by all states that have nuclear weapons.”

I could not agree more. ■

Biographical note



Following the 2003 Article XIV Conference, Ambassador Jaap Ramaker was appointed Special Representative of the Ratifying States to promote the entry into force of the CTBT.

Between 1994 and 1997, he was Permanent Representative of the Netherlands to the Conference on Disarmament in Geneva. In this capacity, he chaired the CTBT negotiations and led them to a successful conclusion. ■

The fifth Conference on Facilitating the Entry into Force of the Comprehensive Nuclear-Test-Ban Treaty (CTBT) will be held 17-18 September 2007 at the Hofburg in Vienna. High level representatives of States that have already ratified the Treaty will examine how the ratification process can be accelerated and decide which measures may be undertaken to facilitate the early entry into force of the CTBT.

The Conference, widely known as the Article XIV Conference, is named after Article XIV of the CTBT that specifies the conditions for the Treaty’s entry into force. Entry into force of the Treaty will take place 180 days after the 44 States that possessed nuclear reactors or research reactors at the time of the negotiations have ratified it. The negotiators of the CTBT also included a mechanism under Article XIV whereby regular conferences were to be convened if entry into force had not taken place three years after the anniversary of the Treaty’s opening for signature.

So far, this mechanism has resulted in four Article XIV Conferences. The United Nations Secretary-General, in his capacity as Depository of the Treaty, convened them at the request of a majority of Ratifying States. Signatory States, non-signatory States, international organizations and non-governmental organizations were invited to attend as observers.

The first Article XIV Conference was held 6-8 October 1999 in Vienna. Ninety-two Ratifying States and States Signatories adopted a Final Declaration calling upon all States which had not yet done so to sign and ratify the Treaty. Japan was selected “to promote cooperation to facilitate the early entry into force of the Treaty, through informal consultations with all interested countries.”

A second such Conference took place 25-27 September 2001 in New York, with 109 States participating. The Final Declaration was formulated in the same fashion as in 1999 and Mexico was selected as the coordinating State.

The third conference took place 3-5 September 2003 in Vienna, with 102 States attending. The Final Declaration stressed the importance of a universal and effectively verifiable comprehensive Treaty as a major instrument in all aspects of nuclear disarmament and non-proliferation. For the first time, the Conference adopted twelve specific measures, appended to its Final Declaration. One of them was the decision to appoint Ambassador Jaap Ramaker as a Special Representative to assist the coordinating State Finland in promoting the early entry into force of the Treaty.

One hundred and seventeen States participated in the 2005 Conference, held 21-23 September at the United Nations Headquarters in New York. Nearly 40 States were represented by their Ministers or Deputy Ministers of Foreign Affairs. The States Parties agreed that they would spare no efforts and use all avenues open to them to encourage further signature and ratification of the Treaty. The Conference reconfirmed the measures adopted at the 2003 Conference and decided that the Special Representative would continue to assist the coordinating State – Australia – in promoting the Treaty’s entry into force.

The upcoming Article XIV Conference will be co-chaired by Austria and Costa Rica. It will provide another opportunity to move the issue of early entry into force of the CTBT to the forefront of Governments’ agendas. The rising number of signatures and ratifications in the period before and after each Conference has previously shown how effective the Article XIV mechanism is. It is to be hoped that the momentum generated by the fifth Conference on Facilitating the Entry into Force of the CTBT once again translates into further signatures and ratifications, thus strengthening the norm against nuclear test explosions. ■

Dr Andrea Wurm is a political scientist working as a Public Information consultant. She has conceptualized, coordinated and edited CTBTO Spectrum since its inception.