

Editorial



When the Comprehensive Nuclear-Test-Ban Treaty (CTBT) opened for signature in 1996, the international community took a significant step forward in making our world safer and more secure. The international focus on peace and security is just as strong today.

Although the Treaty is not yet in force, it plays an important role in global stability, as it has become a vital component in the nuclear non-proliferation regime and a substantial impediment to the qualitative development of new types of nuclear weapons. For the international community, it is of primary importance that the CTBT not only enters into force, but that it is as universal a Treaty as possible. With over 85% of the nations of the world having signed the Treaty, and more than 50% having ratified it, the goal of universality comes nearer every day.

This year Member States will meet to discuss ways and means to accelerate entry into force. This important Conference is convened under Article XIV of the Treaty, and in previous years it has resulted in a substantial increase in signatures and ratifications in the months immediately prior to the Conference.

This issue of CTBTO Spectrum looks at the 'mechanisms' of Conferences on Facilitating the Entry into Force of the CTBT, focusing in particular on the upcoming Conference, which will take place in Vienna from 3 to 5 September this year. An interview with Ambassador Tom Grönberg, who is chairing the preparatory process of the 2003 Conference, and a special feature article by the former United Nations Under-Secretary General Jayantha Dhanapala, concentrate on this theme. This issue also provides an overview of the Commission's work over the past six months, including an update on the latest session of the Preparatory Commission. In addition, the cover story by David McCormack, a Canadian seismologist, gives an example of the potential benefits of civil and scientific applications of the CTBT verification technologies.

I hope that readers will find this issue a useful source of information on the activities of the Commission.

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The legal basis of the Article XIV Conference

The legal basis of the Conference on Facilitating the Entry into Force of the Comprehensive Nuclear-Test-Ban Treaty (CTBT) is laid out in Article XIV of the Treaty. Article XIV, paragraph 1, provides that the Treaty must be ratified by 44 named nuclear-capable States before it can enter into force.

Recognizing that it might not be easy to meet this strict requirement, the negotiators of the CTBT conceived of a mechanism to promote early entry into force. If the Treaty had not entered into force three years after the date of its opening for signature, a conference of States which have ratified the Treaty could be convened to examine the extent to which the requirement for entry into force has been met, and "what measures consistent with international law may be undertaken to accelerate the ratification process in order to facilitate the early entry into force of this Treaty" (Article XIV, paragraph 2). The first such conference took place in Vienna from 6 to 8 October 1999.

Article XIV, paragraph 3, states that unless otherwise decided by the conference or other such conferences, further conferences should be held at subsequent anniversaries of the Treaty's opening for signature until the CTBT enters into force. A second Conference on Facilitating the Entry into Force of the CTBT was held in New York from 11 to 13 November 2001 and the third will be held in Vienna from 3 to 5 September this year.

Article XIV also provides that the conferences are convened by the United Nations Secretary-General in his capacity as Depositary of the Treaty, at the request of a majority of ratifying States. All States Signatories must be invited to attend and decisions of the conferences must be taken by consensus. ■