

Commission update

Report on the November 2003 Session

The Preparatory Commission for the Comprehensive Nuclear-Test-Ban Treaty Organization held its Twenty-First Session from 10 to 13 November 2003 in Vienna under the chairmanship of Ambassador Thomas Stelzer of Austria. 84 Member States attended the session.

The report of the Executive Secretary

Mr. Wolfgang Hoffmann, Executive Secretary of the CTBTO Preparatory Commission, reported in detail on the progress achieved in the implementation of all Major Programmes of the Preparatory Commission. He informed on such events as the International Monitoring System (IMS) Technical Training Programme, the training course for National Data Centre managers, the On-Site Inspection (OSI) table top exercise, the OSI experimental advanced course, the Global Communications Infrastructure/Evaluation joint workshop and the Information Visit Programme. Mr. Hoffmann reported that 68 out of the 337 IMS facilities have now been certified as fully meeting the stringent technical requirements of the system.

The Executive Secretary pointed out that the overall planning and implementation of work programmes became difficult due to currency fluctuations and the uncertainties about payments of 2003 contributions by Member States. He informed Member States that the Provisional Technical Secretariat (PTS) would initiate an internal review of the PTS with a view to further increase its efficiency.

The plenary debate

The main focus of the plenary debate was on budgetary issues and on the introduction of a split currency system to protect the Commission from the adverse effects of currency fluctuations between US dollars and euros. When expressing their views on the 2004 Programme and Budget proposals, several delegations stated that the nominal growth of 6,4% is high compared with the 2003 budget. Other delegations supported the PTS draft budget proposal as a good basis for further discussions.

Member States welcomed the signing of the Comprehensive Nuclear-Test-Ban Treaty by Afghanistan, Eritrea and Palau and the ratifications by Afghanistan, Algeria, Cyprus, Eritrea, Honduras and Kyrgyzstan since the last session of the Commission. Many delegations mentioned the successful outcome of the 2003 Conference on Facilitating the Entry into Force of the CTBT and encouraged the PTS to continue its outreach activities and to carry on holding training courses, seminars and workshops.

Conclusions

The Commission approved the budget for 2004 amounting to US\$94 548 700. It was decided to implement a split currency appropriation and assessment system starting with the 2005 Programme and Budget. Ambassador Yukio Takasu of Japan was elected as the next chairperson of the Commission for 2004. The contract of the Executive Secretary was extended until 31 July 2005. ■

Chairperson of the Preparatory Commission



Ambassador Thomas Stelzer, Permanent Representative of Austria to the CTBTO Preparatory Commission, has served as Chairman of the Commission for the second half of 2003.

Ambassador Stelzer studied at the Faculty of Law of the University of Vienna, Austria, where he attained a doctoral degree. He also holds a diploma from the School for Advanced International Studies of the Johns Hopkins University and an M.A. in Latin American Studies from Stanford University.

Ambassador Stelzer joined the diplomatic service in 1988. From 1990 to 1995 he served as Minister Counsellor in the Austrian Mission to the United Nations in New York. In this position he served, *inter alia*, as Vice-Chairman of the First Committee. From 1995 to 1997 he worked as Deputy Director of the Austrian Cultural Institute in New York. Before he took up his current post in 2001, he held a post in the Provisional Technical Secretariat as Special Assistant to the Executive Secretary. ■