

Report on the November 2005 session

The Preparatory Commission for the Comprehensive Nuclear-Test-Ban Treaty Organization (CTBTO) held its Twenty-Fifth Session from 14 to 18 November 2005 in Vienna under the chairmanship of Ambassador Taous Feroukhi of Algeria. Ninety-one Member States participated in the session.

The report of the Executive Secretary

Mr Tibor Tóth, Executive Secretary of the CTBTO Preparatory Commission, referred to the unique importance of the Comprehensive Nuclear-Test-Ban Treaty (CTBT), its verification regime and the unique mandate of the Preparatory Commission. He reported that currently two thirds of the 321 stations and 16 laboratories of the International Monitoring System (IMS) are built.

The Executive Secretary identified three priority areas in the work of the Provisional Technical Secretariat (PTS): First, to continue the build up of the verification regime. Second, testing, evaluating and provisionally operating the system. Third, the consolidation of the verification regime through organization-wide cooperation such as the system-wide performance test and the on-site inspection integrated field exercise.

The universalization of the CTBT entails signature and ratification by all States, the Executive Secretary said, particularly those, whose ratification is needed for entry into force. In addition, he referred to the 'rich fabric of interactions' that needs to be woven between the PTS and the various constituencies of the CTBT in order to realize fully the potential of the unique verification regime. He informed about his intention to strengthen the cooperation and the assistance that the PTS can extend to the Member States

and also to increase the capacity of States to benefit from the Treaty and the Commission.

In this context, the Executive Secretary announced a project on e-training to be started this year. This project would give access to training modules and expert advice through the Experts Communication System (ECS), thus providing States with the knowledge and the tools to benefit from participating in the work of the Commission. In order to improve further the service function of the PTS, he announced that all future meetings of the Commission and its subsidiary bodies will be made available through live video streaming on the ECS.

The Executive Secretary presented a plan for the incremental restructuring of the IMS and International Data Centre Divisions based on the recommendations of the report of the external review team on how best to adapt to the changing tasks of the PTS which are resulting from the transition of the build-up of the verification regime to the phase of testing, evaluation and provisional operation. The restructuring of the PTS would be undertaken in two phases and be completed at the end of 2007.

Plenary debate and conclusions

Member States welcomed the successful outcome of the Conference on Facilitating the Entry into Force of the CTBT, held in New York from 21 to 23 September 2005, and underlined the importance of promoting signature and ratification, especially by the Annex 2 States. In this regard, Member States welcomed the signing of the Treaty by Lebanon, and its ratification by the Cook Islands, Djibouti, Madagascar and Vanuatu.

The debate focused mainly on budgetary issues related to whether the costs for the security enhancement measures at the Vienna International Centre should be absorbed within a zero real growth budget or not. The Commission approved the budget for 2006 amounting to US\$ 51 804 400 and € 44 421 300.

Views were expressed that a wider participation of experts from developing countries in Working Group B meetings would be beneficial for the work of the Commission. The Commission referred the issue for further examination to Working Group A with a view of developing a pilot project.

States Signatories expressed appreciation for PTS training courses and international cooperation activities. Some Member States expressed support for civil and scientific applications of the verification system in full conformity with the Treaty.

The Commission adopted the final report of the external review team as a basis for proceeding with the restructuring of the PTS with the understanding that all implementation steps proposed by the PTS in a "road-map" would be carried out on the basis of further consultations as well as regular reporting to and feedback from the Commission.

Ambassador Volodymyr Yelchenko of Ukraine was elected as the next chairperson of the Commission for 2006. ■