



Notes & quotes

South-East Asia, the Pacific and the Far East and the CTBT

Since its inception, the Comprehensive Nuclear-Test-Ban Treaty (CTBT) has enjoyed strong support from States of the South-East Asia, the Pacific and the Far East region (SEAPFE)¹. A State of this region, Fiji, was the first to deposit its instrument of ratification of the Treaty on 10 October 1996, a little over two weeks after it was opened for signature. Since then, 27 States out of the 32 in the region have signed the Treaty and become members of the CTBTO Preparatory Commission. Seventeen SEAPFE States have ratified it. The recent ratification by Viet Nam, which is one of the 44 States whose ratification is required for the Treaty's entry into force, highlights the continuing support the Treaty enjoys in the region.

SEAPFE States have a distinguished record in the field of nuclear disarmament and non-proliferation. The Treaty of Rarotonga (1985) established a nuclear weapon free zone in the Southern Pacific. In addition, Mongolia adopted legislation on its nuclear weapon free status in 2000. As a result, 14 States of the region adhere to regimes that complement the global test ban of the CTBT by prohibiting the testing of any nuclear explosive device. The large membership in these regimes is an encouraging indication of further support the CTBT can expect from the SEAPFE States.

The importance of the SEAPFE region for achieving universality of the Treaty is underlined by a number of factors. Seven out of the 44 States mentioned in Annex 2 to the Treaty, whose ratification is a condition for its entry into force, are located there.

Of these, all except one have signed the Treaty, but only four have ratified it. The sole nuclear weapon State in the region, China, has given positive signs regarding future ratification.

States from the SEAPFE region have frequently been elected to representative functions in the CTBTO Preparatory Commission. Japan (in 2001) and Australia (in 2005) presided over the Conference on Facilitating the Entry into Force of the CTBT (Article XIV Conference) which is convened regularly to decide on measures to accelerate the ratification process. The CTBTO Preparatory Commission was chaired by representatives from the region on three occasions: By the Republic of Korea in 1999, Indonesia in 2001 and Japan in 2004.

Since 2000, SEAPFE States have hosted several regional and sub-regional workshops and a seminar, sponsored by the Preparatory Commission to raise awareness of the Treaty and promote its signature and ratification, namely in Beijing (2000), Wellington (2001), Nadi (2003), Kuala Lumpur (2003 and 2006) and Seoul (2005). In order to further international cooperation between States in the region and the Preparatory Commission, the Commission seeks to strengthen its relations with the Association of South-East Asian Nations (ASEAN) and the Pacific Islands Forum.

The benefit of the Treaty for the region goes beyond fostering international cooperation and peace. The Commission promotes technical capacity building and exchange of information among its Member States and provides relevant training. Moreover, the tsunami of December 2004 has demonstrated the potential benefits of civil and scientific applications which the region may obtain from participating in the Treaty regime. ■

Facility Agreements with States in the SEAPFE regions

Under the CTBT, States hosting or otherwise taking responsibility for facilities of the International Monitoring System (IMS) shall conclude international agreements and arrangements known as facility agreements which regulate matters such as the establishment, upgrading, testing, certification and operation and maintenance of monitoring facilities as well as the privileges and immunities of the Organization and its staff.

The SEAPFE region comprises 32 States, six of which have concluded facility agreements with the Commission. All six agreements have entered into force and include those with Australia (2000), the Cook Islands (2000), Mongolia (2001), New Zealand (2000), Palau (2000) and the Philippines (2004). Of the six geographical regions stipulated in the CTBT, the SEAPFE region hosts the second highest number of IMS facilities. Under the monitoring regime provided for by the CTBT, a total of 78 facilities will be established in Australia, China, the Cook Islands, Fiji, Indonesia, Japan, Kiribati, Malaysia, Mongolia, New Zealand, Palau, Papua New Guinea, the Philippines, the Republic of Korea, Samoa, Solomon Islands and Thailand. Thirty-nine of these facilities have already been certified.

The SEAPFE region sets a good example in ensuring that monitoring stations are governed by the necessary legal framework. All countries in the SEAPFE region hosting monitoring stations have, with one exception, either concluded a facility agreement or an interim exchange of letters governing the conduct of activities at their respective stations. The latest entry into force of the agreement with the Philippines in 2004 marked a further important step in establishing the framework regulating the Commission's activities in the region. Negotiations for the conclusion of further facility agreements in the SEAPFE region are in progress. ■

¹SEAPFE is one of the six geographical regions foreseen by Article II, paragraph 28 of the CTBT for the purpose of electing members of the Executive Council of the CTBTO once the Treaty enters into force.