# Ratifying the CTBT – a view from Viet Nam

## By Ambassador Nguyen Truong Giang

The Comprehensive Nuclear Test-Ban-Treaty (CTBT) is one of the pillars of the international regime on the non-proliferation of nuclear weapons. Once entered into force, it will constitute a solid legal basis to prevent nuclear explosions, thus contributing to the prevention of developing more advanced and more lethal types of nuclear weapons. In such ways, the Treaty reinforces efforts towards nuclear disarmament and non-proliferation which in turn helps enhance international peace and security.

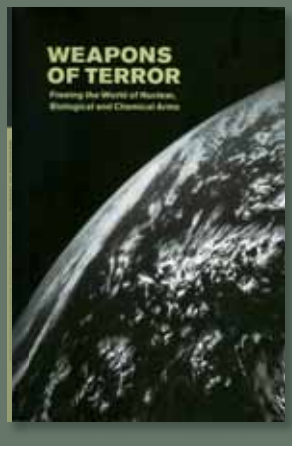
Viet Nam considers nuclear disarmament and non-proliferation as the key approach to free the world of nuclear weapons and provide for a comprehensive and complete ban of all nuclear test explosions and other types of tests designed to develop and upgrade nuclear weapons. Proceeding from this consistent position, Viet Nam fully supports the objectives and purposes of the CTBT.

Viet Nam was one of the first countries to sign the Treaty when it opened for signature on 26 September 1996 in New York. It ratified the Treaty on 23 February 2006 and deposited its instrument of ratification with the United Nations Secretary-General on 10 March 2006. With this decision, Viet Nam has become the thirty-fourth Annex 2 State to ratify the Treaty.

Convinced of the importance of achieving universal adherence to the CTBT, Viet Nam joins all others to call on those States, which have not yet ratified the Treaty, to do so soon. Viet Nam confirms its support for the commitments and concerted efforts of the international community towards achieving universal adherence to the Treaty at an early date. It commends the efforts of the Preparatory Commission for the Nuclear Test-Ban-Treaty Organization (CTBTO) in promoting the universality of the Treaty and the establishment of an effective verification regime designed to monitor compliance with the Treaty when it enters into force. In this regard, Viet Nam supports and encourages bilateral, regional and multilateral initiatives, including the organization of workshops and seminars to promote the entry into force of the Treaty.

In December 2003, Viet Nam and the Provisional Technical Secretariat (PTS) co-organized, with the assistance of Norway, a national workshop on the CTBT in Viet Nam, which played an important role in promoting the ratification process. We also encourage the PTS to continue its efforts in providing States with legal assistance, facilitating the exchange of experiences through consultation, disseminating relevant information and documentation in respect of the ratification process and the implementation measures, and encouraging cooperation with non-governmental organizations to raise awareness of the importance of the Treaty and the need for its early entry into force.

For its part, Viet Nam will continue to work hard with all other countries to enable the CTBT to achieve universal adherence, thus contributing further to the strengthening of world peace and security. ■




**“ Explanations by the nuclear-haves that the weapons are indispensable to defend their sovereignty are not the best way to convince other sovereign states to renounce the option. 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.”**

*Final report of the Weapons of Mass Destruction Commission, ‘Weapons of Terror: Freeing the World of Nuclear, Biological, and Chemical Arms’, Stockholm, Sweden, 1 June 2006, page 61*

### Biographical note

*Ambassador Nguyen Truong Giang, Permanent Representative of the Socialist Republic of Viet Nam to Austria, Slovakia, Croatia and the International Organizations in Vienna, joined the diplomatic service in 1980.*

*After completing the School of Diplomacy in Hanoi, he worked several years as a specialist in the Department of International Law and Treaties at the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, between 1998 and 2003 as a Deputy Director. He also served as Third Secretary at his country’s Permanent Mission to the United Nations in New York.*

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# IMS: The pioneering years

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stations to meet the stringent specifications of the Comprehensive Nuclear-Test-Ban Treaty (CTBT).

In the hydroacoustic technology, the IMS team worked on improving the placement of the three sensors described in the technical specifications. The final endorsement by the governing bodies to place the three sensors in a triangular array has shown its benefit in the ability to identify with an accuracy of only a few degrees the location of sources of the detected acoustic waves.

It was probably the infrasound technology that required the longest design phase. Infrasound technology had been dormant for many years and experts in the field could be counted on the fingers of one hand. In the early IMS days, many questions existed regarding the number of elements and the best geometry of an infrasound array. Thanks to the collaboration of many research institutions and with the experience of having built the first stations, the current design of a seven to eight-element station with pipe arrays to reduce incoherent noise was agreed to as being the most appropriate design needed for the difficult task of identifying and interpreting atmospheric acoustic events

The global radionuclide network was also the first one ever installed. Equipment that traditionally had operated under laboratory conditions had to be designed to survive and operate in remote and isolated locations where technical expertise is scarce. Software and hardware had to be adapted or developed to conform to CTBT specifications. A particularly difficult challenge was to design procedures for sending sensitive samples to radionuclide laboratories.

From the outset, the training of operators has been one of the backbones of the IMS. The need for well trained operators is particularly crucial to the radionuclide stations, since the radionuclide equipment requires the most knowledgeable and numerous operational staff.

The noble gas network was the only one to follow the classical path of design, test and implementation. Considering that no instrument was commercially available to meet the CTBT specifications, an International Noble Gas Experiment (INGE) was set up to develop the instruments. With the support of many institutions, four noble gas systems are now being tested at various IMS stations. (See article on page 22).

We soon learned that the difficulties of establishing the IMS network were not purely technical or logistical. The political nature of such an endeavour needed to be taken into consideration. In order to move forward with the build-up of the network, the IMS started establishing informal contacts with Working Group B delegates to initiate site surveys and start the construction of IMS stations in their countries. The Preparatory Commission requested the Provisional Technical Secretariat to sign facility agreements with all host countries of IMS stations, a very time-consuming process that normally requires parliamentary approval.

To alleviate the problem, the IMS began sending letters to some host countries requesting that they allow the installation of stations pending the signature of the facility agreement in the future. This practice was later formally accepted by the Commission and the IMS added to its tasks the procurement of letters that would authorize the build-up of stations while the facility agreement was still being negotiated. The result of an exchange of letters or the signature of a facility agreement was anxiously awaited in Vienna. Consequently, the IMS was unable to formulate an implementation plan with clearly defined goals. Stations could only be built at sites for which we had an exchange of letters or a facility agreement.

In those early days the tasks and challenges seemed to be endless. We had to build stations using a rapidly growing budget, negotiate exchanges of letters, hire staff at a breakneck pace, organize initial training programmes for every regional group, select and purchase equipment, and implement an ambitious site survey programme as the foundation of our work. The instructions of the governing bodies were to finalize the largest number of site surveys possible in order to be prepared for an accelerated implementation programme when the Treaty approached entry into force. The challenges confronting the IMS were replicated in every Division of the PTS: Everything had to be done from scratch and it had to be done fast.

It would be difficult and perhaps even unfair to single out institutions and countries that helped us in those frantic and hectic days. The IMS has benefited throughout these past nine years from the very generous support and collaboration of hundreds of institutions, both technical and political, all over the world. Based on these partnerships, a monitoring network has been built and the IMS was able to lay the foundations of its operation and maintenance concept.

The pace and expectations for the completion of the IMS were gradually tempered by political reality. Nonetheless, after nine years, Member States have a fully functioning International Data Centre that is receiving and processing data from over 180 stations. One half of the IMS stations are certified and approximately 85% of them are either certified, under testing or under construction. Plans are still firm for the completion of about 90% of the network by the end of 2007.

I believe that I can speak for most of my colleagues when I say that we in the IMS have a proud sense of accomplishment. The build-up of the IMS network, perhaps one of the more ambitious projects ever to monitor the earth, is now a reality. I can only hope that States Signatories also share this sense of pride in a project that they have so generously supported and financed. ■

GERARDO SUÁREZ, IMS DIRECTOR