Media Advisory

High-level conference to promote comprehensive ban on nuclear testing

Vienna, 10 September 2009

Foreign ministers from among more than 100 countries will meet at the United Nations Headquarters in New York 24 and 25 September, 2009, to promote the entry into force of the Comprehensive Nuclear Test Ban Treaty (CTBT). UN Secretary General Ban Ki-moon will open the conference.

The Treaty has been signed by 181 States and ratified by 149 but there are nine among 44 nuclear technology holder states without whose ratification it cannot enter into force.

The conference, to be jointly chaired by Bernard Kouchner and Taïb Fassi Fihri, the Foreign Ministers of France and Morocco respectively, will issue a Final Declaration calling upon the nine to ratify the Treaty.

The nine are: China, the Democratic People’s Republic of Korea (DPRK), Egypt, India, Indonesia, Iran, Israel, Pakistan and the United States. (The DPRK, India and Pakistan have also still to sign the Treaty).

For the first time since 1999 the United States will participate in the conference. The final declaration of the conference will also propose concrete actions that States should take to promote the Treaty.

All sessions of the Conference on Facilitating the Entry into Force of the Comprehensive Nuclear-Test-Ban Treaty are open to the press. The conference takes place on Thursday, 24 September 2009, 08.00-08.45, 11.00-18.00 and Friday, 25 September 2009, 10.00-18.00 in UN Headquarters New York, Conference Room III. There will be a photo-op on 24 September at 08.00 in Conference Room III. The UN Security Council meeting on nuclear disarmament and non-proliferation including the CTBT can be viewed in Conference Room III on 24 September 2009 from 09.00 to 11.00 via video streaming.

Press events for accredited media

- Press breakfast on 8 September 2009, 09.30 -10.30, Vienna International Centre, Vienna, Austria, Room E0763. The Coordinators of the process to promote the entry into force of the CTBT, Ambassador Florence Mangin of France and Ambassador Omar Zniiber of Morocco,
were presented together with the Executive Secretary of the Preparatory Commission for the Comprehensive Nuclear-Test-Ban Treaty Organization (CTBTO), Ambassador Tibor Tóth.

- Press briefing on 18 September 2009 at 12.00, UN Headquarters, New York, U.S.A., press briefing room. CTBTO Executive Secretary Tibor Tóth will be a guest at the daily noon briefing at the UN Headquarters in New York, informing the media about the current political momentum for the Treaty and the upcoming conference. He will also report on achievements in the build-up of the CTBT verification regime and demonstrate its ability to detect nuclear explosions anywhere on the globe, especially in view of the May 2009 nuclear test in the DPRK.

- Press point on 24 September 2009 at 08.45, UN Headquarters, New York. UN Security Council. The UN Secretary-General Ban Ki-moon and the Foreign Ministers of France and Morocco, Bernard Kouchner and Taïb Fassi Fihri, are expected to attend the stake-out.

**Background**

The **CTBT** bans all nuclear explosions on Earth. The Treaty makes it almost impossible to develop nuclear weapons in the first place or to improve existing designs in a militarily relevant way. The Treaty also helps prevent damage caused by nuclear testing to humans and the environment.

**Current political momentum**

The conference takes place in a new positive political climate with an increasing level of support for the CTBT. The UN Security Council, which will gather at the Heads of State level on the same day as the conference starts on 24 September, will focus on nuclear disarmament and non-proliferation, including the CTBT. It will be the first time since 1992 that such a meeting takes place. The meeting will be convened by U.S. President Barack Obama, who in his landmark speech in Prague on 5 April 2009 promised to “immediately and aggressively” pursue U.S. ratification of the CTBT, and to work with other remaining countries so that the Treaty can enter into force.

The two meetings draw unprecedented attention to the CTBT. The current non-permanent members of the Security Council include Austria and Costa Rica, whose Foreign Ministers chaired a similar conference in 2007. The other non-permanent members of the Security Council are Burkina Faso, Croatia, Japan, Libya, Mexico, Turkey, Uganda and Viet Nam, all of which have fully endorsed the CTBT. The five permanent Security Council members — China, France, Russian Federation, the United Kingdom and the United States — are Nuclear Weapons States and as such carry a special responsibility towards the CTBT and its entry into force. France, the Russian Federation and the United Kingdom have already ratified the Treaty, while China and the United States have signed but not yet ratified it.

In a recent Op-Ed published worldwide the UN Secretary General stressed the Treaty’s importance for nuclear disarmament and non-proliferation, along with the Non-Proliferation Treaty (NPT). “If the CTBT can enter into force, and if the NPT review conference makes progress, the world would be off to a good start on its journey to a world free of nuclear weapons,” he said.
Expected ratifications

44 States bear particular importance for the CTBT’s entry into force because they possessed nuclear capabilities at the time of Treaty negotiations in the mid-1990s and need to ratify the Treaty for it to enter into force.

Currently, 181 States have signed the Treaty and 149 have ratified it. The most recent State to fully endorse the CTBT is Liberia, which ratified the Treaty on 17 August 2009. It is expected that in the run-up to and during the conference more States will use the current momentum to sign and ratify the Treaty.

Global alarm system

The establishment of the CTBT verification regime to monitor the globe for nuclear explosions has progressed significantly since the last conference in 2007. Nearly 250 of the planned 337 facilities of the International Monitoring System are now operational and send data to the International Data Centre in Vienna, 68 more than in 2007. On-site inspections were successfully tested in a large scale simulation exercise in 2008.

The monitoring system has been put to the test twice in recent years. In October 2006 and again in May 2009, the DPRK announced that it had exploded underground nuclear devices. On both occasions, the CTBT verification regime was capable of detecting the explosions in a fast and reliable manner.

Media registration

Media representatives wishing to cover the conference need to be accredited with the United Nations in New York. Those who are not yet accredited must apply for media accreditation through an electronic application system. The relevant details can be found at:

http://www.un.org/media/accreditation/form/myform.asp

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More information can be found on our website at www.ctbto.org which also features a dedicated area on the upcoming Article XIV Conference including a press room, Pictures and video packages on the CTBTO, the CTBT and its verification regime are available for download.

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Who we are

The 1996 Comprehensive Nuclear-Test-Ban Treaty (CTBT) bans all nuclear explosions on Earth. The main tasks of the Preparatory Commission for the Comprehensive Nuclear-Test-Ban Treaty Organization (CTBTO) are to promote the Treaty and to establish a global verification regime capable of detecting nuclear explosions underground, underwater and in the atmosphere. The regime must be operational when the Treaty enters into force. It will consist of 337 monitoring facilities supported by the International Data Centre and on-site inspections.