

Science and Diplomacy for Peace and Security: the CTBT at 20

Closing Keynote Address

Lord Des Browne

**Vice-Chairman of the Nuclear Threat Initiative
and former UK Secretary of State for Defence**

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Thank you very much for your kind introduction. It is always a pleasure for me to be back in Vienna and I am honoured to be asked to provide the closing keynote address at this important symposium. And to be back among friends. I am pleased to see so many people in this room whom I have come to know and many of whom I have worked with on issues which are very dear to me.

So, your Excellencies, distinguished delegates, ladies and gentlemen, and in particular the members of the newly inaugurated CTBT Youth Group. I am very pleased to be there.

Some of you may recall I spoke here in Vienna last year and I came away on that occasion even more impressed than I was when I arrived by the important work that you all do and your collective unyielding commitment to building a safer world. I am, to put it simply, a major fan of your work, so I am delighted to be with you once again.

I am particularly pleased to be here at the inauguration of the CTBT Youth Group. I have invested a significant amount of hope and optimism in the younger generation that they will be able to undo some of the difficulties that we have created for you. You are going to inherit a very complicated and difficult world.

I am pleased to be here and I am also always pleased to share a stage or at least a room with my good friend, Lassina Zerbo. Dr. Zerbo and I have worked together on security issues now for a number of years, and I can say from experience that he is an extraordinarily ambitious and creative leader, he's a visionary and he's a creative thinker too – and I know we all are grateful to have him at the helm of the CTBTO. Thank you Lassina, and thank you all at the CTBTO for the extraordinary work that you do. This year's symposium comes at an important and interesting time.

Just since I was here last year:

- The P5+1 and the EU have reached and begun the implementation of an historic and hard-fought agreement with Iran that will prevent it from building a nuclear weapon – something that if Iran had accomplished, most certainly would destabilise the entire Middle East and present a direct threat to Europe, possibly also the United States, and indeed a significant part of the world, and quite possibly would have resulted in another war with extremely serious consequences. Candidly, the last thing that the Middle East needs is more nuclear weapons.
- The U.S. presidential campaign has gotten well underway – and I have to say that it's been rather unsettling for me to have such a close view of it from my perch as vice chairman of NTI in Washington. Nuclear issues haven't emerged as a significant area for debate in the contest this far, but I think it's fair to say that those of us who work on disarmament, non-proliferation, materials security and other issues central to preventing nuclear catastrophe are not looking forward to a golden age.

- World leaders are now preparing for a very significant agenda at the fourth and likely final Nuclear Security Summit at the end of March. Certainly, it will be the last nuclear security summit during the presidency of President Obama. You may recall that the summit process was launched in 2010 – and there's no question that progress has been made on its central goal: to secure vulnerable nuclear materials around the world.

However, NTI has found in the most recent edition of our biennial NTI Nuclear Security Index and in a ground-breaking report on the security of military nuclear materials that a great deal more needs to be done on this front. At a time of escalating and evolving terrorist threats, our leaders need to redouble their efforts to protect the most dangerous materials in the world, and they must establish a way to sustain the summit process beyond this year.

- Finally, on January 6, as everyone here is well aware, North Korea conducted its fourth nuclear test since 2006 – an event picked up on the CTBTO's seismic monitors and later confirmed as man-made. North Korea's continued recalcitrance and rejection of global norms is troubling, to say the least and potentially very dangerous as they find the delivery mechanism for these war heads that they clearly have.

So, it seems to me, given this backdrop, that this is a good time to reflect and re-evaluate how to proceed across a range of challenges to long-term nuclear security, non-proliferation, and disarmament.

During this conference, you have had the opportunity to hear from many renowned experts on topics ranging from the origins of the CTBT to the geopolitical climate currently shaping the conditions for the Treaty's entry into force.

You have had the opportunity to learn more about the CTBT's extraordinarily important verification regime, and everyone here surely appreciates the significance of the Comprehensive Nuclear-Test-Ban Treaty in the nuclear non-proliferation and disarmament regime.

So, you are right to ask: Twenty years after the CTBT was opened for signature, what more can be done to help bring it into force? Have our efforts been working – or do we need a new approach?

Accomplishments to date

First, there should be no question that what has been accomplished to date is extraordinary: the development of a robust global monitoring and verification system with life-saving applications that go beyond its original intent; the establishment of a de facto global moratorium on testing, North Korea notwithstanding; and with 183 signatories and 164 ratifications, one of the most broadly supported arms control treaties. These are among the reasons some nuclear powers among the key Annex 2 states have gone forward and ratified the treaty.

There is a lot to be proud of – and as I said last year at the Science and Technology Forum, the scientists and technical experts responsible for so much of this success must be recognized for all they can achieve, but they must also accept their responsibility that they have to do all they can to share the story of the CTBTO's success to help the officials and politicians working to convince the remaining Annex 2 States that it is in their best interests – and the world's best interest – to support the Treaty.

As Stephen Hawking said just last month, regarding the scientific and technical advances that have brought us the most significant threats to humanity – specifically, nuclear weapons and genetically engineered viruses – he said and I quote: "We are not going to stop making progress, or reverse it, so we must recognise the dangers and control them."

With respect to the ban on testing, we clearly have come a long way. So, why, you might ask, given that the Treaty has such a broad support and that only one country has tested in the past 17 years, is it so important that it be brought into force?

I believe that final step is crucial because without it, all that we have worked so hard to accomplish- a system around the Treaty that is integral to the global non-proliferation and disarmament regime- remains at risk every day that the Treaty is not in force.

Need for a New Approach

So what to do? I believe we need a new approach – one that can and must work hand-in-hand with the ongoing hard work of the CTBTO's scientific and expert community.

We all have a sense of the scale of the job: Only four percent of the countries on the planet have failed to take the action needed to make the Treaty binding: China, Egypt, India, Iran, Israel, North Korea, Pakistan, and the United States. But these are key countries – and obviously not an easy group to sway.

These countries have different sets of concerns, based on their capabilities, their geopolitical status, their rivals – real and perceived, their security concerns and more. Some of them already support a number of the key steps that would take them on the path to ratification. The United States, China and Israel, for example, transmit data from monitoring stations and engage in capacity building activities. Others have taken smaller steps. India and Pakistan, for example, participate in the Science and Technology Forum. And North Korea –well, that's the hardest case of course.

At the political and governmental level, efforts to turn these states toward ratification have so far focused on delivering clear and compelling messages that are designed to convince those who are hesitant and those who oppose the Treaty outright that it is in their best security interests – and in the best security interests of the world – if the Treaty is legally binding.

Listening to Reluctant States

But what if we took a new approach? What if we started listening? Rather than telling non-ratifying states what is in their best interest, rather than repeating our message in ever-stronger and louder voices, perhaps it would be effective to spend more time listening to what the reluctant states have to say. To listen more carefully to their needs, their security concerns, their demands.

In an open letter to the United Nations in 1950, Niels Bohr, the Danish physicist who made significant contributions to understanding atomic structure, stated:

"Everyone associated with the atomic energy project was, of course, conscious of the serious problems which would confront humanity once the enterprise was accomplished. Quite apart from the role atomic weapons might come to play in the war, it was clear that permanent grave dangers to world security would ensue unless measures to prevent abuse of the new formidable means of destruction could be universally agreed upon and carried out. "

Bohr went on to cite the need for all states to properly appreciate the duties and responsibilities accrued as citizens of the world – but he also recognised that the difference between states must be acknowledged and addressed. And I quote again:

"On the one hand, the progress of science and technology has tied the fate of all nations inseparably together; on the other hand, it is on a most different cultural background that vigorous endeavours for national self-assertion and social development are being made in the various parts of our globe."

So, what does this mean with respect to the eight ratifications that are needed? Let's hear the countries out. Let's ask them to explain to us why they cannot take these last steps. If nuclear disarmament is a requirement, let's discuss it. If it's about states having or not having weapons, let's hear from them what is needed to even the score in the interest of global peace and security. Let's look back and examine how it came to be that three nuclear weapon states, Russia, the UK and France had the confidence to ratify – yet others didn't.

By listening, I believe we can begin to become agile enough to address important concerns – and to address new concerns as they evolve.

If you think this is too difficult to do, consider this: In 1999, when the ratification of the CTBT came before the United States Senate, one of the main reasons cited for opposing ratification was concern over the capabilities of the CTBT's verification regime. Today, U.S. Secretary of State John Kerry has rightly called the regime "one of the great accomplishments of the modern world." In recent months, together with Energy Secretary Moniz, he has sought to refocus attention on the issue of U.S. ratification to the CTBT, in part by stressing the technical advantages made since the U.S. Senate voted it down in 1999.

A job for the GEM

However, in the case of the U.S., with a presidential election just ahead, I don't think there's any reasonable chance for serious re-consideration of the Treaty in the short term. But my point is that what might have put a country off some years ago – whether related to technology, the geopolitical climate or some other concern – may not be as much of a factor today, or may be factored in a different way. Times change, leaders change, circumstances change.

And we learn over time, just as we have in some measure with the Iran agreement. Who among us would have had confidence five or six years ago that the Iran agreement would have been agreed in the first place, and implemented to the extent it has been in the short period of time. We learn that building trust in the most difficult circumstances is possible. It must be possible, because it underpins the entire framework of multilateralism in the world.

I believe this new work, this new priority on listening, should be in part the responsibility of the Group of Eminent Persons and I am roping in the Youth group to help this too.

The GEM should create a process deliberately calculated to work with the eight states that have not yet ratified to determine if there are workable solutions to their individual and complex concerns. I also encourage those eight states to be strong enough and confident to come forward and help us understand what is needed to address their security needs.

This is a job for the GEM, but I urge each of you here to listen as well –and to help provide those states with a voice, but much more importantly, to think creatively about how to address their concerns.

Thank you.