The plenary body of the CTBTO Preparatory Commission, which is composed of all States Signatories, provides political guidance and oversight to the Provisional Technical Secretariat. The plenary, as the Policy Making Organ, is assisted by two Working Groups. Working Group A deals with budgetary and administrative matters facing the organization, while Working Group B considers scientific and technical issues related to the Treaty. Both Working Groups submit proposals and recommendations for consideration and adoption by the Commission.

In addition, an Advisory Group of qualified experts serves in a supporting role, advising the Commission through its Working Groups on financial, budgetary and associated administrative matters.

The Secretariat and Task Leaders of Working Group B at the Thirty-Ninth Session.

Policy Making

Highlights in 2012

Election by the Commission of a new Executive Secretary
Continuation of the new method of work of Working Group B, which enabled it to carry out its work more efficiently and in a more focused manner
Launching of the ‘virtual paper approach’ and further advances in establishing the Information System with Hyperlinks on Tasks Assigned by the Resolution Establishing the Preparatory Commission (ISHTAR)
Meetings in 2012

In 2012, the Thirty-Eighth and Thirty-Ninth Sessions of the Preparatory Commission were held on 14 June and 22–23 October respectively. The Thirty-Eighth Session was chaired by Ambassador Alfredo Alejandro Labbé Villa, Permanent Representative of Chile, and the Thirty-Ninth Session was chaired by Ambassador Ana Teresa Dengo, Permanent Representative of Costa Rica.

Working Group A was chaired by Ambassador Jargalsaikhan Enkhsaikhan (Mongolia) and held its Forty-First Session from 23 to 24 May and its Forty-Second Session on 26 September. Working Group B was chaired by Mr Hein Haak (Netherlands) and held its Thirty-Eighth Session from 6 to 24 February and its Thirty-Ninth Session from 13 to 31 August. Joint meetings of Working Groups A and B were held on 20 February and 27 August. The Advisory Group, chaired by Mr Michael Weston (United Kingdom), held the first and second parts of its Thirty-Eighth Session from 16 to 19 April and from 30 April to 4 May and its Thirty-Ninth Session from 3 to 7 September.

Expanding the Participation of Experts from Developing Countries

The PTS continued the implementation of a project, initiated in 2007, to facilitate the participation of experts from developing countries in official technical meetings of the Commission. The stated aim of this project is to strengthen the universal character of the Commission and capacity building in developing countries.

In 2012, three experts supported in 2010 and 2011 left the project and three new experts were selected, so that the total number of experts supported continued to be 10 (one each from Algeria, Brazil, Burkina Faso, the Dominican Republic, Jordan, Kenya, Madagascar, Paraguay, South Africa and Vanuatu). Experts from three least developed countries were therefore supported under the project.

Experts took part in the Thirty-Eighth and Thirty-Ninth Sessions of Working Group B, including formal meetings, meetings of the expert groups and meetings of their respective geographical groups, and in the NDC Evaluation Workshop in Asunción, Paraguay, in October. In addition, the experts benefited from technical discussions with the PTS on key verification related issues. The experts from Brazil, Kenya and Madagascar continued to carry out their functions as Task Leaders in Working Group B for Testing and Provisional Operation, Issues Related to NDCs and Technology Refreshment respectively.

The project was financed in 2012 by voluntary contributions from Austria, China, Finland, Hungary, Indonesia, Luxembourg, Malaysia, Morocco, New Zealand, Norway, Oman, Qatar, the Republic of Korea, Slovenia, South Africa, Spain, Turkey and the United Kingdom, as well as from the OPEC Fund for International Development (OFID). New voluntary contributions were received in 2012 from China, Finland, Norway and OFID.

On the basis of an implementation report prepared by the PTS, at its October session the Commission expressed its appreciation to the donor countries for their contributions and to the PTS for its reports on, and management of, the project. It also decided to continue the project for a further three years (2013–2015), according to the current management guidelines and selection criteria and subject to availability of sufficient voluntary contributions.

Supporting the Preparatory Commission and Its Subsidiary Bodies

The PTS is the body that executes the decisions adopted by the Commission. It is multinational in composition: staff are recruited from States Signatories on as wide a geographical basis as possible. As far as the meetings of the Commission and its subsidiary bodies are concerned, the role of the PTS is to provide substantive and organizational support, thus facilitating the decision making process. From
organizing conference facilities and arranging interpretation for the meetings and translation of papers to drafting official documents of the various sessions and advising the Chairpersons, the PTS is a vital element in the work of the Commission and its subsidiary bodies.

In 2012, the PTS provided substantive and organizational support to the process for election of the next Executive Secretary of the Preparatory Commission. At its Thirty-Ninth Session, the Commission elected Mr Lassina Zerbo as the next Executive Secretary for a renewable term of four years. Mr Zerbo will begin his term of office on 1 August 2013.

The PTS provided substantive and organizational support to the coordinators of the Article XIV process in connection with the holding of informal consultations of States ratifiers. A decision was taken by the Commission on the financing of an Article XIV conference in the event that the Secretary-General of the United Nations, as Depositary of the Treaty, is requested by a majority of ratifying States to convene such a conference in 2013.

**Information System on Progress in Fulfilling the Mandate of the Treaty**

ISHTAR was launched in September 2012 and the database made available to all users of the ECS. Using hyperlinks to the official documentation of the Commission as its basis, the aim of the ISHTAR project continues to be the monitoring of progress achieved in

accordance with the mandate of the Treaty, the Resolution establishing the Commission and the guidance of the Commission and its subsidiary bodies. Its overall purpose is to provide up to date information to the Commission on the tasks that remain to be completed in terms of preparations for the establishment of the CTBTO at entry into force and the first session of the Conference of the States Parties.

**Virtual Working Environment**

The PTS provides a virtual working environment for those unable to attend regular meetings of the Commission and its subsidiary bodies. State of the art technologies are employed to transmit the proceedings of each official plenary meeting around the globe in real time. Meetings are recorded and transmitted live via the ECS before being archived for reference purposes. In addition, supporting documents related to each particular session are distributed to States Signatories through the ECS, and participants are notified of new documents by email alerts.

In 2012, the PTS continued to distribute on DVDs all documents of and presentations to the Commission and its subsidiary bodies at their sessions. The Executive Secretary also announced in August 2012 that, as part of a new ‘virtual paper approach’, through which the PTS is seeking to limit its output of printed documentation, official documents of the Commission, its subsidiary bodies and the PTS would no longer be distributed in hard copy to all States Signatories as of 1 January 2013.