Policy Making

Highlights in 2013

Participation of the President of Burkina Faso in the Fortieth Session of the Preparatory Commission

Further improvement of the method of work of WGB

Further implementation of the virtual paper approach and launch of the new ECS

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 (PTS). The plenary, as the Policy Making Organ, is assisted by two Working Groups.

Working Group A (WGA) deals with budgetary and administrative matters facing the organization, while Working Group B (WGB) 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 (AG) of qualified experts serves in a supporting role, advising the Commission through its Working Groups on financial, budgetary and associated administrative matters.
Meetings in 2013

The Fortieth Session of the Commission was held on 13 June, with a Special Session on 12 September. The Forty-First Session of the Commission was held on 28 October. These sessions were chaired by Ambassador Jan Petersen, Permanent Representative of Norway.

The Forty-Third and Forty-Fourth Sessions of WGA were held on 27 May and 7 October respectively. The Forty-Third Session was chaired by Ambassador Jargalsaikhan Enkhsaikhan (Mongolia), and the Forty-Fourth Session was chaired by Ambassador Gunaajav Batjargal (Mongolia). WGB held its Fortieth Session from 18 March to 5 April and its Forty-First Session from 12 to 30 August. Pursuant to decisions of the Extended Bureau of the Commission, WGB was chaired by Mr Svein Mykkeltveit (Norway) and Mr David McCormack (Canada), the Friends of the Chair, on behalf of the Chairperson of WGB, Mr Hein Haak (Netherlands). Joint meetings of Working Groups A and B were held on 2 April and 26 August. The AG, chaired by Mr Michael Weston (United Kingdom), held the first and second parts of its Fortieth Session from 15 to 17 April and from 29 April to 3 May and its Forty-First Session from 2 to 4 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 October 2012 the project was extended by the Commission for a further three years (2013–2015), subject to availability of sufficient voluntary contributions. A detailed annual report on the status of implementation of the project was issued by the PTS in October.

The project continued to support the 10 experts from Algeria, Brazil, Burkina Faso, the Dominican Republic, Jordan, Kenya, Madagascar, Paraguay, South Africa and Vanuatu. The experts took part in the Fortieth and Forty-First Sessions of WGB, including formal meetings, meetings of the expert groups and meetings of their respective geographical groups. 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 WGB Task Leaders for Testing and Provisional Operation, Issues Related to NDCs and Technology Refreshment respectively.

At the end of 2013 two experts supported since 2011 (from Algeria and South Africa) left the project and two new experts (from Kyrgyzstan and Niger) were selected for support in 2014. As a result of this rotation, the total number of experts supported since 2007 increased from 22 to 24, the number of currently supported experts from least developed and low income countries increased from 4 to 6 (in total since 2007: from 6 to 8) and the number of currently supported female experts increased from 1 to 3 (in total since 2007: from 4 to 6).

In 2013 the project was financed by voluntary contributions received in 2012 from Finland, the OPEC Fund for International Development (OFID), Norway and China, as well as by new voluntary contributions received in 2013 from Sri Lanka, the Netherlands, Turkey and Norway (donors are listed in the chronological order of donations). The PTS continues to seek additional voluntary contributions, as the current amount of available funds is not sufficient to ensure sustainability of the project in 2014.

**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, including in the intersessional periods, thus facilitating the decision making process. With its tasks ranging from organizing conference facilities and arranging interpretation for the meetings and translation of papers to drafting official documents of the various sessions, planning the annual schedule of sessions and providing substantive and procedural advice to the Chairpersons, the PTS is a vital element in the work of the Commission and its subsidiary bodies.

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, as well as the eighth Conference on Facilitating the Entry into Force of the CTBT (“Article XIV conference”), which was held in New York on 27 September 2013.
Information System on Progress in Fulfilling the Mandate of the Treaty

Following its launch to States Signatories in 2012, the Information System with Hyperlinks on Tasks Assigned by the Resolution Establishing the Preparatory Commission (ISHTAR) interface continued to be available to all users of the Experts Communication System (ECS), including after the roll-out of the new ECS at the end of the year. 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 December, a new, updated version of the ECS was launched, providing a more efficient and user friendly electronic platform to access and retrieve official documents, video files and other material relevant to meetings of the Commission and its subsidiary bodies. As a tool for continuous and inclusive discussion among States Signatories and experts on complex scientific and technical issues related to the verification regime, the ECS has become even more important in light of the new method of work of WGB. In 2013, States Signatories called for more intensive use of the ECS in intersessional work to further enhance the efficiency and effectiveness of work during sessions.

The PTS continued to distribute on DVDs all documents of and presentations to the Commission and its subsidiary bodies at their sessions. As part of the 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 were no longer distributed in hard copy to all States Signatories as of 1 January 2013. In addition, at the Forty-First Session of WGB the PTS introduced, on a trial basis, a new ‘print on demand’ service enabling delegates to print documents from their computers and mobile devices during the meetings.