In the spotlight

High-level action needed to promote CTBT’s entry into force
Interview with Carl Bildt, the Minister for Foreign Affairs of Sweden

Q: Sweden has always been one of the strongest proponents and contributors to the Comprehensive Nuclear-Test-Ban Treaty (CTBT) politically and scientifically. How do you explain Sweden’s longstanding commitment to and involvement with the CTBT?

A: Let me start by referring back to the situation in Sweden during the Cold War, and its general approach to nuclear weapons. Back in the 1950s, as part of an early interest in nuclear power generally, Sweden was actively planning to acquire nuclear weapons in the belief that this would improve the ability to deter military aggression.

By the late 1950s, public understanding about the destructive power of nuclear weapons and the devastating consequences of a nuclear war in Europe was starting to increase. The opposition to nuclear weapons intensified as a result of the nuclear fallout from large scale nuclear test explosions by the former Soviet Union at Novaya Zemlya, which affected northern Sweden in the early 1960s.

In 1963, the same year Sweden signed the Partial Test Ban Treaty, it was decided for a number of reasons to halt all exploratory plans related to the acquisition of nuclear weapons. This was, however, a process that proceeded in stages and took some time. In 1968 the Swedish Parliament took a decision not to develop nuclear weapons and later the same year, Sweden also signed the Nuclear Non-Proliferation Treaty (NPT).

In the early 1970s, the Swedish Defense Research Institute (FOA/FOI) recommended the creation of the Group of Scientific Experts (GSE) to design and test a global seismological system to monitor nuclear explosions. This system laid the foundation for the CTBT’s verification regime. Sweden chaired the GSE from its inception in 1976 until the CTBT negotiations were finalized in 1996 and was also instrumental in proposing a draft treaty at the beginning of these negotiations in January 1994. A Swedish expert in the field, Dr. Ola Dahlman, former chairman of the GSE, chaired the Working Group on verification issues at the Preparatory Commission for the Comprehensive Nuclear-Test-Ban Treaty Organization (CTBTO) from 1996 to 2006 and is currently leading the International Scientific Studies project, which is performing an independent assessment of the capability and readiness of the CTBT’s verification regime. More recently, in 2008, Sweden’s Ambassador Hans Lundborg chaired the CTBTO’s executive organ, the Preparatory Commission.

Sweden also developed the Swedish Unattended Noble gas Analyzer (SAUNA), which is one of the systems used by the CTBTO to measure radionuclide noble gases released by nuclear explosions.

All together, I suppose one could say that my country’s involvement with the CTBT both in terms of putting the legal norm in place and helping to define its verification regime has been, and remains, quite significant.

Q: Why in your view is the CTBT important?

A: I believe it is a vital component of the international effort to prevent nuclear weapons proliferation and to bring about nuclear disarmament. Once the Treaty enters into force, it will put a brake on the development of new weapons systems and arguably reduce the security policy significance of nuclear weapons in sensitive regions, thus making a key contribution to international peace and security. It will also convey the very important signal that the international community is once again taking disarmament and arms control issues seriously.

There can be little doubt that the CTBT’s verification and control system, which is now approaching completion, makes it virtually impossible to conduct undetected clandestine nuclear testing. As the role and importance of nuclear weapons themselves decrease in a world of new and different security challenges, so does the need for any further testing.

Biographical note
Carl Bildt was appointed the Swedish Minister for Foreign Affairs in 2006. Between 1991 and 1994 he served as Sweden’s Prime Minister and was leader of the Moderate Party from 1986 to 1999. He has also been noted internationally as a mediator in the Balkan conflict, serving as the European Union’s Special Representative for the Former Yugoslavia from 1995 to 1997, as High Representative of the international community in Bosnia and Herzegovina from 1996 to 1997, and as the UN Secretary-General’s Special Envoy for the Balkans from 1999 to 2001.
The nuclear tests that the Democratic People’s Republic of Korea conducted in October 2006 and most recently in May 2009 have highlighted the importance of a universal, legally binding standard for banning nuclear testing and of the verification regime provided for by CTBT.

Q: Sweden assumed the Presidency of the European Union (EU) in July 2009. It is very welcome news that you will personally deliver the speech on behalf of the European Union at the Article XIV conference on Facilitating the Entry into Force of the CTBT in September this year.

During its Presidency of the EU, what plans does Sweden have for the EU to continue promoting the Treaty’s entry into force and to encourage the build-up of the verification regime?

A: The EU plays a very special role in relation to the CTBT since all its Member States have ratified the Treaty and are strong supporters of it. This is of particular importance since the EU is composed of countries with different security policy doctrines: nuclear weapon States, countries that are members of NATO, and countries that do not belong to any military alliance. During Sweden’s presidency of the EU, promoting the CTBT’s entry into force at the earliest possible date will be one of our top priorities in the field of non-proliferation and disarmament. Universal ratification of the Treaty and completion of its verification regime, as well as dismantling all nuclear testing facilities as soon as possible in a manner that is transparent and open to the international community, are crucial elements for achieving not only NPT objectives but also for nuclear disarmament in general.

Sweden is determined to sustain the current momentum in favour of the CTBT, particularly in view of President Barack Obama’s commitment to pursue U.S. ratification of the Treaty “immediately and aggressively.” During its EU presidency, Sweden will work with partners to promote the CTBT’s entry into force in the run up to the Article XIV conference. These efforts aims to address the issue of ratification and, where necessary, of signature of the CTBT, at EU meetings with relevant partners. We will appeal to all remaining Annex 2 States to sign and/or ratify the Treaty expeditiously to facilitate its entry into force as well as urging the Treaty’s signatories and ratifiers to demonstrate their support for the CTBT by participating in the Article XIV conference at the ministerial level or higher.

The EU attaches utmost importance to completing a credible and operational CTBT verification regime. A fully operational verification regime will provide the international community with independent and reliable means of ensuring compliance with the above-mentioned standard. During its presidency of the EU, Sweden will encourage the build-up of the verification regime and will continue to support the CTBTO. Three EU joint actions have been adopted within the framework of the Common Foreign and Security Policy which have enabled actions in such fields as training, strengthening verification regime performances and technical assistance for developing countries. EU support is also helping develop civil and scientific uses of international monitoring system technologies.

Notes & Quotes

“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...President Barack Obama’s support for US ratification of the CTBT is welcome – the treaty only needs a few more ratifications to enter into force. Disarmament must be rooted in legal obligations.”

Under Sweden’s EU presidency, we will also urge all States that have signed the Treaty to pay their full contributions to the CTBTO within the prescribed time limit and without setting conditions in order to ensure the CTBTO’s financial stability as well as the consolidation and credibility of the verification regime.

**Q:** What role do you think the CTBT can play in strengthening the nuclear non-proliferation and disarmament regime? And what impact do you think ratification by the United States will have on the other Annex 2 States which must ratify before the Treaty can enter into force?

**A:** Although the CTBT has not yet entered into force, the fact that 181 countries have signed and 149 have ratified it has already created an international norm that condemns nuclear tests. This unquestionably strengthens the non-proliferation and disarmament regime. Any State that were to conduct a nuclear test would pay a heavy political price, as we have recently seen in North Korea with the UN Security Council voting unanimously to adopt tougher sanctions targeting North Korea’s atomic and ballistic missile programmes.

Ratifications by key States such as the United States and China could potentially spark a positive chain reaction. The United States was the first country to sign the CTBT in 1996 and renewed U.S. leadership for the entry into force of the Treaty is immensely important.

On 1 April 2009, the presidents of the United States and Russia released a statement detailing a work plan for a new relationship between the two countries, starting with the goal of a nuclear-weapon-free world. Both Barack Obama and Dmitry Medvedev have pledged to bring the CTBT into force.

The accession of all remaining Annex 2 countries is, of course, equally important and necessary. Short of immediately signing or ratifying the Treaty, any direct actions or statements to that end by relevant countries would certainly aid similar processes in other Annex 2 States. In this context, the recent statement by Indonesia explaining its clear intention to ratify the CTBT once U.S. ratification has taken place is very encouraging.

Regional approaches to secure ratifications by Egypt, Iran, and Israel should also be further explored. Similarly, there is a need to engage India and Pakistan on a range of security and arms related issues. The CTBT – in conjunction with a future universal, legally binding and verifiable ban on the production of weapon grade fissile material – would naturally be one of them, making the further development of nuclear weapons virtually impossible. China could play an important role as a catalyst in South Asia. Much would be gained for confidence and security building in Asia if the continent as a whole moved towards ratification.

**Q:** During an official visit to China in March 2009, you described nuclear

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**NOTES & QUOTES**

“To achieve a global ban on nuclear testing, my administration will immediately and aggressively pursue U.S. ratification of the Comprehensive Test Ban Treaty. After more than five decades of talks, it is time for the testing of nuclear weapons to finally be banned.”

**President Barack Obama in Prague, Czech Republic on 5 April 2009, outlining his plan for a world free of nuclear weapons.**
proliferation as one of the three acute issues on the agenda of the important strategic relationship between China and the EU. Could you elaborate on that?

A: The Joint Declaration between China and the EU on Non-proliferation and Arms Control that was signed in December 2004 is of great significance and commits both sides to working together to ensure strict compliance with the obligations under disarmament and non-proliferation treaties. In particular, the Joint Declaration promotes the universalization, entry into force, implementation and strengthening of the treaties, conventions and norms in the area of disarmament and non-proliferation, such as the NPT and the CTBT.

Nuclear proliferation is indeed an acute issue not only on the agenda of China and the EU but also currently one of the top priorities on the global agenda. There are already too many nuclear weapons and too many States with nuclear weapons in the world today. Although I am hopeful that we will see a reduction in overall arsenals in the years to come – after all, approximately 95 percent of them are held by Russia and the United States – I am far more concerned with the risk that we will see further States acquiring these weapons. New States with nuclear weapons in East Asia or the Middle East would be profoundly destabilizing and would significantly increase the risk that we will actually see nuclear weapons used and a nuclear war breaking out at some point in the future.

Of immediate concern at the moment is the situation in North Korea. We all have a profound interest in both non-proliferation and in the stability of the Korean peninsula, and clear messages from the leading international actors are of importance in a situation like this. It should be clear that we are ready to consult and coordinate in order to handle any contingencies so as to preserve wider regional stability.

Q: In the Foreign Policy Declaration that you delivered to the Swedish Parliament on 18 February 2009, you said: “A new nuclear disarmament treaty between the US and Russia and US ratification of the CTBT treaty would create considerably better conditions to prevent the proliferation of nuclear weapons in the future.” Please expand on your statement in light of the recent follow-on to the 1991 Strategic Arms Reduction Treaty (Start I) and the other steps that you believe need to be taken to pave the way for a successful NPT Review Conference in 2010.

A: The Joint Understanding signed by President Obama and President Medvedev on 6 July 2009 to verifiably cut U.S. and Russian strategic nuclear arsenals below the Moscow Treaty levels, is a very welcome first step in a broader effort intended to reduce the threat of such weapons drastically and to prevent their further spread to unstable regions. By setting out the basic terms of a treaty to reduce the number of strategic delivery systems and their associated warheads to the lowest levels since the early years of the Cold War, countering the spread of nuclear weapons and eventually moving towards Obama’s vision of “a world without nuclear weapons” becomes more of a reality.

In order for the NPT Review Conference to reach a successful conclusion in May next year, efforts to promote the CTBT’s entry into force must be accelerated over the following months. In many ways the NPT and the CTBT go hand in hand. After all, the commitment in the 1990s to negotiate the CTBT was one of the important factors that paved the way for the 1995 decision to indefinitely extend the NPT. One significant distinction of the CTBT is that it will, once adhered to universally, apply equally to all States on a non-discriminatory basis.

Consensus must be reached on the renewed commitment of the principles and objectives for nuclear non-proliferation and disarmament. Continued efforts to reduce nuclear dangers should be pursued to help strengthen the non-proliferation regime and increase progress on nuclear disarmament.

Further progress in strategic arms limitation talks between the United States and Russia, ratification of the CTBT and progress on the North Korean and Iranian issues would pave the way for the NPT Review Conference next year. It has to succeed – failure in these efforts could
have grave consequences for global stability in the world of the future.

Q: Over the years, you have reiterated your personal commitment to the CTBT. On 24 September 2008 you endorsed the Joint Ministerial Statement on the CTBT, along with 90 other Foreign Ministers, which called for the Treaty’s entry into force. In view of the influence you exert in the global arena, what would you consider to be the most effective strategy to ensure the CTBT’s entry into force? And how would you convince your friends and colleagues around the world that it is in the interest of their respective countries to ratify the Treaty?

A: We will surely continue our efforts directed towards the CTBT, and I would naturally be glad to contribute to this cause in any way I can. At the same time, I am completely convinced that – as in most international and political endeavours – it will take a broad team effort to win the confidence and support of as many stakeholders as possible. A number of reasons and arguments in support of the CTBT have already been outlined, underpinning a comprehensive strategy to ensure the CTBT’s entry into force. That crucial message of united support should be continued and developed. At the same time, the issue of the CTBT – realistically – has to be seen in an integrated, political context.

As I see it, a precondition to success is to really prioritize the issue at hand. We need to devote attention at the highest possible level to the CTBT’s entry into force. One step in the near future to prioritize support for the CTBT, would be – as already mentioned, but surely worth repeating – by ensuring participation at a high political level at the upcoming Article XIV conference in New York in September.

Conference on Facilitating the Entry into Force of the CTBT
24-25 September 2009, United Nations, New York

What is it?
- Named after the entry into force article of the CTBT.
- Article XIV states that a conference should be convened every two years to promote the Treaty’s entry into force, if this has not taken place.
- Five such conferences have already taken place in New York or Vienna since 1999.

Why does it take place?
- The Treaty’s entry into force depends on the ratifications of 44 specific States, which had nuclear capabilities when the Treaty was negotiated in 1996.
- Thirty-five of these States have already ratified. Nine States still need to do so: China, Democratic People’s Republic of Korea (DPRK), Egypt, India, Indonesia, Iran, Israel, Pakistan and the United States. The DPRK, India and Pakistan also have to sign the Treaty.
- The Article XIV conferences strive to convince hold-out States to sign and ratify the Treaty.

Why is this year’s conference different from previous ones?
- There is currently a very strong political momentum in support of the CTBT.
- The United States’ participation for the first time in ten years is particularly encouraging.