



The CTBT: Its crucial and overdue entry into force

by Taib Fassi Fihri, the Minister of Foreign Affairs of Morocco

The Comprehensive Nuclear-Test-Ban Treaty (CTBT) is the outcome of many years of active multilateral diplomacy aimed at preserving peace and security. It is also a consequence of decreased international tensions following the end of the Cold War.

The adoption of the CTBT in 1996, no matter how difficult and complicated the negotiations were, reflected the will of the international community to make a new step towards nuclear non-proliferation and disarmament. By banning test explosions, the CTBT prevents the development of new nuclear weapons as well as the spread of such weapons, since testing is crucial for the verification of their capabilities.

The CTBT complements and strengthens the Nuclear Non-Proliferation Treaty (NPT). The linkage was established during its negotiations and a global test ban is explicitly mentioned in the NPT's preamble. In addition, the CTBT is part of the commitments of the 1995 and 2000 NPT Review Conferences and will also be instrumental for nuclear disarmament.

The CTBT, once in force, would be a significant boost for the NPT and reinvigorating for the wider nuclear non-proliferation regime. We share the view that the Treaty would also

be a confidence building measure, in particular in regions where the risk of nuclear proliferation is a real challenge due to unresolved political issues.

The common will that constitutes the basis of the Treaty has been confirmed through the worldwide political support it has received: 181 signatories of which 149 have ratified, making it clear that they are ready to be bound by the Treaty upon its entry into force. Moreover, the Preparatory Commission for the Comprehensive Nuclear-Test-Ban Treaty Organization (CTBTO) has almost completed the establishment of the global verification regime required under the Treaty.

The work of the CTBTO is valuable. The CTBTO's experts and staff deserve our appreciation for their tireless efforts under the leadership of the Executive Secretary Ambassador Tibor Tóth and his predecessor, Ambassador Wolfgang Hoffmann.

2010: A turning point for non-proliferation and disarmament

It is deplorable that such an important security and peace tool as the CTBT is not effective yet: nine ratifications necessary for the Treaty's entry into force

are missing, despite the five Conferences on Facilitating the Entry into Force of the CTBT (Article XIV conferences) held since 1999 and efforts made by a significant number of ratifying States to promote signatures and ratifications and, thus, the CTBT's entry into force.

We remain convinced that the CTBT is more relevant than ever and that its entry into force is very urgent in light of the challenges the non-proliferation regime is facing.

We also believe that the Annex 2 States, namely the 44 countries that must sign and ratify the CTBT before it can enter into force, including the nuclear weapon States, bear a special responsibility in this regard. The international community has enjoyed a de facto global nuclear test moratorium and we want to make it permanent, binding and verifiable. There is only one way to get there: bringing the CTBT into force universally.

We think that efforts should be united to make the year 2010 a turning point for non-proliferation and disarmament. We should build on the progress made at the Third Session of the Preparatory Committee for the NPT Review Conference in New York in May 2009 to ensure the

NOTES & QUOTES

“The Heads of State and Government stressed the significance of achieving universal adherence to the CTBT, including by all NWS [nuclear weapon States], which, *inter alia*, should contribute to the process of nuclear disarmament. They reiterated that if the objectives of the Treaty were to be fully realized, the continued commitment of all States signatories, especially the NWS, to nuclear disarmament would be essential.”

FROM THE FINAL DOCUMENT OF THE XV SUMMIT OF HEADS OF STATE AND GOVERNMENT OF THE NON-ALIGNED MOVEMENT, SHARM EL SHEIKH, 11-16 JULY 2009





success of the conference in 2010. In addition, we should take advantage of the improved political context to push for progress in disarmament.

Failure to meet this challenge will only add to the existing risk of the collapse of the non-proliferation regime. The international community cannot afford such a disaster. In spite of all the difficulties and challenges, we are determined to continue working tirelessly, in line with our commitment towards nuclear disarmament and non-proliferation, and in full cooperation with our partners and friends, to ensure significant progress in order to preserve the regime's credibility.

Article XIV conference co-chaired by Morocco and France: Improving prospects for entry into force

Difficulties are real and a lot still has to be done, but we have reasons for some optimism. In particular, the Conference on Disarmament has agreed to negotiate a Fissile Material Cut-off Treaty and President Barack Obama has renewed the commitment of his country to the CTBT, promising its ratification. If this materializes, it will greatly improve the prospects of the Treaty's entry into force. China has also started its ratification process, while Russia, which has already ratified the Treaty, has renewed its support for the CTBT as well as its willingness to move forward on the path of arms control and disarmament.

Promoting the entry into force of the Treaty is the objective of the next

Article XIV conference, which Morocco will be chairing with France in New York in September 2009. This conference will be an opportunity for the international community to show its unity on the

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objectives of the Treaty. Ratifying States will have to agree on a means to bring on board other countries, especially the nine outstanding Annex 2 States which still need to ratify the CTBT.

The success of the conference is important to the furtherance of the Treaty goals. It is also crucial for maintaining the political and diplomatic momentum to move this Treaty forward

Civil applications of verification technologies

Preserving peace and security is not the only advantage of the CTBT. Member States, in particular those from developing countries, attach high importance to the possible civil applications of technologies developed for verification purposes.

Experts and scientists have explored the possible role that such technologies could play in fields

such as earthquakes, underwater volcanoes and the monitoring of ocean processes, tsunami predictions, climate change, and nuclear accidents.

We look forward to the possible civil and scientific applications of the technologies of the CTBT's International Monitoring System and the products of the International Data Centre, and their potential contribution to sustainable development.

For all these reasons and benefits, the international community should spare no efforts to ensure this Treaty's entry into force which would represent, undoubtedly, the most valuable achievement since the adoption of the NPT. ■

Biographical note



Taib Fassi Fihri has served as Minister of Foreign Affairs and Cooperation for the Kingdom of Morocco since October 2007. His first appointment with the

Government of Morocco was with the Ministry of Planning in 1984. Mr. Fassi Fihri's career with the Ministry of Foreign Affairs spans over two decades, having first been appointed as Head of the Division in charge of relations with the European Community in 1986 and Secretary of State for Foreign Affairs and Cooperation in 1993. ■