



It is time for the CTBT to come into force

by Bernard Kouchner, the Minister of Foreign and European Affairs of France

The Comprehensive Nuclear-Test-Ban Treaty (CTBT) stands at a crossroads. Never has the prospect of its entry into force seemed so close. President Obama's confirmation of his intention to work with Congress towards the Treaty's ratification has undeniably created momentum in that direction, momentum that it is our responsibility to foster and extend.

CTBT approaches near-universality

The next Conference on Facilitating the Entry into Force of the Comprehensive Nuclear-Test-Ban Treaty to be held at the end of September in New York is one of the key points in that onward momentum. It was the wish of France, along with Morocco, to chair this major gathering in order to send out a strong message to those States that have not as yet ratified the Treaty. To date, it has been signed by over 180 States and just under 150 have ratified it – including the Member States of the European Union, all of whom are strongly committed to the Treaty. I am pleased to observe such near-universality, which testifies to the concern and commitment of the international community to see the definitive cessation of all nuclear tests.

DPRK's nuclear test reinforces the urgency of CTBT's entry into force

That is not, however, sufficient in itself. Thirteen years after it opened for

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signature, it is time the Treaty came into force. Over the last thirteen years the need for it has become increasingly marked. The second nuclear test the Democratic People's Republic of Korea (DPRK) claimed to have conducted on 25 May this year came as a further reminder of the importance of a universal, legally binding standard for the banning of nuclear tests.

That test also highlighted the relevance of an effective regime for the verification of compliance with the standard. In that regard, I can only welcome the operational deployment of the International Monitoring System for which the Treaty makes provision, and which has demonstrated its effectiveness by detecting the two explosions in North Korea. I salute the work done by the Preparatory Commission for the Comprehensive Nuclear-Test-Ban Treaty Organization (CTBTO) which, by

helping strengthen the Treaty, ensures that its credibility increases with every day that passes. As of now, the CTBTO is capable of performing the monitoring mission given to it by the Treaty. And as of tomorrow, no State will be able to carry out a nuclear test without the knowledge of the international community.

Nuclear disarmament From words to deeds

France has always provided its unfailing support for the CTBT. France signed it immediately after its adoption in 1996. Along with the United Kingdom, it was the first nuclear weapon State to ratify it in 1998. That same year, France began to dismantle its test facility in the Pacific and it no longer possesses the installations that would allow it to carry out nuclear tests. France is the only nuclear weapon State to have taken this irreversible step.

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This support testifies, from a wider perspective, to the particular importance my country attaches to nuclear disarmament. Our commitment is reflected in practical action. But we cannot continue to go down the road to disarmament unless the determination to make progress is unanimous. Transparency, trust and reciprocity form the basis of collective security and disarmament. Prospects for progress are now becoming clearer, with the commitment of the United States and Russia to the negotiation of a new agreement on the reduction of their strategic offensive arsenals.

The CTBT reminds us that a multilateral approach is also important. As the Nuclear Non-Proliferation Treaty (NPT) stresses, it is the responsibility of every State, not only the nuclear weapon States, to make its contribution to the edifice of nuclear disarmament and more generally to collective security.

CTBT’s entry into force is one of the top priorities in nuclear disarmament

In this context, I am pleased to note the forthcoming launch at the Conference on Disarmament of negotiations for a treaty banning the production of fissile materials for nuclear weapons. This Fissile Material Cut-off Treaty stands, alongside the entry into force of the CTBT, as one of our twin priorities in the field of multilateral nuclear disarmament, as the President of the Republic of France recalled in his speech at Cherbourg in March 2008. In that speech, he also proposed the implementation of an immediate moratorium on the production of fissile

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materials for nuclear weapons. The importance of this call is all the more apparent at a time when the negotiations are about to commence. Four nuclear weapon States have already agreed to such a moratorium. It is now essential that the other nuclear powers should take an unambiguous decision to join us.

These are crucial times ahead of us. The decisions that we take today will define the security of the world in which we shall be living tomorrow. The lead-up to the NPT Review Conference next May provides a favourable context for the ratification of the CTBT by those States that have not yet done so. The nine States whose ratification is necessary for its entry into force bear a special responsibility: China, the DPRK, Egypt, India, Indonesia, Iran, Israel, Pakistan and the United States. I solemnly call upon them to ratify the Treaty and to strengthen, in so doing, the international non-proliferation regime and collective security. ■

Biographical note



Dr. Bernard Kouchner was appointed Minister of Foreign and European Affairs of France in 2007. He previously served as France’s Minister

for Health and Humanitarian Action from 1992 to 1993 and as the United Nations Special Representative for Kosovo from 1999 to 2001. In addition to holding senior government and international positions, he has had a distinguished career as a medical doctor and professor. He is the founder of the Nobel Prize winning Médecins sans Frontières and of Médecins du Monde. ■

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