



In the spotlight

The Comprehensive Nuclear-Test-Ban Treaty (CTBT): The Way Forward

President Oscar Arias of Costa Rica presents his views on the CTBT

Q: *Since the Comprehensive Nuclear-Test-Ban Treaty (CTBT) opened for signature in 1996, Costa Rica has been unwavering in its political and technical support. It is coordinating the Conference on Facilitating the Entry into Force of the Comprehensive Nuclear-Test-Ban Treaty (Article XIV Conference) until 2009. It also chaired the Preparatory Commission for the Comprehensive Nuclear-Test-Ban Treaty Organization (CTBTO) in 2007 and the current Director of the International Monitoring System Division of the CTBTO is a Costa Rican national.*

In view of this background and of Costa Rica's commitment to global nuclear disarmament, what steps do you consider necessary over the next few years to ensure the Treaty's entry into force?

A: Costa Rica reiterated its strong support for the CTBT when it assumed, together with Austria, the co-chairmanship of the fifth Article XIV Conference held in Vienna from 17 to 18 September 2007.

The Conference's final declaration called for measures to promote the entry into force of the CTBT. Therefore, renewed efforts must be made to call on outstanding States to sign and ratify the Treaty.

While continuing to take advantage of bilateral occasions as well as multilateral fora for this purpose, I believe that new concerted efforts and strategies must be defined for the nine outstanding countries.

Let us review the list of States whose signature/ratification is still outstanding, and who need to ratify the Treaty for it to enter into force (Annex 2 countries): China, the Democratic People's Republic

of Korea, Egypt, India, Indonesia, Iran, Israel, Pakistan, and the United States.

The probable exception here is Indonesia, which is likely to respond to intensified lobbying efforts from like-minded States and ratify in the near future.

In the case of India and Pakistan, it is important to work out a creative deal whereby the lack of trust between the two countries can be overcome, by proposing that signature/ratification be a joint action by both States. It is very important for the international

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community to be attentive to developments of the U.S.-India deal, as it has a direct bearing on the CTBT and the norm against nuclear testing. It is regrettable that the documents relating to civil nuclear cooperation with India which have so far been agreed upon, including the safeguards agreement with the IAEA, have failed to place conditions on India to maintain its test moratorium and have not mentioned the importance of CTBT signature/ratification.

Regarding the outstanding Middle East countries, the strategy will not be effective unless it is integrated into the larger peace efforts for the region.

China has openly indicated that it is looking towards the United States before moving to ratification.

Regarding the Democratic People's Republic of Korea (DPRK), as it depends largely on China, it is foreseeable that it will follow suit after the Chinese ratification. In addition, the CTBT will be a logical addition to the DPRK denuclearization commitments under the Six-Party Talks, particularly after the U.S. ratification is secured.

Which brings us now to the United States.

Q: *How important do you consider U.S. leadership in the CTBT ratification process to be?*

A: It is necessary that the United States resumes its leadership role and commitment to the CTBT as one of the proponents of the Treaty. The upcoming elections provide an excellent opportunity to start new lobbying efforts within the policy-making apparatus in the new administration.

The two major presidential candidates have already declared that they would make major changes to the national security and foreign policies carried out by the George W. Bush administration over the last seven years. Although the United States has not conducted a nuclear test explosion since 1992, the Bush administration has not put the Treaty forward for a new vote on ratification to the Senate.

Barack Obama has been clear in his support of the bipartisan group of senior and former government officials who have called for moving toward a “world free of nuclear weapons. He has promised: “As president, I will take the lead to work for a world in which the roles and risks of nuclear weapons can be reduced and ultimately eliminated.” Furthermore, he has promised to make the CTBT a priority of his first term



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in office and pledged to work to rebuild bipartisan support for the Treaty.

In a recent speech, John McCain also endorsed the concept by stating: “A quarter of a century ago, President Ronald Reagan declared, ‘our dream is to see the day when nuclear weapons will be banished from the face of the Earth.’ That is my dream, too.”

McCain voted against the CTBT in 1999, stating at the time: “The viability of our nuclear deterrent is too central to our national security to rush approval of a treaty that cannot be verified and that will facilitate the decline of that deterrent.” However, more recently, he has committed to continuing the moratorium on nuclear weapons testing that has existed since 1992, and promised to take “another look” at the Treaty.

In order to give effect to international arms control and disarmament agreements, States must bring their domestic law into conformity with their obligations under international law. The need to implement national measures was highlighted by the adoption of UN Security Council Resolution 1540 in April 2004. This resolution obliges States to enact and enforce effective laws and supporting measures to prevent the proliferation of nuclear, biological and chemical weapons, related materials and their means of

delivery, and to prohibit non-State actors, especially terrorists, from developing and using such weapons.

Costa Rica assumed a non-permanent seat at the UN Security Council on 1 January 2008

and as Chair of the Terrorism/Weapons of Mass Destruction Committee under resolution 1540, it is strongly advocating the enhancement of international security by improving transparency over and assessing the quality of States’ national implementation of this resolution.

Q: *For the last two years, special meetings of the Organization of American States (OAS) Committee on Hemispheric Security have been convened, to consolidate the nuclear-weapon-free zone in Latin America and the Caribbean through the Treaty of Tlatelolco, and to promote the full force and effect of the CTBT.*

One of the goals of the OAS is to strengthen peace and security on the continent. As a fellow member of the OAS, what influence can be exerted on the United States to ratify the Treaty?

A: With the welcomed ratification by Colombia in January 2008, the United States is the only country from the OAS Member States listed in Annex 2 of the Treaty whose ratification is still outstanding.

From the very beginning, Costa Rica has sponsored the resolution in support of the CTBT, which has been approved by the OAS General Assembly since 2000. We will continue to work together with other OAS members to exert pressure on the USA to consider ratification as

soon as possible, particularly through the Committee on Hemispheric Security.

In this regard, it is very important to achieve the ratification of the remaining five States from the Latin America and Caribbean region (singling out the USA as the only outstanding OAS Member State whose ratification is still pending).

The OAS special sessions have played an important role in keeping the CTBT on the table of international discussions, even at a time when the global situation was not so conducive to its entry into force, and they have also served as a lobbying platform. Further such sessions should serve to foster more synergy with other Washington-based organizations/institutions to create a stronger momentum within the political arena in the USA, particularly in the light of the upcoming elections and later on with the new administration.

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Biographical note



First elected as president of Costa Rica in 1986 and re-elected in 2006, President Oscar Arias has won international recognition as a spokesperson for developing nations and for

promoting democracy, human development, demilitarization and disarmament. President Arias played a pivotal role in the signing of the Esquipulas Peace Agreement, which led to the cessation of various conflicts in Central America during the 1980s and for which he was awarded the Nobel Peace Prize in 1987. ■



In the spotlight

Q: *As an active and highly respected member of the international community and with an impressive record of settling disputes, Costa Rica exerts considerable influence on world affairs. What role can you play, as President of Costa Rica and 1987 Nobel Peace Prize Laureate, in encouraging the five remaining States in Latin America – Cuba, Dominica, Guatemala, St Vincent and the Grenadines, and Trinidad and Tobago – to ratify the CTBT?*

A: Through the Tlatelolco Treaty, the Latin American and Caribbean Region took a pioneer step towards international peace and security and constituted the first inhabited region in the world to become a nuclear-weapon-free zone.

The CTBT supersedes the commitments of the Tlatelolco Treaty and establishes a global norm against testing. In addition, it establishes a monitoring system to verify compliance.

I would like to reiterate my personal as well as my country's commitment to promoting disarmament and international peace and security, in line with Costa Rica's traditional policy on these issues, which form one of the pillars of my administration.

In this regard, the Foreign Ministers of the five outstanding States in Latin America have been invited to participate in the upcoming Ministerial Meeting to be held at the end of September 2008 in San José. This has been organized jointly by Austria and Costa Rica in follow up to the Article XIV Conference. In addition, five other States from the region who are strong supporters of the Treaty have also been invited to participate.

Furthermore, Costa Rica will continue to take advantage of bilateral meetings and multilateral fora such as the

UN and the OAS General Assemblies to encourage these States to sign and ratify as soon as possible.

Q: *Austria and Costa Rica are currently sharing the presidency of the Article XIV Conference.*

How important is it that two different geographic regions are jointly presiding over the Conference for the first time in the Treaty's history?

A: This shared presidency symbolizes the global support for the Treaty. It testifies that nuclear non-proliferation and disarmament, as well as international security as such, are universal concerns in which each and every Member State of the United Nations is a stakeholder. It also highlights the necessity for world-wide cooperation, a partnership, in the fight against global threats. ■

Notes & quotes

U.S. PRESIDENTIAL CANDIDATES' POSITIONS ON THE CTBT:

Senator John McCain promised to take "... another look at the Comprehensive Test Ban Treaty..." if elected, while speaking at the University of Denver, Colorado, United States, on 27 May 2008.

Senator Barack Obama pledged to "... work with the Senate to ratify the Comprehensive Test Ban Treaty and then seek its earliest possible entry into force," while delivering a speech at the University of Purdue, Indiana, United States, on 16 July 2008.