Underpinning the international non-proliferation regime

The UK’s commitment to bringing the CTBT into force

by WILLIAM HAGUE
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Britain is committed to upholding the Nuclear Non-Proliferation Treaty (NPT) and to the long term goal of a world free of nuclear weapons. Nuclear proliferation is a live threat to the security of the international community. It is our task to work together to respond to reduce the risks while spreading the benefits of peaceful civil nuclear technology. In Britain we demonstrate this resolve through our active membership of the multilateral disarmament machinery, our commitment to progress on the action plan agreed at the NPT Review Conference two years ago and our work with our international partners to build and maintain the political will needed to move along the path.

THE CTBT: A PINNACLE OF ARMS CONTROL AND DISARMAMENT

The Comprehensive Nuclear-Test-Ban Treaty (CTBT) is a vital component of this architecture. The steps required to complete and sustain the Treaty’s verification regime and bring it into force are central UK policy objectives. These shape our diplomatic and technical efforts in Vienna and elsewhere in support of the work of the Preparatory Commission for the Comprehensive Nuclear-Test-Ban Treaty Organization (CTBTO) and the CTBT more generally. The Treaty plays a central role in underpinning the international non-proliferation regime and our collective efforts towards global disarmament. The cessation of all nuclear weapon test explosions and all other nuclear explosions will genuinely reduce the development and quality of nuclear weapons, making it harder for those States that choose to develop them to do so. This would be a powerful step towards a safer world.

The United Kingdom has a long history of support for a ban on the testing of nuclear weapons. After it was first proposed by the Indian Prime Minister Jawaharlal Nehru in 1954, British Prime Minister Harold Macmillan devoted considerable personal effort to securing a Soviet/U.S. agreement on a comprehensive ban on nuclear tests in the late 1950s and early 1960s. But despite these efforts, the international community had to settle for the Partial Test Ban Treaty in 1963. In the mid-1990s a convergence of interests led finally to the Comprehensive Nuclear-Test-Ban Treaty, which we and many others regard as the pinnacle of arms control and disarmament. The United Kingdom was one of the very first signatories to the Treaty. Today the total number of countries to have signed it has reached 182 and I believe we are not far from finally realizing the goal of the Treaty’s entry into force.

IMPORTANT PROGRESS TOWARDS ENTRY INTO FORCE

In the last decade, while the NPT has come under increasing strain, progress towards the entry into force of the CTBT shows that we are still making strides and positive progress in the wider regime.
In December, we congratulated Indonesia for its ratification of the Treaty\(^1\). This significant move is indicative of the genuine strides that were made in 2011, following as it does the ratifications by Ghana and Guinea earlier in the year.

It is important that we maintain that momentum in 2012. We have already seen success with Guatemala’s decision to ratify in January. These ratifications are a major step towards finalizing the Treaty’s entry into force and a global ban on nuclear weapon test explosions. Putting in place a legally binding ban on nuclear test explosions is one of the UK Government’s key disarmament and non-proliferation priorities and the Treaty’s entry into force will strengthen not only our own national security but will also strengthen global security: we will all be safer with this Treaty than without it.

The Treaty is stronger with every new nation that adopts it, and I call on the remaining eight States that need to ratify the Treaty for it to enter into force to do so. I hope the Indonesian and Guatemalan examples of a change of direction in policy on the CTBT after 15 years will send a positive signal to them.

PROVIDING AN INDEPENDENT, MULTILATERAL VALIDATION OF ANY SUSPECT EVENT

At a technical level, preparations for entry into force also show great promise. The Treaty’s verification system is close to completion. As of 1 March 2012, 270 of the 337 International Monitoring System (IMS) facilities were fully operational with 18 more stations having been installed. Without the ability of the IMS to give an independent, multilateral validation of any suspect event, the international community’s response to any potential nuclear explosive test will be muted. The detection by the IMS of the sub-kiloton underground tests in the Democratic People’s Republic of Korea (DPRK) shows the clear progress that has been made in refining this system and its importance in the enforcement of any regime. The Treaty’s on-site inspection capability has taken great strides too. The successful integrated field exercise in Kazakhstan in 2008 was a significant milestone in progress towards an on-site inspection capability. I hope that the next such exercise in 2014 will show that we have moved even further forward in the last six years and the UK is providing practical support for this exercise. It is our fervent hope that it will represent a further major milestone for the Treaty.

The technical capabilities of the regime have improved beyond recognition from the days when the Treaty was negotiated in the mid-1990s. There should now be no doubt that the Treaty’s verification regime is fit for purpose. Our understanding of the interaction of seismic, hydroacoustic, radionuclide and infrasound IMS stations, alongside the other means of verification at the international community’s disposal, has continued to make good progress. These developments continue to build towards an on-site inspection capability, which alongside the detection of the DPRK tests, will both ensure that the case for the Treaty will be proven conclusively.

KEEPING ABRASE OF SCIENTIFIC AND TECHNICAL DEVELOPMENTS

The CTBT verification regime therefore has developed to a point where it now presents a formidable challenge for any would-be Treaty violator. That does not mean, however, that it is infallible, which is why we should continue to support the role played by national technical means. Science and technology continue to develop at a rapid pace. We must ensure that we make the most of developments in computing or detection that will improve all aspects of the verification regime over the coming years and continue to raise our standards ever higher in a bid to give ourselves as comprehensive a tool kit as possible to support the Treaty. As the CTBT: Science and Technology Conference in Vienna noted last June, progress in sensors, networks and observational technologies as well as advances in computing and processing power offer benefits that will improve the efficacy of all components of the Treaty’s verification regime.

The CTBT network performed impressively in the aftermath of the devastating tragedy that affected Japan a year ago and was a strong demonstration of the network’s ability to detect and identify the fallout from nuclear incidents. As the network grows its capability around the world, there will be nowhere that a nuclear test explosion can take place without detection. This can strengthen our own national security and the security of the world.

\(^1\) The Indonesian Parliament ratified the CTBT on 6 December 2011. The ratification process was completed on 6 February 2012 when Indonesian Minister of Foreign Affairs Marty Natalegawa deposited the instrument of ratification of the CTBT with the UN Secretary-General in New York. Indonesia is one of the Annex 2 States that must ratify the CTBT before it can enter into force.  

**BIOGRAPHICAL NOTE**

**WILLIAM HAGUE**  
was appointed British Foreign Secretary in May 2010. He was first elected to Parliament in 1989 and held several posts in government in the 1990s, including Minister of State for Social Security and Disabled People from 1994 to 1995 and Secretary of State for Wales in 1995. In 1997 Hague was elected Leader of the Conservative party and remained in that position until 2001. From 2005 to 2010 he served as Shadow Foreign Secretary and Senior Member of the Shadow Cabinet.