Finland is a faithful supporter of the Comprehensive Nuclear-Test-Ban Treaty (CTBT). My country signed the Treaty on the very same day it was opened for signature in 1996 and ratified it in early 1999. Because it has nuclear energy power plants, Finland is one of the 44 Annex 2 States whose ratification is needed before the Treaty can enter into force.

The CTBT is frequently quoted as a core element of the worldwide nuclear disarmament and non-proliferation regime. I fully agree. It is in our common interests that no new nuclear weapons are developed and no new nuclear weapons States emerge. The verification regime embedded in the Treaty is an important tool to make sure that the ban is respected. By signing and ratifying the Treaty we have committed ourselves to constructing a verification system that will be fully operational by the time the Treaty enters into force. That work is proceeding well. During the time that the verification system has been developed it has become evident that its usefulness extends way beyond its original purpose of monitoring compliance with the CTBT.

Through its network of 337 monitoring facilities – the International Monitoring System (IMS) – the Preparatory Commission for the Comprehensive Nuclear-Test-Ban Treaty Organization (CTBTO) has also proven its potential, effectiveness and usefulness with regard to civil and scientific applications. The IMS provides accurate information not only to countries around the world but also to many international organizations like the International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA), the World Meteorological Organization (WMO) and the World Health Organization (WHO). We witnessed during last year’s Fukushima catastrophe that the CTBTO data could help Japan and other countries in the region to issue tsunami warnings within a few minutes of the event.

As one of the organizers of the CTBT Ministerial Meeting in New York on 27 September, Finland’s Foreign Minister Erkki Tuomioja states that while the current voluntary moratorium on nuclear weapon tests is important, it cannot be a substitute for a global ban. In addition, he points out the significant role of the CTBTO not only in detecting nuclear explosions but also in contributing to human welfare.

»The verification system’s usefulness extends way beyond its original purpose of monitoring compliance with the CTBT.«
minutes time, allowing many people to escape to higher ground. I am convinced that the added value of the IMS data for natural and man-made disaster prevention and mitigation will continue to increase in the future. Through the CTBT we can promote the wealth of our planet and we can contribute in many ways to human welfare.

ENSURING NUCLEAR SAFETY AND SECURITY

Since May 2000, Finland has hosted two IMS facilities: a station in Lahti and a radionuclide laboratory in Helsinki. Finland was the 11th Member State to sign a facility agreement with the CTBTO. The cooperation between the facilities and the CTBTO is excellent.

Nuclear safety and security are of utmost importance to my country. The safety of Finland’s nuclear power plants is strictly regulated by STUK, the independent Radiation and Nuclear Safety Authority of Finland. However, the accidents in Chernobyl and Fukushima have proven that there are no borders in nuclear catastrophes. Accidents can take place unexpectedly anywhere. Therefore, the CTBTO’s monitoring system is of great importance in detecting the dispersion of radioactive materials and delivering early warnings.

My country plays an active role in promoting the universalization of the CTBT. Together with other “Friends of the CTBT” we have offered our strongest political and practical support to the CTBT and its entry into force. As I stated at the Conference on Facilitating the Entry into Force of the CTBT in New York last September, it is time to act now: Finland calls upon all States that have not yet signed and ratified the CTBT to do so without further delay. I warmly congratulate Indonesia, which ratified the CTBT on 6 December, on the Finnish Independence Day. Indonesia is a good example for the eight remaining Annex 2 States to follow suit and ratify without further delay.

CONTINUING EFFORTS TO CLOSE THE DOOR ON NUCLEAR TESTING

We should keep in mind the successful outcome of the 2010 Review Conference of the Nuclear Non-Proliferation Treaty (NPT), and continue making efforts in nuclear disarmament. Finland has accepted the challenge of acting as both the facilitator and host of a conference in December 2012 on the establishment of a Middle East zone free of nuclear weapons and all other weapons of mass destruction.

The current voluntary moratorium on nuclear weapon tests is of great importance, but I wish to underline that it cannot be a substitute for a global ban. It is time to close the door on nuclear weapon tests. The CTBT’s entry into force will considerably strengthen the world’s security architecture and benefit the whole world. To quote the UN Secretary General, Ban Ki-moon: “Even before entering into force, the CTBT is saving lives.” Let’s save more lives! Let’s do it – now, in 2012!

(1) The ratification process was completed when Indonesia deposited the instrument of ratification with the UNSG on 6 February 2012.

ERKKI TUOMIOJA

is the Finnish Minister for Foreign Affairs. Prior to his appointment in June 2011, he was Chairman of the Grand Committee for EU Affairs from 2007 to 2011, Minister for Foreign Affairs from 2000 to 2007 and Minister of Trade and Industry from 1999 to 2000. Minister Tuomioja served as Vice-Chairman and then Chairman of the Social Democratic Party Parliamentary Group between 1991 and 1999 and as Deputy Mayor of Helsinki from 1979 to 1991. He has been a Member of Parliament since 1970.