



VOICES

Burkina Faso's commitment to peace and security

BY PRESIDENT BLAISE COMPAORÉ
OF BURKINA FASO

On 13 June 2013, President Blaise Compaoré of Burkina Faso became the first head of state to address the Preparatory Commission for the Comprehensive Nuclear-Test-Ban Treaty Organization.

Below is a slightly abridged version of President Compaoré's address.

It is a real pleasure for me to take part in this 40th session of the Preparatory Commission for the Comprehensive Nuclear-Test-Ban Treaty Organization (CTBTO) here in the historic city of Vienna.

I would like to express my gratitude to the Chairperson of the Preparatory Commission for his kind invitation, which has afforded me the opportunity to address this august assembly gathered here to consider the important issues related to nuclear non-proliferation.

I would also like to extend my sincere congratulations to Mr Tibor Tóth, the outgoing Executive Secretary, for his total commitment in the service of world peace and for the excellent work he has accomplished during his two terms of office at the head of our organization.

Promoting the peace and security of humankind is one of the major challenges facing the international community.

The nuclear era, which started in the early 1940s, is characterized by a certain ambivalence. There have been some positive achievements regarding the civilian use of nuclear technology, which has the potential to improve the lives of men and women in the fields of energy and medicine. But on the other hand, it also poses a serious threat to mankind because the military use that can be made of nuclear technology has led to the development and stockpiling of enormous quantities of nuclear weapons and to a stealthy but nonetheless real arms race to acquire and produce these weapons.

Thus, while the risk of a global nuclear war remains contained, the probability of nuclear weapons being used in limited conflicts remains fairly high because of the spread of technology that can be used for nuclear weapons production, the

growing number of political hot-spots in the world and the development of international terrorism.

We are happy to see that the international community has been able to mobilize itself to establish the instruments necessary to address this threat. The Comprehensive Nuclear-Test-Ban Treaty (CTBT) is a key element of the international institutional and legal architecture that the world's States have developed to that end.

Contemporary history of world governance teaches us, on the one hand, that the issue of nuclear non-proliferation in general and the ban on nuclear testing concerns all countries and, on the other hand, that the CTBT is the ultimate legal barrier not only to the development of new weapons but also to the improvement of existing ones.

My country, Burkina Faso, is deeply committed to the promotion of peace and security in our world. It is our conviction that peace and security must be dealt

with in a global fashion in a system based on multilateralism. This is why Burkina Faso has always invested in the initiatives of the international community to prevent conflicts and restore peace in various regions of the world.

Our work has been conducted with success: we have mediated between conflicting parties on the African continent every time the dialogue process between countries has broken down and the population's security has been affected. In the past, we have mediated in Darfur, in Togo, in Côte d'Ivoire and in the Republic of Guinea; today in Mali.

On the subject of nuclear weapons, Burkina Faso was one of the first countries to sign and ratify the treaty that created a nuclear-weapon-free zone in Africa, commonly known as the Treaty of Pelindaba. Burkina Faso is a party to the Nuclear Non-Proliferation Treaty, and is proud to have signed and ratified the CTBT in September 1996 and

April 2002 respectively. This Treaty and its statutory organs require our fullest attention. The CTBT has been waiting on the sidelines for more than 16 years for the international community to affirm its full entry into force by completing the process of signatures and ratifications.

I would like to take this opportunity to add my voice to that of all peace-loving men and women to launch an appeal to all States whose signature and ratification is still needed for the Treaty's entry into force; they should indeed sign and ratify in the name of the promotion of peace and security of humankind.

Despite its relative youth, the CTBT has already been recognized as an international standard, with substantial achievements to its credit. Apart from a few rare exceptions, we can state with satisfaction that traditional nuclear testing has not taken place since the end of the 1990s. We also note that, over and above the issues that are

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strictly linked to nuclear disarmament and non-proliferation, the data that are collected and the products and technologies developed by the CTBTO and its Preparatory Commission are of great importance in defining effective responses to natural risks and disasters.

The data promote a better knowledge and fuller understanding of geological, climatic and environmental phenomena such as the structure of the Earth's crust, volcanic activity, tsunamis, global climate change and the continual deterioration of ecological balances.

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President Compaoré addressing the 40th session of the Preparatory Commission for the CTBTO on 13 June 2013.





CTBTO Executive Secretary-elect Lassina Zerbo briefing President Compaoré in the Operations Centre at the CTBTO's International Data Centre. June 2013.



President Compaoré (left) and CTBTO Executive Secretary-elect Lassina Zerbo (right) during a press briefing, Vienna, 13 June 2013.



President Compaoré (seated second from left) during his visit to the CTBTO headquarters, Vienna, 13 June 2013. Representing the Permanent Mission of Burkina Faso: Ambassador Paul Tiendrebeogo (to the President's right) and Ambassador Agnekotom Bogore (to the President's left).

I believe that the time has come to strengthen this standard by making the CTBT legally binding and universal. With this expectation, we believe it is necessary to continue to reinforce the technical and operational capacities of the CTBTO because the viability of this instrument of disarmament and non-proliferation depends on the effectiveness of the verification and monitoring regime that underpins it.

You have seen fit to place your trust in Mr Lassina Zerbo to direct the Preparatory Commission of the CTBTO as Executive Secretary. I would like to thank you for this great distinction that you have bestowed on a son of Burkina Faso and of Africa. Your choice reflects your appreciation of the merits of Mr Zerbo, his technical competence acquired throughout his long and very extensive professional career, qualities which are scientific, managerial and diplomatic and which he has deployed in the cause of world peace and security.

Once Mr Zerbo has assumed office, I would like to reiterate my full congratulations, and reassure him of the full backing of the Government and the people of Burkina Faso and convey to him my desire for the complete success of his mission in the service of peace in general and of nuclear non-proliferation in particular.

BIOGRAPHICAL NOTE

BLAISE COMPAORE

is the President of Burkina Faso. He has served as the chairman of various regional bodies, including the Organization of African Unity (now the African Union), the Economic Community of West African States, and the West African Economic and Monetary Union. He has also served as a key mediator in conflicts in Côte d'Ivoire, Togo, Guinea, Mali, Niger and Eritrea/Ethiopia. In recognition of his actions for peace in Africa and the world, he has received several awards, most recently from the Islamic Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (ISESCO) in May 2013 and *la Grande Croix de l'Ordre National du Mali* in August 2013.