



*CTBTO GEM members and CTBTO Youth Group members exchanging views at the inter-generational dialogue sessions at the 2019 CTBTO Science and Technology (SnT) Conference.*

# Towards a real nuclear inter-generational dialogue: the experience of CTBTO

BY CTBTO EDITORIAL TEAM

The call for a more inclusive dialogue with younger generations on issues of global relevance is growing more pressing by the day, within the United Nations and beyond.

As the world population ages and welfare costs increase, a solid inter-generational social contract based on principles such as fairness, justice and communitarianism is seen as indispensable for societies to remain peaceful. The world's media have been riveted by youth activism on issues related to climate change, environmental protection and sustainability. These youth-led movements have risen to global prominence because they have been able to cast the relations among generations as a matter of justice broadly conceived. In this

new framework, the social contract between generations includes burden-sharing over rising costs related to welfare for the aging population, but also a more responsible approach to the environment and development. Genuine inter-generational dialogue amid geopolitical uncertainties and global pains is also vital to establish and nurture a globally minded class of future leaders attuned to working collegially for the greater good.

Inspired by the green movements, inter-generational dialogues are emerging in other domains including human rights and nuclear disarmament. In a recent report, UN Secretary General António Guterres remarks that young people:

**“proved their power time and again in support of the cause of disarmament. Young campaigners have worked at the forefront of successful international campaigns to ban landmines, cluster munitions and nuclear weapons.”**

Against this backdrop, the CTBTO is actively supporting youth involvement through its CTBTO Youth Group (CYG), and its experience of fostering constructive relationships across the generational divide is yielding valuable lessons.

## **YOUTH FOR DISARMAMENT**

According to the UN's 2019 World Population Prospects report, there are about 1.2 billion youth aged 15 to 24 years in the world, or 16 per

## AGE BREAKDOWN

AGE RANGE	NO. OF MEMBERS	
<18	7	0.8%
18 – 22	149	17.7%
23 – 26	276	32.7%
27 – 30	221	26.2%
31 – 33	82	9.7%
34–35	45	5.3%
35 <	50	5.9%
Unknown	13	1.5%
<b>Total</b>	<b>843</b>	<b>100.0%</b>

## REGIONAL DISTRIBUTION

REGION	NO. OF MEMBERS	
Africa	117	13.9%
Eastern Europe	115	13.6%
Latin America and the Caribbean	51	6.0%
Middle East and South Asia	183	21.7%
North America, Western Europe	296	35.1%
South East Asia, the Pacific and the Far East	81	9.6%
<b>Total</b>	<b>843</b>	<b>100.0%</b>

## AFFILIATION

AFFILIATION	NO. OF MEMBERS	
Student	442	52.4%
Station Operator	2	0.2%
Researcher	108	12.8%
Professor	12	1.4%
Permanent Mission	6	0.7%
Other Ministry/Government Agency	46	5.5%
Other	52	6.2%
Non Governmental Organization	47	5.6%
National Data Centre	24	2.8%
Ministry of Foreign Affairs	4	0.5%
International Organization	31	3.7%
Unknown	69	8.2%
<b>Total</b>	<b>843</b>	<b>100.0%</b>

cent of the global population. In 2019, Central and Southern Asia were home to the largest number of youth (361 million), followed by Eastern and South-Eastern Asia (307 million) and sub-Saharan Africa (211 million). Nearly half of the world's young live in Sub-Saharan Africa.

In the past two years, the United Nations has accelerated its efforts to forge a constructive policy dialogue with youth around the world. The interest of the international community in engaging young people in the most pressing issues of our times has resulted in the adoption of important policy and legislative instruments.

For example, in his Agenda for Disarmament: Securing Our Common Future, Secretary General Gutierrez has asked the international community to undertake greater efforts to empower young people and establish inclusive consultative mechanisms with them. In response to that call, late last year at its 74th session the First Committee of the United Nations General Assembly adopted – for the first time since its establishment – a resolution on Youth, Disarmament and Non-Proliferation.

The resolution recognizes the critical role of young people as agents for social change, and encourages Member States, the United Nations, relevant specialized agencies and regional and subregional organizations: **“to promote the meaningful and inclusive participation of young people in discussions in the field of disarmament and non-proliferation, including through dialogue platforms, mentoring, internships, fellowships, scholarships, model events and youth group activities”**.

## CTBTO YOUTH GROUP: NUMBERS AND IMPACT

The CYG, established in 2016 under the leadership of Executive Secretary Lassina Zerbo, today stands as one of the largest youth initiatives on nuclear disarmament and non-proliferation.

The scope of the initiative is twofold: to preserve the extraordinary legacy and historical achievements of the anti-nuclear-test movement by educating young people on the importance of the CTBT and the urgency of banning nuclear test explosions once and for all; and to work alongside the new generation to find creative ways to maintain and expand support to the CTBTO from communities and societies, member states and organizations around the world.

Today the CTBTO Youth Group counts roughly 900 members from 101 countries with an almost equal representation of women (48.3%), and men (51.7%). The data provided below offers a more comprehensive picture of our youth members.

At the same time, the CTBTO has established an internal Task Force mandated to coordinate the CYG initiative, identify opportunities for youth engagement, develop and conduct capacity building training across regions and design social media platforms to encourage youth to share knowledge and experiences related to their work in the promotion of the CTBT.

The initiative has certainly allowed the CTBTO to benefit from the incredible talent and creativity of young professionals from around the world. From science to policy and the arts, young people engaged with the CTBTO have devised innovative ways to reach young people around the world, integrate the Treaty into educational curricula and bring CTBTO scientific knowledge to museums and art forums. Similarly, the initiative has helped young professionals strengthen their understanding and knowledge of issues related to nuclear disarmament and non-proliferation. Over 25 regional and national workshops and outreach educational activities have been organized in the past three years with the participation of over 300 youth members.

### A successful inter-generational dialogue develops over time.

In addition, the CTBTO Youth Group has facilitated the creation of a global network of like-minded young professionals interested in working together to achieve a world free of nuclear weapons. The CTBTO has made concerted efforts to feature youth members in high-level meetings, including CTBTO side-events at

the Nuclear Non-Proliferation Treaty's Preparatory Committee in 2017, 2018 and 2019. CYG members have also been invited to address CTBTO Ministerial Meetings in 2017 and 2019.

### CTBTO'S INTER-GENERATIONAL DIALOGUE

To capitalize further on the success of the CYG initiative, the CTBTO has been working to convene a series of Inter-Generational Dialogues between CYG members and established diplomats, scientists and policy makers in the field of nuclear non-proliferation, sustainable development and disarmament. Two of the most successful inter-generational dialogues convened by the CTBTO involved CYG members and selected representatives from the CTBTO Group of Eminent Persons (GEM), held to mark the International Day against Nuclear Tests in August 2018, and during the CTBTO Science and Technology Conference in June 2019.

In 2018, under the banner of the CTBTO GEM-Youth International Conference "Remembering the past, looking to the future", CYG members and GEM participants examined the conditions that allowed for the successful negotiations of the Comprehensive Nuclear-Test-Ban Treaty and discussed how the Treaty

*CTBTO Youth Group members at 2019 SnT Conference in Vienna*





*CTBTO Youth Group members exchange views with CTBTO GEM members at the inter-generational dialogue sessions at the 2019 SnT Conference held at the Hofburg Palace in Vienna.*

continues to be relevant today. In 2019 the two groups focused on how the Sustainable Development Goals interplay with the mandate of the CTBT to achieve a world free of nuclear weapons. The two groups also exchanged views on how educational institutions today should offer a curriculum that better promotes global citizenship and universal values. The dialogues between the two groups were held in closed-door sessions and were moderated by facilitators specialized in inter-cultural mediation. The discussions were structured in segments, each revolving around the examination of a specific policy question related to the mandate and current work of the CTBTO.

Both dialogues ended in success as participants worked collaboratively towards the generation of new project ideas. As inter-generational dialogues proliferate around the world, the experience of the CTBTO Youth Group – GEM dialogue revealed important lessons learned:

**A Make it timely and relevant**  
Inter-generational dialogues work best if they are convened around concrete strategic questions that can be best addressed through an inclusive decision-making approach.

Before convening the dialogue, participants need to understand in what way this dialogue serves a higher purpose for the organization.

**B A learning experience for everyone**

Former diplomats and professionals well established in their field bring to the table a unique historical perspective that should not be lost in the dialogue. In the case of the Comprehensive Nuclear-Test-Ban Treaty, many of the GEM members served as negotiators to the Treaty itself. Personal accounts of how the diplomatic negotiations unfolded made for compelling and inspiring stories encouraging much deeper learning for all participants.

In addition, and even more importantly, a historical perspective allows participants, especially the youngest ones, to recognize that all generations have faced troubling challenges and encountered both defeats and victories along the way. Young people often erroneously believe that the historical moment in which they are coming of age is bleaker and more conflictual than previous ones. It is vital therefore to restore a historical perspective to today's challenges and to make young people understand that

these challenges originated long ago. Similarly, young people offer insights into modern thinking that former diplomats might not be familiar with. It is therefore important to recognize that each dialogue is informed by a specific historical context that skews interpretation of facts and perceptions.

**c Sustain the dialogue**

A successful inter-generational dialogue develops over time. Generally, when two groups come together for the first time, the dialogue inevitably stays on a superficial level. It is only when the groups meet for the second and third time that a bond forms among their members and deep learning begins.

**CONCLUSIONS**

The CTBTO is deeply committed to continue engaging with young people to promote and advance the vision of a world free of nuclear weapons. We are also strong supporters of forging a strong bond among generations committed to such a goal. We have planned new inter-generational dialogues around the world, and we are determined to continue to sustain such efforts in the future.