

Opening Statements of Australia's Foreign Minister Stephen Smith and CTBTO Executive Secretary Tibor Tóth at a Press Briefing the Vienna International Center

[Note: This is a rush transcript from the press conference at 4:30pm, 17 February 2010]

Australian Minister for Foreign Affairs Stephen Smith:

"Firstly it is my first visit as Australian Foreign Minister to Vienna and in the course of the day I have obviously had contact with the Austrian Government on bilateral matters but also with key regional and international institutions on regional and international matters.

At the end of last year Australia became an Asian Dialogue Partner for the Organization of Security Cooperation in Europe so I have been to the OSCE earlier this morning. But Vienna of course is home to significant and important nuclear non-proliferation institutions but also to Security Institutions, so this afternoon I have met with the Director General of the IAEA and now with the Executive Secretary of the CTBT Organization.

Can I firstly say Tibor Tóth that we have met a number of occasions before in Australia in New York and maybe it is something that I am not supposed to share but is a great pleasure to complete the circle in its entirety in Vienna on CTBT soil.

Australia was the first country to sign the CTBT. We take very seriously our role as a country deeply committed to nuclear non-proliferation and to disarmament.

At the end of last year, two former foreign ministers, one from Australia and one from Japan, at Australia and Japan's instigation launched the Report on the *International Committee on Nuclear Non-proliferation and Disarmament* which is a report we see as playing a valuable contribution in the run up to Nuclear Non-Proliferation Treaty Conference later this year.

Of course we see the CTBT as one of the most fundamental things that the global community can do to reach the ultimate objective of abolition of nuclear weapons and to ensure that in the interim, non-proliferation and disarmament. We are now up to 151 ratifications. Australia has worked very closely with the organization to help secure those ratifications. There is more we can do. One of the conversations that we have had today is how Australia can persistently encourage other nations in our region and in the Asia Pacific to sign up to the Treaty and to ratify. Importantly also we had a discussion about how the verification system is now able to be used for very other important objectives. The early warning systems for Tsunamis so very significant humanitarian, both preventative and other mechanisms and so that is a very good useful addition to the verification procedures and mechanisms of the Treaty.

Australian regards itself very proudly that as the country has made a significant contribution to the Treaty, to nuclear non-proliferation and disarmament issues and we continue to be very active in the field and to work very closely with the CTBT organization and we hope that with enduring patience we will see the ratification and the coming into force of the Treaty. Can I take this opportunity just complimenting Tibor and his Officers on the great work that they do. It is always a great pleasure to

meet and to work with Tibor, but it is also productive outcomes and we have seen that again today and that was the conversation that we have had. Thank you very much.”

CTBTO Executive Secretary Tibor Tóth:

I called Australia a superpower for nuclear disarmament and nuclear nonproliferation. The way they have historically invested in this area. Minister Smith did not mention that practically it was Australia who took the treaty from Geneva to New York. Australia played a significant role during the last decade on promoting the Treaty, as coordinator for two years of the ministerial process providing the chair, helping us in many regions with universalisation not just in the Pacific Far East Region but in other regions supporting all efforts there.

On stations, Australia is a superpower as well. After the United States and after the Russian Federation, with 21 stations Australia has the highest contingent of monitoring facilities around the world and it has a similarly high number of communication assets which are linking the stations with Vienna.

On Tsunami warning he touched upon this issue but Australia was one of the first countries with whom we concluded a national Tsunami early warning arrangement. We discussed how to replicate that very positive experience with other countries in the region and with other regions. There are the regions like the Western Pacific Coast of Latin America like the Caribbean Region, Western Coast of Africa, where countries like to strengthen the Tsunami warning arrangements.

So I just wanted to add these elements besides the recognition of the important role of the Evans-Kawaguchi Commission. It was sponsored by the two governments and supported by the two governments. [Japan and Australia] The report is providing an important menu for potential action. What was emphasized in the discussion is that we need not just ideas but people who can implement these ideas.

On all parts, the organization wants to make a significant step forward on what we call “capacity development” to create additional knowledge, additional layers of people who are skilled in verification monitoring who understand the issues behind those technologies and who can help to carry out many of the main items. Just in the Even Evans-Kawaguchi Report, there are around one hundred proposals and these are clusters of proposals.

So I will stop here.”