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International Conference: “From a Nuclear Test Ban to a Nuclear-Weapons-Free World”

*Panel: Comprehensive Nuclear-Test-Ban Treaty:
Building Block for a Nuclear-Weapons-Free World*

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It is a distinct honour for me to address the Astana International Conference “From a Nuclear Test Ban to a Nuclear-Weapons-Free World.” I would like to express my gratitude to the Government of Kazakhstan for convening this timely event. It is under the leadership and vision of President Nazarbayev that Kazakhstan closed down the Semipalatinsk Test Site exactly 21 years ago on this day. Since then Kazakhstan has taken the lead in virtually all aspects of nuclear disarmament and non-proliferation, including renouncing the Soviet nuclear weapons legacy, establishing a Nuclear-Weapons-Free Zone in Central Asia and pioneering multilateral approaches to the nuclear fuel cycle. Kazakhstan has been an ardent supporter and reliable partner for the Comprehensive Nuclear-Test-Ban Treaty (CTBT), promoting the Treaty at the highest political level and providing important expertise for the development of the verification regime and capacity building. Today I would like to share with you the importance of the CTBT to global security and ridding the world of nuclear weapons and suggest why I think you should be part of this ambitious endeavour.

The CTBT is a pillar of the nuclear non-proliferation and disarmament regime. Its entry-into-force is crucial for further progress on nuclear disarmament. Since the CTBT was adopted in 1996, the genie of nuclear testing has virtually been pushed back into the bottle. In contrast to of some 400 explosions every decade since 1945, there were only two tests in the last decade. However, until we seal the bottle once and for all, until we bring the Treaty into force, none of us can feel safe.

In the wake of the ratification of the CTBT by Indonesia this year, there is an important opportunity to harness and maintain the momentum towards a world free of nuclear testing and ultimately, of nuclear weapons. The Treaty enjoys growing political support. Today, 183 countries have signed the Treaty. 157 states have ratified. ***The international community has rallied behind the Test Ban Treaty in a universal manner***, but for the Treaty to enter into force, the signature and ratification of the remaining eight Annex 2 states is still required.

While the CTBT has still not entered into force, it serves as an important confidence building measure. It provides a forum to engage on complex verification issues in a multilateral setting. The CTBTO demonstrates that politically and scientifically complex multilateral verification is possible, and that it does work.

The CTBT and its verification regime embody the principles of democracy and transparency, all-inclusiveness and non-discrimination. The verification regime of the CTBT gathers data around the globe and around the clock. Around the globe and around the clock, the data are shared with 1,300 institutions in 120 countries. Made up of 337 monitoring facilities and 250 communication assets, the system operates at the cutting edge of scientific knowledge and is over 85% complete. It requires the cooperation of a staff of over 260 people at the PTS with governments, national data centres and monitoring stations all over the world. The system is unprecedented in its global reach. It is a joint venture for strengthening international peace and security. It has proven that it is effective not only during the two North Korean tests, but also during the response to and mitigation of the consequences of the Fukushima accident.

This is the reason why you are invited to become a partner in a mission where the world puts an end to nuclear explosions, before nuclear explosions put an end to the world. ***The role of parliamentarians is key*** in making this possible: moving towards the entry-into-force of the Treaty and eventually to its universalization. We need your leadership to reinvigorate the vision of your governments and ensure that we move in the right direction. I cannot think of a better group to address than the legislators who gathered here today, who support nuclear disarmament and non-proliferation.

CTBT verification science and technology does not stand still: it is continually in development. In this regard, I would like to highlight a landmark conference aimed at building engagement with the global science community: “Science, Technology and Innovation 2013”, which will be held in Vienna from 17 to 21 June of next year. The Conference will put particular emphasis on the importance of technology foresight with regards to the CTBT verification system. The format for the conference will build on that of Science and Technology 2011, which brought 700 participants from 100 different countries to Vienna.

The CTBTO is also investing in the development of capacity on a global scale that will contribute to achieving a world free of nuclear weapons. This investment follows a two-pronged approach: ***deep training***, which focuses on developing the human capital directly invested in the verification regime, including training of station operators and national data centre staff. In addition, the CTBTO utilizes ***broad training under the umbrella of the Capacity Development Initiative***, which seeks to train and educate the next generation of CTBT experts from across a range of disciplines. The upcoming ***Advanced Science Course***, to be held in Vienna and online in November this year, is an example of our capacity building synergy between diplomacy, academia, research and education on the one hand, and the practice of disarmament and non-proliferation on the other.

Parliamentarians can learn more about the CTBT and our work by requesting an ***information visit*** to Vienna, where they can visit our facilities and be briefed about the most recent developments related to the CTBT and its verification regime.

By taking steps to ***educate themselves about the CTBT and inform their government, colleagues and constituencies*** about the importance of banning nuclear testing, parliamentarians can take ***concrete action*** towards a nuclear-weapons-free world.

Thank you.