

Transcript of Press Conference on 17 February 2012

This is a transcript of remarks made by the United Nations Secretary-General Ban Ki-moon, the Swedish Foreign Minister Carl Bildt, Austrian State Secretary for Foreign Affairs Wolfgang Waldner and CTBTO Executive Secretary Tibor Tóth to the media on the occasion of the CTBTO's 15th Anniversary at CTBTO Headquarters, Vienna, Austria, 17 February 2012.

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Introduction by CTBTO spokesperson Annika Thunborg

Annika Thunborg: Welcome to this press briefing on the 15th anniversary of the Comprehensive Nuclear-Test-Ban Treaty Organization and the opening of the United Nations Office of Disarmament Affairs. We will start with brief statements. The Secretary General will start, followed by the Foreign Minister of Sweden, the State Secretary of Austria and then the Executive Secretary, in that order, followed by questions and answers.

Mr Secretary General, you have the floor.

Statements

Statement by United Nations Secretary-General Ban Ki-moon

It is a great pleasure to join our distinguished colleague, Foreign Minister Carl Bildt of Sweden, of course, Tibor Tóth, our Executive Secretary and also State Secretary of Austria, Wolfgang Waldner, and thank you for your strong leadership and commitment.

I have been to Vienna many times and I'm very much committed to see the CTBT coming into effect as soon as possible. In fact, I made 2012, this year, the target year to have this CTBT coming into effect. We have been waiting 15 years and it is in a sense irresponsible for the international community just to wait. I urge again all those so-called hold-out States, eight hold-out States, to sign and ratify as early as possible. I'd like to comment on the leadership and commitment of Executive Secretary Tibor Tóth. He is in fact a "one man WMD", a one man of "weapons of mass disarmament" - instead of weapons of mass destruction. So I nicknamed him as "one man WMD".

As I told you earlier in the ceremony, I am ready to travel to the capitals of these eight countries together with Ambassador Tibor Tóth to convince those leaders who are still not ready, or are reluctant, even doubtful about the importance of the CTBT. That is my commitment as I had the distinguished honour of serving for six months in 1999 (as Chairperson) at the CTBT, at an early stage of the existence of the CTBT.

Let us work together with wholehearted commitment to make this world free of nuclear testing, nuclear weapons - so that everybody can live in peace and security without any fear of nuclear explosions.

Thank you very much.

Statement by Swedish Foreign Minister Carl Bildt

I don't think, as a matter of fact, I need to say very much more. Because you said it all and I think we said it in our introductory statements. So, I think, I'll leave it here and see if there are any questions or anything further that we need to clarify for the representatives of the media.

Statement by Austrian State Secretary for Foreign Affairs Wolfgang Waldner

What should I add now? I can only repeat my introductory statement.

As an Austrian I can say I am very very proud that we are standing here today, in Vienna, and celebrating this event. We think that both organisations, which we have mentioned today, CTBTO and UNODA, are very important for Vienna. And we as Austrians try to contribute as much as possible to the working of these organizations.

Statement by CTBTO Executive Secretary Tibor Tóth

I skip my part as well.

Questions and Answers

Fredrik Dahl, Reuters:

Do you see any political will at all in the holdout states to ratify the treaty? And what would be the consequence if the treaty is not ratified?

United Nations Secretary-General Ban Ki-moon:

This is clearly a matter of political will. If there is political will at the leaders' level, I believe this CTBT can enter into force at any time. You will remember that a few years ago there was a nuclear summit for the first time in the Security Council. It was historic in the history of the United Nations that all 15 Heads of State of the Security Council met in one place. They pledged to make this world free of nuclear weapons.

I hope that such commitment demonstrated by the leaders will live continuously, that is why we need more pressure from the international community. It's not only me as Secretary General, it's not only Foreign Ministers, it's the global citizens who can raise awareness and really press the business community, civil community, students, or women's groups. They can speak out to their leaders. There are only 8 countries remaining, they are holding out.

Now even without this, I can tell you that the CTBT has been quite effective in terms of monitoring and verification. They have detected the explosions of North Korean nuclear testing, twice, and they have effectively detected and gave early warning to Fukushima at the time of the tsunami in Japan. They have established almost 300 monitoring stations. This is a well-established network. But this network can be even more effective, more legal, more authoritative, so this treaty should enter into force. That's what we are doing.

Jonathan Tirone, Bloomberg:

Fukushima, a year ago, showed that uncontrolled radiation observes no borders. The UN system has particular specialization: CTBTO network, WMO, UNSCEAR and the IAEA, and yet one year after the meltdown there is no binding structure for data sharing between UN bodies. Why is there no urgency to make a permanent structure and what are you doing about it?

United Nations Secretary-General Ban Ki-moon:

The Fukushima Daiichi nuclear power plant accident has given a strong alarm to the international community for nuclear safety issues. That's why last September, after the IAEA Director General convened a ministerial meeting on nuclear safety, I have convened a nuclear safety and security summit meeting where many world leaders came and discussed this matter.

There is a clear link between nuclear safety and nuclear security, so how to combine and link these two interlinked issues will be an important one. I have mobilized all UN agencies to study and analyse all of these situations. We have made good recommendations to the high level summit meeting last September and this will be discussed in a Seoul nuclear security summit meeting next month. So this is now ongoing, all the leaders are committed. At the same time, I would guard against any just unconditional, suspicions or doubts about the uses of nuclear energy. Nuclear energy can also be a source of energy issues, when it is assured of safety. That is

what I would say not necessarily as Secretary General but as a person who has been involved in these nuclear energy issues. That's what my personal thoughts are.

Antonio Sanches, EFE:

Mr Ban, we are talking today about nuclear security and nonproliferation. I have to ask you about Iran. Taken that apparently the policy of sanctions is not working to force Iran to freeze its nuclear programme, what do you think should be the next step, or do you see a Plan B in order to convince Teheran to change its mind.

United Nations Secretary-General Ban Ki-moon

I have stated the position of the United Nations on many occasions. First of all, the Iranian authorities must fully comply with relevant Security Council resolutions. There are five Security Council resolutions which have not been implemented fully by the Iranian authorities. And that is one very fundamental, important point.

Secondly, I am deeply concerned by the latest IAEA report indicating that there may be the possibility of a military dimension in Iranian nuclear development programmes. And I have been urging President Ahmadinejad and all senior authorities of the Iranian government that the onus is on the Iranian side to prove, to convince the international community that their nuclear development programme is genuinely for peaceful purposes only. To my mind and to the IAEA, they have not been able to convince the international community, so they have to fully cooperate with the IAEA and with the United Nations and the Security Council. That is their responsibility.

And thirdly, all these issues should be resolved peacefully, through negotiation, through dialogue. I do not know what you meant by "Plan B" but there is not an alternative to a peaceful resolution of this issue.

Swedish Foreign Minister Carl Bildt

Could I just add that sanctions is never a policy in itself. We have pursued from the EU side a twin-track policy: sanctions in order to reinforce the diplomatic search for solutions. And whichever way you look at it there is no other solution but a diplomatic and a political one.

There are plusses and minuses in the present situation. The plus is of course that we are now moving towards a new meeting at some point in time between the 3plus3 or 5plus1 and hereon.

That will not in itself solve the problem. We had these meetings a couple of years ago and I think we have learned from that that one meeting is never going to be enough. There has to be the beginning of a diplomatic process. And I would urge

everyone on the two sides to contemplate the confidence building measures that they are prepared to put on the table as there is the possibility of restarting the diplomatic process.

It is not going to be easy but it needs to be done and I think it is urgent.