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**Statement by  
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**Conference on Facilitating the Entry into Force of the  
Comprehensive Nuclear-Test-Ban Treaty**

**Vienna, 3 September 2003**

Mr. President,  
Mr. Director General,  
Excellencies,  
Ladies and Gentlemen,

Let me start by warmly welcoming you here in Vienna at the 2003 Conference Facilitating the Early Entry into Force of the CTBT. Despite the ambitious agenda of the conference I invite you to also enjoy the beauty and hospitality of the city of Vienna.

I wish to congratulate you, Mr. President, on your election to this post and thank you for your intensive efforts in preparing this conference. In the same vein, I wish to acknowledge with gratitude that (representative of UN-SG) has again joined us and thank him/her for his/her inspiring words.

Before turning to the substance of this Conference, I would like to stress that Austria fully associates herself with the statement to be made by the Presidency of the European Union later this morning.

Mr. President,

The issue of weapons of mass destruction dominates the international agenda and is a major ingredient of some of the most dangerous crises the world is facing today. The prevention of proliferation and of testing of such weapons therefore is of the utmost urgency. This conference could not come at a more appropriate moment.

And yet I have to recall the words of my predecessor, now Austria's Federal Chancellor, Wolfgang Schüssel, four years ago, at the 1999 Article XIV Conference. He then welcomed the holding of future conferences at the seat of the CTBTO and its Preparatory Commission here in Vienna but expressed his hope that there might be no need for further such conferences as the Treaty might soon enter into force.

This hope, however, has not materialized. Out of the 44 countries whose ratification is a prerequisite for the CTBT's entry-into-force, 12 countries still have not ratified the treaty. In this respect, I highly welcome the recent ratification of the CTBT by Algeria. This is the first ratification by an Annex-2-State since February 2001. I hope that some other Annex-2 states will soon follow suit, especially as some of them only face practical difficulties in their ratification process.

Looking at numbers, there is an urgent need to tackle the enormous gap between the number of signatures and the number of ratifications. 168 states have to date signed the treaty, of which 104 have deposited their instruments of ratification.

As it normally takes many years until international treaties in the field of disarmament and non-proliferation are accepted by a significant number of countries, the number of 104 ratifications is by itself remarkable and should give rise to optimism. I do admit, however, that my expectations with regard to the speed of the ratification process of the CTBT were – and still are – higher than usual.

On many occasions, States have underlined the high importance they attach to the CTBT and its early entry into force.

At the 2000 NPT Review Conference, States made an unequivocal undertaking to the total elimination of their nuclear arsenals and agreed 13 practical steps to this end. It is worthwhile recalling that the first two steps comprise the “importance and urgency of signatures and ratifications, without delay and without conditions, to achieve the early entry into force of the CTBT” as well as a moratorium on nuclear-weapon-test explosions or any other nuclear explosions. In the past two PrepComs for the next NPT Review Conference in 2005 many delegations reiterated these commitments and called for their full implementation.

Seven years after opening the CTBT for signature, it is time for those states which have not signed and ratified the Treaty to do so without conditions and without further delay.

In addressing the slow progress in the ratification process, I suggest that in the future additional emphasis is put on the benefits of the civil and scientific applications of the verification technologies, especially in the areas of environment and earth science. In this respect, I highly welcome the seminar on this topic tomorrow afternoon.

While we are all following impatiently the ratification process, the Provisional Technical Secretariat is doing excellent work in setting up the international verification system. Month by month additional monitoring stations are completed and linked via satellite infrastructure to the International Data Center in the Vienna International Center which subsequently distributes the raw data and products to the national data centers.

In this context, let me pay tribute to Executive Secretary, Wolfgang Hoffmann and his team. It is due to his diligence and leadership that the Provisional Technical Secretariat has evolved into a full-fledged international organization and that substantial progress has been made in the build-up of the international verification system. I know that the scientific and technical challenges involved are huge. Hence I note with great appreciation that the PTS with its 270 staff members fully lives up to our high expectations.

Mr. President,

in view of the growing threat of the proliferation of weapons of mass destruction, we must intensify our efforts in combating it. In this respect, the CTBT has an essential role to play as it curbs the qualitative nuclear arms race and stops the decades-long deadly spiral of developing evermore sophisticated and hence more destructive nuclear weapons. Despite the difficulties in the ratification process and the uncertainty about the entry into force of the CTBT, we must remain steadfast in our commitment to the treaty. We must continue to work hard on those countries which still harbour doubts about the treaty's verification capabilities and usefulness in the new international security environment or which link the ratification of the CTBT with the resolution of the Middle East conflict.

This is an undoubtedly difficult task. I am convinced, however, that if we continue to join forces, we will finally succeed in bringing this landmark treaty into force.

Mr President,

Let us together work towards a world that finally does not need any more Conferences on Facilitating the Entry into Force of the Comprehensive Nuclear-Test Ban Treaty. Or maybe just a last Conference to celebrate the entry into force of the Treaty.

Thank you, Mr. President!