



FRANCE

STATEMENT BY MS CATHERINE COLONNA,
MINISTER DELEGATE FOR EUROPEAN AFFAIRS,
TO THE CONFERENCE ON FACILITATING THE ENTRY INTO FORCE
OF THE COMPREHENSIVE NUCLEAR-TEST-BAN TREATY

NEW YORK, THURSDAY 22 SEPTEMBER 2005

CHECK AGAINST DELIVERY

Madam President,

Let me begin by congratulating you on your election as President of the Conference and by assuring you of my delegation's full support. France associates itself completely with the declaration made by the UK Presidency on behalf of the European Union and the acceding and associate countries.

Madam President,

The improvement in the conditions of international security in the years following the end of the Cold War made it possible for us to conclude forty years of negotiations in 1996 and to open for signing a Treaty banning all nuclear weapon test explosions.

This major success achieved by the multilateral arms control and non-proliferation process was the application of decisions finalised by the international community at the Nuclear Non-Proliferation Treaty (NPT) Review and Extension Conference in 1995. It was intended above all to mark the end of the nuclear arms race in the world.

Madam President,

Almost a decade after the conclusion of the Comprehensive Nuclear-Test-Ban Treaty (CTBT), we are forced to observe that the parameters of international security have changed. The threat of the

proliferation of weapons of mass destruction and their means of delivery, and the proliferation of nuclear weapons in particular, has become more sharply defined; it is now present in several locations around the world. This threat is made even more complex by the development of clandestine proliferation networks, and by the ever-present danger that links may come to be formed between the latter and terrorist groups.

France is convinced that in this new context the Treaty continues to be fully relevant. Indeed, its credibility has been affirmed since 1996, in particular through the work done by the Preparatory Commission for the Comprehensive Nuclear-Test-Ban Treaty Organisation (CTBTO).

Recognising that the cessation of all nuclear weapon test explosions will put an end to the appearance of new arms stockpiles and new types of weapons, the CTBT has become one of the fundamental components of strategic stability. It also preserves the right and the duty of nuclear weapon states to guarantee the safety and reliability of their nuclear arms.

Several States that have not ratified the Treaty have announced moratoria and since 1998 not a single nuclear test has occurred in the world. We know however that this situation is precarious. We must continue to work to ensure that the entry into force of the CTBT, in conjunction with a determined non-proliferation policy, will provide us with the assurance that this halt to nuclear tests is fully definitive.

Madam President,

The last French nuclear test took place in January 1996. In September of the same year, my country signed the Comprehensive Nuclear-Test-Ban Treaty, which it ratified, along with the United Kingdom, in April 1998.

This decision has had implications beyond the effective end to such tests: indeed, we wished to go further, deciding to close down and dismantle our Pacific Ocean test site. My country is alone among the nuclear powers to have made such a gesture. Today, France possesses no facilities allowing it to carry out nuclear test explosions.

The broad scope of our decisions, which have been accompanied by measures for extensive reductions in our weapons stockpile, and by the shutting down of the production of fissile materials for nuclear weapons at Pierrelatte and Marcoule, encourages us to approach the debate on nuclear disarmament in a serious and rigorous spirit. I remind you that the only commitments given by France in this field are those contained in Article VI of the Nuclear Non-Proliferation Treaty. We regret that the draft declaration of this Conference does not reflect this fact appropriately.