

Statement by Dr. Itshak LEDERMAN

Senior Director for CTBT and Special Projects  
Israel Atomic Energy Commission

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of the Comprehensive Nuclear Test Ban Treaty

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*CHECK AGAINST DELIVERY*

Mr. President,

Let me join previous speakers in congratulating His Excellency the Foreign Minister of Australia, Mr. Downer on behalf of the delegation of Israel, on his election as President of the Conference on Facilitating the Entry into Force of the Comprehensive Nuclear-Test-Ban Treaty. I am confident that his leadership will lead us to a successful conclusion of the Conference. I can assure him of our full support and cooperation.

Allow me also to express our thanks to the Secretary General of the UN and to the UN Secretariate for hosting the Conference. Our deep appreciation goes to Ambassador Stokes of Australia for her relentless efforts in preparing this conference. We hope these efforts have laid the ground for its success. Thanks go as well to the former Executive Secretary of the Preparatory Commission of the Comprehensive Nuclear-Test-Ban Treaty Organization, Ambassador Hoffmann, and his staff for their excellent work in building the CTBTO and especially the Treaty's verification regime. We would like to take this opportunity to wish Ambassador Toth every success with his new post as the Executive Secretary of the CTBTO.

Mr. President,

At the outset I would like to reiterate my Government's support for the CTBT. It is our hope that this Conference will succeed in advancing the objective of entry into force of the Treaty and in outlining clearly the way ahead, marking the important intermediate goals and the required steps to achieve them.

Israel considers the prohibition it enshrines on nuclear testing as an important pillar of the global nuclear non-proliferation regime, as well as part and parcel of its overall national approach to nuclear security and stability. The importance of the norm it embodies is especially pronounced in light of the nuclear challenges of proliferation and non compliance so evident in recent years and most acute in the Middle East. The CTBT constitutes one significant tool for addressing these challenges, some of the others being nuclear export controls as well as conventions, codes of conduct, pertinent UNSC resolutions, and corresponding national practices.

Israel for its part has been supporting the CTBT since its inception and has undertaken new obligations and responsibilities such as comprehensive export control legislation and adoption of the control lists of the NSG and the Australia Group. Other measures included supporting the amended Convention on Physical Protection of Nuclear Material (CPPNM) and the International Convention for the Suppression of Acts of Nuclear Terrorism. The looming threat of weapons of mass destruction in the hands of terrorists is paramount and must be prevented. Therefore Israel has welcomed UN Security

Council Resolution 1540 aimed at preventing Weapons of Mass Destruction proliferation, in particular to non-state actors. Israel also supported the IAEA Code of Conduct on the Safety and Security of Radioactive Sources and the Code on the Safety of Research Reactors.

Mr. President,

In line with the importance Israel attaches to the CTBT for the enhancement of international peace and security we have lent our active support to the establishment of its verification regime, recognizing it to be one of the main requirements for the Treaty's Entry into Force (Article IV paragraph 1).

In this regard, Israel has already completed the construction of the two auxiliary seismic stations in Meron (already certified) and Eilat (in testing period) according to the Treaty and have signed a Facility Agreement with the Organization. Israel took part in most of the activities, especially those related to OSI such as training, tabletops, field exercises and workshops and contributed significantly to the drafting and later on to the elaboration of the OSI Operational Manual. We have further contributed to support in full the CTBTO's operations financially, despite the austere national budgets and the the financial constraints we have been operating under.

Mr. President

Much as we can derive satisfaction from the progress made by the CTBTO dedicated staff with the support of many States, in recent years, we still have to recognize that the Treaty's HF is unfortunately not so close and presently not in sight. Such lamentable reality requires genuine efforts among those who value the Treaty and the ensuing conclusion is in our view, that we need to adjust our work plan accordingly, putting a great emphasis on a series of practical interim measures designed both to serve the broader cause of security and stability even in the current setup, while also working on those issues that would assure smooth and rapid EIF when the moment comes.

Mr President,

Pending Entry into Force of the Treaty we call upon all participants to proceed along the following steps:

--Sustain the commitment not to carry out any nuclear test explosion in line with the Treaty's basic obligations.

– Redouble the efforts to complete the CTBT verification regime and in this context complete the preparation of the OSI Operational Manual, purchase and test the OSI equipment and prepare the training infrastructure. It is also necessary to test and validate the whole OSI system by field exercises.

--Operate, maintain and test the completed IMS stations and the IDC in order to gain experience and to provide early detection capabilities (designed to promote the prohibition norm and verify compliance with it). Where coverage gaps of IMS stations exist, take temporary measures to strengthen the system

prior to EIF. Such measures may include temporary operation of auxiliary seismic stations as primary ones to fill gaps in IMS coverage until all primary stations are in place and transferring data. --Provide sufficient funds to the CTBTO in order to enable the completion of the build up of its verification regime and its testing.

Use the IMS and the IDC capabilities, in a cost effective manner, without diversion from their primary objective as the verification instruments of the Treaty, to support Tsunami warning systems, in order to alert in time threatened populations and save human lives.

As for the longer term considerations Israel's ratification of the CTBT will be influenced by the same three factors we have laid down on previous occasions. Briefly stated, these include the readiness of the verification regime of the Treaty, especially that of the OSI and its immunity to abuse; Israel's sovereign equality status in the Policy Making Organs of the Treaty, including those related to the geographical region of the Middle East and South Asia (MESA) and in the Executive Council of the future CTBTO, and the adherence to and compliance with the CTBT by states in the Middle East.

Mr President,

In this context I would presently wish to highlight the first among these considerations. All of the efforts to date to function within the Treaty-defined MESA geographical region have not been successful. These efforts have been consistently blocked by one delegation for reasons completely alien to the purposes of the Treaty. Noble efforts of the Chairperson and several delegations to include a sentence in the Final Declaration highlighting the importance of this issue have been further stymied and the sentence is consequently not included. This outcome can not but signal, not only to Israel but to all, that the proper functioning of all geographical regions of the Treaty, essential for our ratification, and to the Treaty as well, remains far from resolution. We do hope that those interested in EIF of the Treaty will endeavor to rectify this regrettable situation so that the MESA geographical region may function like all others, within the various bodies of the Preparatory Commission.

Mr. President;

Since the last conference in 2003 much progress has been made and credit should go to all those who contributed to it. However, the current reality requires in our view that we rethink our strategy, and chart a way ahead that furthers the objectives of the CTBT through a series of interim measures, while getting ready for the eventual entry into force.

Thank you, Mr. President.