

### **Statement by Dr Robert Floyd Executive Secretary**

# High-Level Meeting of the General Assembly to Commemorate and Promote the

## **International Day against Nuclear Tests**

#### **New York, United States of America**

#### 7 September 2022

Excellencies,

Ladies and Gentlemen,

Mr President,

Thank you, Mr President, for inviting me to address the General Assembly on the critical issue of banning nuclear tests. My thanks also to High Representative Izumi Nakamitsu for delivering opening remarks on behalf of Secretary-General, António Guterres.

The date of the International Day against Nuclear Tests marks the closing, on 29 August 1991, of the nuclear test site in Semipalatinsk, Kazakhstan.

Last year, when I addressed this High-Level Meeting of the General Assembly, I recalled the indelible impression which had been left upon me, having stood at one of the ground zeros at Semipalatinsk. It was an experience I will never forget, and a stark reminder of why we must do everything in our power to prevent nuclear tests in the future.

And yet, one year later, it is not clear that we are on more stable ground in this regard. Ominous dark clouds of concern are gathering: Ongoing conflicts conjure fears of the return of nuclear brinkmanship, and another nuclear test may be on the horizon. Indeed, Secretary-General Antonio Guterres recently warned that humanity is "just one misunderstanding, one miscalculation away from nuclear annihilation."

These grave geopolitical tensions have rightly shaken us out of our complacency. The existential threat posed by nuclear proliferation cannot be ignored. And while the Review Conference of the Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons (the NPT) recently concluded deliberations without consensus on a final document, I actually see cause for optimism.

Optimism, because despite the disappointing outcome, I observed the sincere and tireless efforts made by so many as they sought to breach the chasm that divides the international community on this topic, and I heard the resounding calls for action. These four weeks of intense negotiations have laid the groundwork for real progress in the future. We have an opportunity, and a responsibility, to build on this foundation and carry it forward.

Regarding the CTBT, I was heartened to see an increasingly fervent swell of support expressed by NPT States Parties. Indeed, the draft of the final document recalled the importance of the entry into force of the CTBT and reaffirmed the responsibility of all States that have ratified the Treaty to promote the CTBT.

This is a call to action to help us achieve universalization and entry into force. And I trust it will not fall on deaf ears.

And yet, there is already much to celebrate. In this, the 25<sup>th</sup> anniversary year of the opening for signature of the CTBT, I set a goal for us all to strive towards: to see at least 5 new ratifications of our treaty in one year!

So far – four; Dominica, The Gambia, Timor-Leste, and Tuvalu have stepped up to ratify the CTBT. And there are many more states on the way!

With Dominica's ratification, we have complete adherence to the CTBT in the Latin American and Caribbean region. With Timor-Leste's ratification, we have complete adherence in South-East Asia. These are historical milestones.

Ladies and Gentlemen,

I applaud these countries for their efforts. They are convinced that the international community's best protection against nuclear threats is to strengthen and reinforce the global nuclear non-proliferation and disarmament regime. And they recognize that the CTBT, with its unique means of verification, is undeniably a key element of this regime.

The CTBT's means of verification comprises a state-of-the-art international data center in Vienna and a global network of monitoring stations, which have proven their efficacy time and again. This critical asset will continue to deliver on the CTBT's promise to detect any nuclear explosion, any time and anywhere. For that reason, it must be properly sustained.

And it has more to offer.

The data gathered contributes to tsunami warning systems, earthquake and climate change studies, and a multitude of other civil and scientific applications. Our monitoring system can help reduce deaths from natural disasters. That is why I have launched the 'National Data Centres for All Initiative,' an effort, supported by so many States to ensure that all States Signatories of the CTBT can use this data to the fullest, for the benefit of all – particularly in the smallest of states.

Despite these impressive achievements and exciting initiatives, our work is not yet done.

The International Day Against Nuclear Testing provides us with an important opportunity to both soberly reflect, and to take stock of our efforts towards creating a world free from nuclear test explosions. It is our historic responsibility to see that our planet never again suffers the disastrous consequences of nuclear testing. Never again!

The only way we can put in place an enduring and verifiable prohibition on nuclear testing is through the entry into force of the CTBT. So, to each of you, and the nations of the world that you so ably represent, let's recommit ourselves to this noble cause, and let's finish what we've started.

I thank you all.