
Statement by Dr Robert Floyd Executive Secretary

Tenth Meeting of the Friends of the CTBT,

New York, United States of America

11:15-12:15, 21 September 2022

Thank you, Mr Prime Minister,

Excellencies,

Ladies and Gentlemen,

Ominous dark clouds of concern are gathering around nuclear nonproliferation and disarmament: Ongoing conflicts conjure fears of the return of nuclear brinkmanship, and another nuclear test may be on the horizon. Indeed, Secretary-General 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.

Nevertheless, I remain optimistic.

Optimistic because of the resounding calls for action to strengthen the non-proliferation and disarmament regime, and the sincere and tireless efforts made by so many, including you, Mr Prime Minister, in this regard.

I also see much to celebrate when it comes to the CTBTO.

In my first year as Executive Secretary I have seen firsthand that the Treaty enjoys universal support - whether a state has ratified or not, each one agrees with the Treaty’s mandate and ambition.

And, over the course of the past year, we have been converting that good will into action, witnessing ratifications at a rate not seen in many years. I set a goal of five ratifications in this 25th anniversary year of the opening for signature of the CTBT.

So far, Dominica, The Gambia, Timor-Leste, and Tuvalu have stepped up to ratify the CTBT. Two more states will do so this week, and there are even more states on their way!

I applaud these countries for their efforts. We all have a responsibility to continue this momentum, and to strive for a world free from nuclear explosions. And I am pleased to see members of our Youth Group (CYG) here, representing the next generation whose voices are so important as we consider this important duty.

Ladies and Gentlemen,

In the period between 1945 and 1996, when the Treaty was opened for signature, more than 2000 nuclear tests were conducted - That is about one test every nine days. Since then, the CTBT has created and sustained a norm against nuclear testing so powerful that less than a dozen nuclear tests have been conducted; a norm breached by only one country since the turn of the century.

A powerful norm, but let us never take our eyes off the ultimate goal - entry into force of the Treaty.

And do you know why that norm is so powerful? It is because the CTBT comes with a remarkably sensitive verification system, our International Monitoring System (IMS), that ensures no nuclear test can go undetected.

Let me tell you how sensitive it is: Many of you will recall in January, the explosive eruption of the Hunga Tonga-Hunga Ha'apai volcano in Tonga. This catastrophic explosive eruption and tsunami generated infrasound, seismic and hydroacoustic signals. This eruption was the largest event ever detected by the IMS infrasound network. As the pressure waves created by this violent interaction of magma and seawater spread throughout the atmosphere, our infrasound stations, all around the world, began to light up one by one.

Before long, every one of the 53 certified infrasound stations recorded signals from the event. But this is not the most impressive part. In fact, the pressure waves were recorded each time they completed a tour

around the globe for at least four days after the eruption. This is a breath-taking example of the sensitivity of the system.

If it can detect this, I think we can be confident it will detect any nuclear test, any time, any place.

Thank you for your partnership in this extraordinary achievement and your commitment to reach the final goal – entry into force of the CTBT.

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