

Izumi Nakamitsu
High Representative for Disarmament Affairs

Article XIV Conference of the Comprehensive Nuclear-Test-Ban Treaty

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Excellencies,
Distinguished Delegates,
Ladies and Gentlemen,

At the outset, I would like to stress how glad I am to speak to this conference in person. States will recall that our last conference in 2021 was convened virtually, marking an unprecedented moment in our history due to the challenges posed by the COVID-19 pandemic.

I also want to convey my sincere appreciation to Dr. Robert Floyd, whose exceptional leadership as the Executive Secretary of the Provisional Technical Secretariat (PTS) of the CTBTO ensured that we not only persevered but thrived during such demanding times.

The Comprehensive Nuclear-Test-Ban Treaty (CTBT) is not just an agreement; it is a pillar of our united ambition for a nuclear weapon-free future. 27 years since its adoption, it is inspiring to witness how the CTBT has become one of the world's most extensively backed international instruments, with an impressive 186 signatories and 178 ratifying States. It has created a robust global norm rooted in our collective repugnance of nuclear tests and our shared understanding that preventing such tests is essential to the establishment and maintenance of a world free of nuclear weapons.

Check against delivery

An in-force CTBT should be one of our highest disarmament and non-proliferation priorities. To that end, I welcome the States that have joined the Treaty since our last conference in 2021: The Gambia, Tuvalu, Dominica, Timor-Leste, Sao Tome and Principe, Solomon Islands and Sri Lanka. Your commitment not only strengthens the Treaty's universality but also its global impact.

The unyielding dedication of the CTBTO in establishing a proven, global verification system through its International Monitoring System remains commendable. With the capability to conduct real-time monitoring of nuclear test activities across the globe, we have taken strides towards safeguarding our common future.

However, as we reflect on the strides made, we are confronted with the stark reality that the Treaty has not yet entered into force. The reason for this impasse is no secret: the eight remaining Annex II States whose ratifications remain pending.

How many more anniversaries of this Treaty do we wish to observe without seeing it in full force?

I echo the call made in 2021, urging these States to swiftly ratify the CTBT. For nations yet to sign or ratify, let us expedite our collective journey towards a safer world, upholding the Treaty's principles.

It is deeply concerning to hear insinuations about potential backtracking on non-testing pledges. A return to nuclear testing would lead us to another age of instability, taking us closer to the edge of catastrophe, damaging human health and our environment in the process.

Check against delivery

In this context, I remind us of the Joint Statement on the Comprehensive Nuclear Test-Ban Treaty by China, France, the Russian Federation, the United Kingdom, and the United States of America of September 15, 2016. They unequivocally stated that, “any other nuclear explosion would defeat the object and purpose of the CTBT.”

In today’s climate of growing nuclear danger, I call on all States that have previously declared moratoriums on nuclear testing to reaffirm those moratoriums and to take immediate steps to sign and/or ratify the CTBT.

I call on States to learn from history rather than revert to it. Let us champion progress over regression.

Now is the time for constructive deeds over threatening words. The stalemate delaying the Treaty's effectiveness must end. While moratoriums and norms pave the way, only a legal ban truly solidifies our commitment. The traumatic events of testing stand as stark reminders of the devastating price of inaction.

The urgency is evident; we cannot afford another year of mere anticipation.

The United Nations stands resolute in its support, ready to assist in realizing the Treaty’s full potential. It is my sincere hope that soon, we will no longer need to gather for these conferences, but rather celebrate the achievement of entry into force. Until that day arrives, we must intensify our efforts, ensuring the CTBT stands firm as the foundation of our shared vision for a nuclear-weapon-free world.

Thank you for your unwavering commitment, and I wish you a fruitful conference.