



CTBTO
PREPARATORY COMMISSION

PUTTING AN
END TO NUCLEAR
EXPLOSIONS

ACUNS Conference – New Approaches for a Peaceful and More Sustainable World

Opening Speech by Dr Lassina Zerbo, Executive Secretary CTBTO

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It is a pleasure to open this year's ACUNS Vienna Conference. The topic "New Approaches for a Peaceful and More Sustainable World" is a very relevant one to all Vienna-based organizations. It reminds us of the common thread that binds us all together in the UN family. It also challenges us to do things differently and to do things better.

In the CTBTO we know about new approaches. When it was opened for signature in 1996, the Comprehensive Nuclear-Test-Ban Treaty was at the forefront of a new approach to nuclear non-proliferation and disarmament. In fact, it continues to represent a high point in multilateral collaboration on nuclear issues.

It is worth stopping to think about what a game changer the CTBT still is. Last Wednesday at 02.30 hours Vienna time, stations of the International Monitoring System established under the Treaty detected unusual seismic activity in North Korea. Shortly afterwards the DPRK announced that a nuclear test had been conducted. We went on to provide our Member States with automated and reviewed data on the event well within the short timelines provided for by the Treaty. We held a briefing on the initial data just hours after the event, and a full meeting of the Preparatory Commission, our governing body, was held the following day. Meanwhile, condemnation of the announced nuclear test resounded throughout the world. The Security Council met to discuss steps to take.

Without the CTBT, things would be very different. Without a global system for monitoring and detecting signs of nuclear explosions, and no means of transmitting the relevant data in a timely and non-discriminatory manner, the international community would not be empowered to draw conclusions on the nature of an event.

This empowerment to use CTBT data is also one of the most exciting and innovative elements of what we do. We are an organization at the forefront of technology, linking academia with governmental institutions and engaging with countries throughout the world to build capacity on technical, legal and

policy-related aspects of the Treaty regime. That makes it all the more important to connect with ACUNS, which is also fostering new generations of experts to build a more peaceful world.

The very existence of the CTBT has all but put a stop to nuclear testing. Many States condemned the announced test as breaking with a de facto norm against testing. While this demonstrates that the Treaty is as important as ever, it is also a wake-up call to finally bring it into force.

The Treaty has the support of 183 States Signatories, 164 of which have ratified it. This is an excellent sign-up rate by most standards. But entry into force will follow only when 44 listed countries complete their ratification procedures. We still have 8 to go. 5 of those have signed but not ratified. What we need now is for real leadership from those countries.

Acting on the CTBT can only be ‘disruptive’ in the most positive sense. It would transform bilateral and multilateral relationships, build confidence regionally and globally, and help unlock a range of pending issues in non-proliferation and disarmament.

Some people have begun to consider if there are other new approaches to non-proliferation and disarmament that should be tried. It is very interesting to see how over the past couple of years an analysis based on humanitarian issues has emerged. Others have suggested a nuclear weapon convention. These can certainly throw a new light on things. But we should bear in mind that we do not yet have even a nuclear-test free world. It is hard to imagine progress until that is achieved.

We must always take advantage of opportunities to move forward. Let’s take the Iran talks. It took not only almost two years of talks, but many years of hard work, to reach what is an historical agreement with Iran. It is important to seize opportunities and move forward when the time is right. And now is the time to move on the CTBT.

The Iran deal shows that multilateral collaboration can effectively overcome intractable problems. Many of the key players in the Iran deal – such as EU High Representative Mogherini – are now talking about CTBT entry into force as the next big goal in disarmament and non-proliferation, which can be achieved with a similar approach. Let’s make her words a reality.

Mogherini and others such as US Secretary of State Kerry, who recently indicated renewed attention from the Obama Administration on the CTBT, are well aware that this year, 2016, is the 20th anniversary of the opening for signature of the Treaty. They rightly see this anniversary as an opportunity in itself. So do I.

When we began to think about commemorating the anniversary, one prominent Ambassador said to me: “Lassina, there is nothing to celebrate! If anything we should observe a moment of silence!”

It may not be a reason for celebration, but it does provide a unique opportunity to reflect on the Treaty and its entry into force. I recently told an audience of members of esteemed think tanks and government institutions to put aside even 30 seconds a day in 2016 to think about the CTBT. Perhaps after last week's event they've already gone way beyond that. And I would ask you to do the same.

The CTBTO will hold a number of events to commemorate the anniversary. The centrepiece will be a major Ministerial-level event in Vienna in June.

We are launching the anniversary year with a Symposium titled "Science and Diplomacy for Peace and Security: the CTBT at 20", which takes place in Vienna from 25 January to 4 February 2016. It will bring together negotiators of the Treaty, diplomats, scientists, civil society, academia and others. I would encourage all of you to register and participate. Information sheets are available here in the room, and full details are on our website.

Let me finish by reiterating what a pleasure it is to speak to you today. Many of you are at the start of careers that will no doubt touch on many inter-related issues in international cooperation. I very much hope that the energy and enthusiasm of the next generation will truly lead us to a peaceful and more sustainable world.

Thank you.