

CTBT20 Ministerial Meeting

Keynote Address

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Executive Secretary

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Your Excellency Minister Comănescu,
Honourable Ministers,
Excellencies,
Distinguished Delegates,
Participants,
Ladies and Gentlemen,

I would like to join the Foreign Minister of Romania in our thoughts and prayers for the victims of the last terrorist attacks in the United States, in Kazakhstan, and in Turkey. Let me also especially welcome Ms Mogherini, the High Representative of the European Union, who is a member of the Group of Eminent Persons and the first to join us in the endeavour to organize this Ministerial Meeting. Ms Mogherini, dear friend, welcome and thank you for joining us. Let me now say it is a pleasure to welcome you at this Ministerial Meeting. The Ministerial Meeting, is also hosted by Foreign Minister Kurz as the host country Austria. Foreign Minister Kurz, welcome. Your presence here is a resounding endorsement of the Comprehensive Nuclear-Test-Ban Treaty as we approach the twentieth anniversary of its opening for signature.

Through discussion in the plenary session, the Ministerial Roundtable, and side events today and tomorrow, I hope we can bring into focus what a monumental accomplishment the CTBT is.

The Treaty, with its verification regime, is one of the greatest examples of how people and nations came together to put an end to one of the most destructive legacies of the Cold War.

As I have said before, we cannot really approach the anniversary as a cause for celebration. Until it enters into force, the CTBT is unfinished business. Until we finish what we started, there is a risk that the world will backslide into nuclear testing.

Last year, as I looked ahead to 2016, I became convinced, together with my staff, that the most appropriate way to mark the anniversary was to seek opportunities to reflect upon the Treaty – on the

real achievements made and the challenges that have persisted over time. We must understand the past if we are to find a way to secure the Treaty's future. And this is why my predecessors both Ambassador Tóth and Ambassador Hoffmann are here with us as part of this 20 years achievement.

So far this year we have held some major events as part of that reflection process – including a two-week Symposium in January and a public discussion with the United Nations Secretary-General in April.

This Ministerial Meeting takes the process further. In addition to a large number of serving government Ministers and other senior officials, we are delighted to welcome the wise counsel of many members of the Group of Eminent Persons for the CTBT.

We also have very healthy participation from civil society, academia and media. And we continue our focus on the next generation, with contributions by members of the CTBT Youth Group and other young persons.

My hope is that all these participants will help bring us from a place of reflection to a place of action.

Excellencies,

Ladies and Gentlemen,

Nuclear tests not only poison the environment, they also poison the political climate. They breed mistrust, isolation and fear.

Since I began my term as Executive Secretary three years ago – and even before as Director of the International Data Centre – I have visited nuclear test sites such as those in Nevada and Semipalatinsk. I have also been to Hiroshima and Nagasaki. Nobody can set foot in such places and remain unaffected by what they see and what they learn.

That is the value of bearing witness. And it is the value of advocacy. So today I ask all of you in a position of leadership and responsibility to do what you can to bring this Treaty into force. We have much to be proud of in the last twenty years, but we have not yet reached our final destination.

Above all, we need to transmit the story of nuclear testing to the next generation. Leadership is also about mentorship. I very much hope that determined and focused youth engagement on CTBT issues will be one of the strongest outcomes of the twentieth anniversary.

So thank you, Minister Comănescu, for the hard work you, Ambassador Istrate, and the Government of Romania have put into preparing this Ministerial Meeting. And thank you once again to all participants for their active engagement in support of the nuclear test ban.

I wanted to also thank my colleagues, the Director-General of the IAEA, the Director-General of UNIDO, the Under-Secretary-General for Disarmament, and all the members of GEM and my directors as well, and the staff of the CTBT, to have joined us in this special event.

Let's meet again, sometime the not too distant future, to finally celebrate the first of many happy anniversaries of the Treaty's entry into force.
