

# CHECK AGAINST DELIVERY



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**Statement by Dr Lassina Zerbo**

**Executive Secretary**

**Preparatory Commission for the Comprehensive  
Nuclear-Test-Ban Treaty Organization**

**Exchange with the High Representative for Disarmament Affairs and other high-level  
officials in the field of arms control and disarmament**

**UN First Committee**

**19 October 2015**

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Excellencies,

Ladies and Gentlemen,

Mr Chairman,

Allow me to congratulate you, Mr Chairman, on your appointment as chair of the First Committee of the seventieth session of the United Nations General Assembly. I wish to also express my appreciation to Under Secretary-General and Acting High Representative for Disarmament Affairs Mr Kim Won-soo for convening this important exchange. The discussion topic “Increasing Capacities to Address Weapons of Mass Destruction” is highly relevant. Achieving the objectives of the Comprehensive Nuclear-Test-Ban Treaty (CTBT) would greatly increase the capacity of the international community to address the proliferation of nuclear weapons and advance prospects for their eventual elimination.

In the years since the CTBT opened for signature, its crucial role in reducing nuclear dangers by moving the world away from an era of uninhibited nuclear testing is indisputable.

The Treaty has succeeded in its objectives to such a degree that only one State has violated the non-testing norm in this millennium. On each of these occasions, the international response was swift, universal and unequivocal in its condemnation of the nuclear tests as direct threats to international peace and security. Moreover, the verification regime established to monitor compliance with the Treaty detected these tests with speed and precision, underscoring the return on investment that States continue to receive from their contributions to the Treaty and its verification regime.

However, these achievements must not overshadow the magnitude of the challenges that still lie ahead. Action still needs to be taken to secure the future of the Treaty as a firm legal barrier against a return to nuclear testing and to the nuclear arms race.

Mr Chairman,

Let us not forget the driving forces that compel us to eradicate nuclear threats.

The nuclear age was ushered in seventy years ago in the deserts of New Mexico, followed by the atomic bombings of Hiroshima and Nagasaki a month later. From the Trinity test in 1945 up to 1996

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when the CTBT opened for signature, more than 2000 nuclear tests were conducted in the atmosphere, in the oceans, and underground.

Throughout these years, nuclear testing had a dangerous and destabilizing impact on global security, and exacted a terrible cost on human health and the environment. Here we are not speaking of hypothetical or abstract concerns. To lose sight of the lessons of Hiroshima and Nagasaki, or the Marshall Islands and Semipalatinsk, is to depart from our own humanity.

Mr Chairman,

The CTBT is the subject of one of the key resolutions before this very Committee, and many delegations have addressed the urgency of its entry-into-force in their national statements. States Signatories have invested over one billion dollars in the establishment of the most sophisticated and far-reaching verification regime ever conceived. Significant national security decisions were made in good faith with the expectation that the Treaty would become legally binding and enforceable in international law. Yet some may wonder whether we are any closer now to achieving this goal than we were at the start.

The political upheavals of the early 1990s let loose the forces of freedom, change and – most importantly – hope. Objectives that once seemed impossible were finally within reach, and an inspired and highly motivated core of diplomats and scientists came together to forge agreement on key multilateral arms control and disarmament mechanisms that we now take for granted.

Quite simply, we need countries to re-ignite this spirit and finish the job.

Disarmament and non-proliferation are highly challenging, multifaceted endeavours that require bold ideas and sound execution. Global security challenges require creative global solutions and the active engagement of stakeholders from all corners of the world. Equally important is building capacities among the next generation of experts who will have the responsibility of carrying nuclear disarmament and non-proliferation forward.

We all share the goal of a world free of nuclear weapons, and indeed the voices for this grow stronger every day. However, we should remember that we do not yet have even a nuclear-test free world. This objective – a vital concrete step towards nuclear disarmament – is within reach if States move forward in a determined manner through effective multilateral collaboration.

Mr Chairman,

We have been treading water for too long. We can no longer afford to take a business-as-usual approach. We must bring passion and urgency to our efforts to bring this Treaty into force.

At the CTBTO, we have done our part to provide States with trust and confidence in the Treaty and its verification regime as an effective measure for nuclear disarmament and non-proliferation. But it is up to you, the Member States, to make the next move. Let me quote the distinguished representative from Mongolia, who pointed out earlier in the Committee's General Debate that the "Provisional Technical Secretariat is moving forward with necessary infrastructural development for the verification regime. Now, it's the States Signatories' responsibility to demonstrate their real actions". It is time to rise to the occasion and prove that the international community can summon the political will to make good on the promise of the CTBT.

I look forward to continuing to engage with all of you on this issue, and as long as we are sincere in our efforts, I truly believe that we will make real progress towards banning nuclear tests and ultimately eliminating nuclear weapons.

Thank you.