

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

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**Address to the Conference on Disarmament
High-level Segment**

**Council Chamber, Palais des Nations
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Madam President,
Excellencies,
Distinguished Delegates,

Allow me to thank you, Madam President, for your warm welcome. I also wish to express my gratitude to all delegations for inviting me to speak today.

It is always a pleasure to be in Geneva, and especially to be at the Conference on Disarmament, where the CTBT was ‘born’.

Those of us concerned with the disarmament and non-proliferation of weapons of mass destruction have been facing challenging times. Breaking free of the stalemate that has stalled the work of the Conference on Disarmament so long would send a much needed positive signal to the world. It would demonstrate that countries- despite their differences- are willing to work together to solve the world’s most difficult problems.

The decision taken by the Conference on 16 February has sent a very encouraging message to the international community: Concrete steps are being taken to advance the substantive work of the Conference on Disarmament.

Advancing its substantive work has become of paramount importance since the last NPT Review Conference, and will surely play a determining role in the 2020 Review Conference.

The CTBT, the last treaty that was negotiated by the Conference, was opened for signature more than 20 years ago.

In those 20 years, 183 countries have signed the Treaty and 166 have ratified. An over one billion dollar robust verification regime has been set up and data is being generated on a 24/7 basis, allowing the Organization to provide transparently its Member States with objective and verifiable information within minutes of a suspicious event. The CTBT's International Monitoring System has been hailed as "one of the greatest accomplishments of the modern world".

I firmly believe that the CTBT is a 'low hanging fruit' and that the success of any further actions taken to advance work on nuclear non-proliferation and disarmament will depend on the international community's resolve and political will to "finish what it starts". This means to use dedicated and concerted efforts to get the CTBT into legal force; making sure that the billion dollar investment is preserved for the future generations to come; and providing a platform for progress by establishing a firm basis for the other disarmament treaties needed to close the circle.

Ending explosive nuclear testing globally is vital to halting the proliferation of nuclear weapons –both vertically and horizontally. In its preamble, the CTBT States Signatories have recognized that the cessation of all nuclear weapon test explosions and more generally all nuclear explosions by anyone constitutes an effective measure of nuclear disarmament and non-proliferation in all its aspects. 183 States have recognized this by signing the Treaty, 166 of which have already made it a law in their respective countries. To date, not only is the CTBT an effective measure of nuclear disarmament, the CTBT is the only effective measure currently within the international community's reach. As I said before, a 'low-hanging fruit'.

You, the Members of the Conference of Disarmament, have a special responsibility in this regard. Your decision of 16 February emphasized the need to identify areas of commonalities, to deepen technical discussions and to broaden areas of agreement. The CTBT provides you with a platform for all of this. The Treaty is almost universal, its robust verification regime is in place and keeps abreast of technological advances which strives to prevent or mitigate natural disasters or help science advance in other areas. Every country, with only one exception, has renounced nuclear testing.

Looking ahead to the 2020 NPT Review Conference, it is clear that trust and confidence are the key elements necessary to achieve a successful outcome. We must take great care to preserve the integrity of the institutions and instruments we have and to build trust in them and around them. This means maintain and securing the NPT and its entire chain of responsibilities-of which the CTBT entry into force is an integral part. I look forward to participating in the Review Conference PrepCom here in Geneva this April to recall the close bond between NPT and the CTBT.

Action is needed.

Supporters of the CTBT must be ready to take advantage of any opportunities that arise. What was unprecedented can quickly become the “new normal”. Take the situation in the Korean Peninsula for example. The spirit of the Olympics may give a boost to Pyeongyang – Seoul relations. This could open up real avenues of opportunity for dialogue. The CTBT could serve as a tool for such dialogue: a unilaterally declared test moratorium moving towards eventual signature of the CTBT would be a start.

There is also much that can be done through outreach and education, especially to the next generation. The future of disarmament and non-proliferation lies with our future leaders: the young policymakers and scientists of today.

Early in 2016, a CTBTO Youth Group was established, which now has close to 400 members. It has very active participation from seven of the eight remaining Annex 2 States.

We count on these young people to raise their voices back home and promote the Treaty, and to promote peace and security in general.

End May of this year, the CTBTO will hold its second Science Diplomacy Symposium in Vienna. The Symposium is open to all applicants, with a particular emphasis on participation by those in the earlier stages of their careers. It will examine political, legal and diplomatic aspects of the CTBT, as well as the science and technology that underpin its verification regime.

I hope to see wide participation from many of the countries represented here today.

Excellencies,
Ladies and Gentlemen,

In the end, it is the international community that has the responsibility to make progress on the CTBT, just as it must make progress on the work of the Conference on Disarmament.

Although achieving progress is not easy, this is no reason not to try. Smaller steps can give rise to huge leaps.

Through trust and respect, multilateralism and dialogue can assert itself as the most effective means of resolving issues in disarmament and non-proliferation.

Thank you.