

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

**Executive Secretary Dr Lassina Zerbo**

**Address to the Conference on Disarmament**

**Council Chamber, Palais des Nations  
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*CHECK AGAINST DELIVERY*

Mr President,  
Excellencies,  
Distinguished Delegates,

I would like to thank you, Mr President, for the invitation to speak today. It is always a pleasure to return to Geneva, and especially to the Conference on Disarmament which is of course the forum in which the Comprehensive Nuclear-Test-Ban Treaty was negotiated.

It has been twenty three years since those negotiations came to a conclusion and the Treaty was adopted by the General Assembly. Everyone in this Chamber is aware that times are very different now.

Without seeking to minimize the difficulties we all face, I wish to use my time here to highlight some of the real progress that has been made and to look ahead to next year's NPT Review Conference – in the spirit of asking ‘what can we achieve?’ rather than dwelling on negativity. I'm sure we all agree there is more than enough negativity without me adding to it further!

**Update on CTBT**

It has been almost one and a half years since I last spoke to the Conference. In the intervening time, we in the CTBTO have continued working on the universalization of the Treaty. One more signature – that of Tuvalu – and two more ratifications – by Thailand and Zimbabwe – have now brought the Treaty up to 184 signatories, 168 of whom have ratified.

For easily understandable reasons, the focus on adhesion to the CTBT is generally on the status of Annex 2 ratifications, but each and every new member should be celebrated. In these days of supposed paralysis where nuclear non-proliferation and disarmament is concerned, this is real, ongoing, progress and we should all cherish that.

We are of course also continuing our work on confidence building and education and outreach with the Annex 2 States with the aim of creating an environment that would be conducive for them to sign and/or ratify the Treaty.

With this in mind, the Conference on Facilitating Entry into Force the CTBT, also known as the Article XIV Conference, has been held every other year to promote the Treaty's entry into force. The 11th such conference will be held in New York on 25 September and will offer an opportunity for States to renew their commitment to the CTBT as a core element of the nuclear disarmament and non-proliferation regime.

Regarding the Treaty's verification regime, I am pleased to report that the International Monitoring System is nearing completion. The progressive build-up of the system has resulted in a level of maturity, readiness, and relevance that has been demonstrated on numerous occasions and in a variety of circumstances.

We have installed or certified several important new IMS stations in the past several years. Of particular note, the last remaining hydroacoustic station in Crozet Islands, France, was certified, which marked a major milestone on the way to completion of the verification system. Five stations were certified in China – two primary seismic stations and three radionuclide stations.

Additional achievements include the certification of an infrasound station and a radionuclide station in the Galápagos Islands, Ecuador, as well as certifications of stations and radionuclide laboratories in the Russian Federation, Ethiopia, the United Kingdom, Italy, and France.

The International Data Centre continues to process and analyse data registered at monitoring stations, which are shared with 1,300 institutions in 130 countries. Alongside the steady advancement of the IMS, the capabilities of the IDC continue to develop, resulting in a far better detection threshold than many thought would be possible when the Treaty was negotiated.

The CTBTO is also continuing to prepare for entry into force by strengthening its on-site inspection capabilities through the development of OSI elements, the conduct of field exercises and the evaluation of its OSI activities.

Last month, we inaugurated our permanent Technology Support and Training (TeST) Centre in Seibersdorf, Austria. It offers a modern, purpose-built, location for all the CTBT technologies and for future capacity-building and training exercises we will carry out for the benefit of the international community. It is a sign that the CTBT is here to stay and is part of our collective legacy to future generations.

## **CTBT and Non-Proliferation and Disarmament**

Since I last spoke to the Conference on Disarmament, we have moved much closer to the 2020 NPT Review Conference. We have now had three Preparatory Committee meetings, and unfortunately differing viewpoints on key issues have if anything seen the gaps between States Parties widen.

But let's not be fatalistic. All is not lost. The NPT, as the cornerstone of the nuclear non-proliferation and disarmament regime, has proved strikingly resilient in the past. It has also proved open to positive change agents from outside, of which the CTBT is a prime example.

The intrinsic link between the two instruments is always worth recalling. The NPT contains in its preamble the determination to achieve the discontinuance of all test explosions of nuclear weapons for all time, and to continue negotiations to this end.

On top of that, the CTBT has played a critical role in the NPT review process. It has often served as a gauge of the determination of the nuclear-weapon States to fulfil their disarmament obligations under Article VI. The conclusion of a test ban treaty was one of the three key decisions that allowed for the indefinite extension of the NPT in 1995, and furthering the CTBT was the first of the practical steps for disarmament agreed to by NPT States Parties in 2000.

At the risk of sounding dramatic, it could be said that the CTBT 'saved' the NPT at times of high tension in the past, and it can do so again.

As we move towards 2020 and beyond, we must take great care to preserve the integrity of the institutions and instruments we have, and to build trust on them and around them. This means maintaining and securing the NPT and its entire web of responsibilities – of which the CTBT is an integral part.

A successful outcome of the Review Conference would be one that recognizes what we have achieved so far in creating the architecture for non-proliferation and disarmament and preserves this for the future, while creating space for dialogue and movement on both 'front burner' and 'back burner' issues.

Building trust and confidence is key. Despite the temptation to focus on the fraying of relationships, there are positives from which we can draw hope. Initiatives and mechanisms – both bilateral and multilateral – that encourage discussions on nuclear issues are to be welcomed.

In this regard, the recent resumption here in Geneva of talks between the United States and the Russian Federation is an important step.

It is also heartening that the Head of State-level encounter between the United States and the DPRK at the end of June means that progress on the Korean Peninsula remains a possibility. The last time I spoke to the CD, there was a vague hope that the aftermath of the Winter Olympics could lead to North-South dialogue, but there was no suggestion of the huge strides

that were to follow. This goes to show how quickly things can change, and how we need to be ready for all eventualities.

As I have stated before, within its mandate, and with the approval of our Member States, the CTBTO stands ready to contribute our expertise, technologies and monitoring assets to any multilateral process aimed at confirming the closure of the Punggye-ri nuclear test site. This could be in any format agreeable to the parties – for example, the participation of experts as part of a multinational team.

At the same time, the CTBT can help build trust among the parties. If an agreement on verifiable denuclearization is reached, a prohibition on nuclear tests could be included as an interim step pending DPRK ratification. The CTBTO and its verification regime can be explicitly called upon to verify this aspect of an agreement.

Even if signature and/or ratification is out of reach for North Korea at this stage, the country could still consider becoming an observer to the CTBTO, as Pakistan and Cuba have done. With that, it could familiarize itself with Treaty technical verification capabilities as well as access ancillary benefits including the use of CTBT data for disaster prevention and mitigation.

Excellencies,  
Distinguished Delegates,

The CTBT is a practical and effective measure for nuclear non-proliferation, and is a necessary building block for a nuclear weapons-free world. Progress on the CTBT would undoubtedly positively impact the NPT process, and would help to unlock other challenges too.

The world is already benefitting from the value of the CTBT under the *de facto* global norm against nuclear testing. But without determined and urgent action, these benefits remain at risk.

As representatives and delegates to the Conference on Disarmament, your leadership can make a difference in this regard. As we prepare for 2020, let us not give in to despair, but rather cherish – and complete – the architecture that we have so painstakingly built.

Thank you.