

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

**Executive Secretary Dr. Lassina Zerbo**

**Keynote Speech**

**Annual NATO Conference on WMD Arms Control,  
Disarmament and Non-proliferation**

**“The CTBT and international security: overcoming challenges and seizing opportunities”**

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**Introduction**

Minister Soini,  
Ambassador Ducaru,  
Excellences  
Ladies and Gentlemen,

Thanks to Rose for an inspiring video message. Rose has been known as a strong and cautious supporter of the CTBT.

Let me express my sincere appreciation to the Ministry for Foreign Affairs of Finland for hosting this event and to Ambassador Sorin Ducaru for the invitation to speak. It is an honour to deliver the keynote speech here this morning.

This meeting is an excellent opportunity to continue a dialogue with NATO Member States and partners on how the Comprehensive Nuclear-Test-Ban Treaty (CTBT) can contribute to the alliance’s WMD non-proliferation objectives.

NATO has consistently shown support for the CTBT, bringing it more recently into the forefront of conversations on disarmament and non-proliferation.

Both the CTBTO and NATO have a shared objective: delivering peace and security by removing the threat of proliferation of nuclear weapons.

This objective is more crucial than ever in an increasingly tense and polarized political atmosphere.

We are all concerned about escalating tensions in many regions of the world, and the potential effect of this on nuclear non-proliferation. Allow me this morning to explore this from a CTBT perspective, looking not just at challenges but also at opportunities.

I will first look at the regional context, before addressing in more detail the NATO-CTBTO relationship and the future of the global non-proliferation and disarmament regime.

Where best to start than **DPRK and Asia**, where DPRK just launched again another ballistic missile.

Tomorrow, there will be a panel on the current proliferation threats and challenges in Asia. That region often comes to mind these days when we think about arms control, disarmament and non-proliferation – and for good reason.

Many see North Korea’s nuclear weapons programme as the most urgent WMD proliferation challenge that we face today. The DPRK has performed five nuclear tests to date – the last one was in September 2016 – and there are speculations that preparations were or are underway for a sixth.

The CTBT International Monitoring System has provided timely, accurate, reliable and unbiased information on all five tests with no doubt today about the effectiveness of its verification system and the verifiability of the Treaty.

In recent weeks, the DPRK has been launching what appear to be intermediate range ballistic missiles into the sea between North Korea and Japan.

These missile launches are also very worrying. With each test the DPRK enhances its nuclear weapons expertise, understanding and capabilities.

While the situation with North Korea is grave, we should not be pessimistic about the chances of resolving the issue. We must find opportunity and positivity within the situation presented one way or another.

What makes me get up in the morning is to focus on the opportunities rather than the threats because the diplomat you are have taught me that there is always a way to find a solution... at least one day.

Diplomacy has an opportunity to triumph, one day! Threats and sanctions against the DPRK are yet to prove their effectiveness. Dialogue seems to be needed, and the CTBT should feature prominently in that dialogue.

The CTBT can and should serve as a confidence-building measure to stabilize the Korean peninsula and decrease tensions across the Asian region. A moratorium on further testing and a CTBT platform for the DPRK should be the key goals to pursue.

This is in the interest of NATO and its Member States, as well as the Russian Federation and China. It is a pragmatic and practical means to reach a solution in the interest of international peace and security.

Another important opportunity in Asia is the potential of China as an advocate for the Treaty. We have been making significant progress in China by establishing and certifying its IMS stations.

China has proven itself to be a great leader on many issues throughout the world. Through advancing the CTBT, it can demonstrate its leadership on nuclear non-proliferation and security in the region.

Turning to **South Asia**, neither India nor Pakistan have yet signed or ratified the CTBT. As States listed in Annex 2 to the Treaty, their ratifications are necessary for it to enter into force. And I believe there is significant room to establish a framework for discussion on the Treaty in these countries.

Focusing on scientific and civil applications of IMS data has been a practical way of making progress. We have connected with Indian and Pakistani scientists through a series of Science and Technology Conferences and Scientist-to-Scientist workshops.

By engaging with academia and civil society, we nurtured an understanding of the CTBT and the role it plays in non-proliferation and disarmament.

NATO Member States could build on this by raising the benefits of the Treaty and its verification regime during bilateral or multilateral interactions with these states. This would promote multilateral cooperation and help to build confidence in the Treaty and its verification regime.

Despite the supposed 'allergic reaction' to the CTBT in this region entry into force can be advanced under the right conditions.

## **The Middle East**

Also in the Middle East there are opportunities. As you know, lack of progress on a WMD-free zone has led to difficulties in the implementation and review of the NPT. The CTBT could become a

stepping stone. A nuclear *test* free zone would build confidence among the key actors in the region. This would help lay the groundwork for a full WMD-free zone.

Three of the eight “missing” Annex 2 states are in the Middle East—Egypt, Iran and Israel. All have signed the CTBT, but not ratified. I have long mentioned a test free zone as a confidence building measure with a positive effect on further ratification. Israel may lead the way here! We have seen the powerful effect of diplomatic negotiations in this region. The success of the EU3+3 talks on the JCPOA demonstrated that there is a way forward. Except that I felt a mis-opportunity for the CTBT.

Progress in the region could also come in the form of constructing and certifying the IMS stations in Iran, Egypt, or even Saudi Arabia – not an Annex 2 State, but a key player nonetheless. This would send a clear message about the role that the CTBT plays in regional peace and stability.

One way that NATO can contribute to these efforts is by emphasizing the CTBT in its Mediterranean Dialogue and Istanbul Cooperation Initiative, which will help to raise the profile of the Treaty among states in that region.

## **NATO and CTBTO**

Ladies and Gentlemen,

NATO has done a great deal to support the CTBT: from the 1999 endorsement of the Treaty by the NATO Parliamentary Assembly, to the call by Heads of State and Government at the NATO Council in Warsaw last July for its universalization.

And this is how it should be. All NATO States have bound themselves to every major multilateral treaty concerning arms control and disarmament.

NATO Member States contribute up to 60% of the regular budget and together host 125 IMS stations, making up 37% of the system. This contribution is vital.

With your assistance, we have made great progress. Currently, about 92% of the IMS is installed. And it already has exceeded initial expectations for coverage and detection capabilities of the fully-established system.

The United States has been one of the strongest supporters of all. Its contributions make up approximately 22% of the CTBTO’s budget. It has also frequently made generous extra-budgetary contributions. It hosts the most IMS stations, and supports countless projects that contribute to the development of the verification regime, such as software development and station maintenance.

My trust is in NATO and its members that they will continue this important support, and encourage others to follow suit. An in-force CTBT with a fully operational verification regime is very much in the interest of Euro-Atlantic security.

## **Moving now on The Future of the global Non-Proliferation Regime**

Moving now on the future of the global non-proliferation regime, the fact is that we find ourselves in a world in which States are increasingly facing pressure to pull back from the international stage, and away from multilateral, and even bilateral, cooperation and agreements.

Now more than ever we need to appeal to a spirit of collaboration.

The CTBT can come to the rescue and serve as common ground across the board in international nuclear non-proliferation and disarmament fora. During the recent first session of the 2020 NPT Review Conference PrepCom, the CTBT stood out as an uncontested and universally supported item.

Let me thank His Excellency Mr. Henk Cor van der Kwast for his work in this regard. It certainly helped that many NATO members supported a change in procedural practice by having the CTBT feature prominently at the start of the meeting. Let me thank you for supporting that change.

Last year the UN Security Council adopted resolution 2310, the first resolution focusing solely on the CTBT and nuclear testing. The resolution calls for the CTBT's early entry into force and highlights its key role in non-proliferation and disarmament.

Importantly, the resolution also recognizes the maturity of the IMS, and the demonstrated ability of the IDC to provide independent and reliable means to ensure compliance with the Treaty.

It is often said that the CTBT has already achieved its objective. True, there is only one country which still conducts nuclear explosive tests. The Treaty has established a de-facto norm against nuclear testing. There should be no room for complacency. Until the CTBT is universally in force, the risk of backsliding into nuclear testing remains.

As you know, there are also frustration and impatience among a number of countries on the lack of progress towards nuclear disarmament. Negotiations on a proposed convention to ban nuclear weapons are underway and a draft text has been released

The frustration with lack of progress is understandable. Nevertheless, all states should ensure that the achievements made in non-proliferation and disarmament, and in particular the CTBT verification regime, are not suddenly forgotten. I am often asked if Japan was right not to be part of the Weapon Ban Treaty: without getting into domestic politics, let me say that there is no doubt about Japan's commitment to a world free of nuclear weapons. It is in that vein that FM Kishida has laid out the way forward for Japan which is a step by step approach: an approach that includes the pending arms control treaties like the CTBT as a solid ground to prepare our ultimate goal of a world free of nuclear weapons.

The nuclear moratoria currently in place help to reinforce the non-testing norm. But without the CTBT in force, a breakdown in the global security environment or erosion in strategic stability could lead to a real weakening of that norm. This is not a risk any of us should take.

## **Conclusion**

Ladies and Gentlemen,

The CTBT is a unifying stepping stone which encourages confidence building and multilateral cooperation. We shall make no mistake; do not see it as a little step towards disarmament. By continuing to voice and encourage support for the CTBT, NATO can effectively advance arms control, disarmament and non-proliferation.

In a climate of uncertainty, we need to capitalize upon opportunities.

Bringing the CTBT into force would reinforce mutual understanding and trust in independent, neutral and science-based verification, making the world a more secure place.

Continued and strong support from NATO and its Member States will contribute to the goal: a peaceful world, where nuclear testing is history and where the path to a Nuclear Weapons free world much clearer and even brighter.

So to Rose's question: "What's next?", I say: "let's finish what we started".

Thank you.