



Wilton Park Conference – Nuclear Non-proliferation: Planning for 2020

Keynote Speech by Dr Lassina Zerbo, Executive Secretary “Reaching the Nearest Shore: Acting on the CTBT to Re-invigorate Multilateral Non-proliferation Collaboration”

16 December 2015

I would like to express my gratitude to Mark Smith for offering me this opportunity to give a dinner address at this important and timely conference. Wilton Park’s periodic conferences on non-proliferation are one of the **most important platforms for candid discussions** on nuclear issues.

Acting on the CTBT: A building block, a step, or something more?

The Conference agenda manages to be both **all-encompassing yet super-specific**. The overarching theme is planning for 2020, which sets our sights firmly on the new NPT cycle. There are sessions looking at the entirety of the non-proliferation architecture and the overall strategic security context for the years ahead. Then some sessions drill down to issues that are component parts, yet ‘stars’ in their own right. The Iran deal, DPRK, prospects for a Middle East WMD-Free Zone, the next Nuclear Security Summit, and so on.

I like the approach. I have always maintained that the CTBT **cannot be viewed in isolation**. It is so intricately related to everything on this week’s agenda, just as everything is related to it.

From 1995 onwards, the CTBT has frequently been characterized as a building block towards meeting full, universal, NPT obligations right up to and including disarmament. CTBT entry into force was, of course, one of the famous 13 Steps in 2000.

A **building block** and a **step**. These are useful words to describe the constructive, progressive, role of the CTBT. But they also kind of miss something. Acting on the CTBT is not one segment in a linear process. **To be at the landing, you also have to be part of the take-off**. And of course you should not parachute out on the way.

Acting on the CTBT can only be **‘disruptive’** in the most positive sense. It would transform bilateral and multilateral relationships, build confidence regionally and globally, and help unlock a range of outstanding issues in non-proliferation and disarmament.

The ‘Nearest Shore’

2020 will mark 25 years since the indefinite extension of the NPT in 1995. In other words, the post-extension life of the NPT will be just as long as its original cap of 25 years. A functioning CTBT was such an integral part of the extension bargain. Let me be frank: it is hard to imagine much success in 2020 without making significant strides towards CTBT entry into force.

We have felt this in our own governing bodies, where previously short sessions have been dragged out over issues of contention that have their roots in frustration. We cannot let frustration and Treaty fatigue lead to a situation where some States question the value of their contribution to the CTBT.

Some people have begun to consider if there are other ways across the broad ocean. Other approaches such as a nuclear weapon convention can certainly throw a new light on things. But we should bear in mind that **we do not yet have even a nuclear-test free world**. By bringing the CTBT into force, this is the **‘nearest shore’** we can reach together.

We must always take advantage of opportunities to move forward. Let’s take the Iran talks. It took not only almost two years of talks, but many years of hard work, to reach what is an historical agreement with Iran. It is important to **seize opportunities** and move forward when the time is right. And now is the time to move on the CTBT.

Multilateral collaboration

The JCPOA also gives us a **model** to follow, both for the CTBT and for other elements of the 2020 cycle. **Multilateral collaboration** can effectively overcome intractable problems. Many of the key players in the Iran deal – such as EU High Representative Mogherini – are now talking about CTBT entry into force as the next big goal in disarmament and non-proliferation, which can be achieved with a similar approach. Let’s make her words a reality.

Mogherini and others such as Secretary Kerry, who recently indicated renewed attention from the Obama Administration on the CTBT, are well aware that next year, 2016, will be the **20th anniversary** of the opening for signature of the Treaty. They rightly see this anniversary as an opportunity in itself. So do I. And I will come to this shortly.

First I wish to look at two regional contexts in which multilateral collaboration can further the CTBT and non-proliferation goals more generally: the Middle East and the Korean Peninsula.

Middle East

The nuclear deal may well re-shape relations between Iran and the West, and will hopefully have positive repercussions with other States in the Middle East. But we are talking about a region abound with scepticism and lack of trust. Measures have to be taken to reinforce the Iran deal, for the benefit of all parties, as well as for regional and global security.

I believe that the CTBT can serve as such a **regional confidence and security building measure**. Iran has signed the CTBT. Ratifying would be a powerful and definitive response to sceptics who worry about Iran's nuclear ambitions in the longer term.

The same holds for other countries in the region from which ratifications are needed – namely Egypt and Israel.

You have already had an in-depth discussion on a WMD-Free Zone for the Middle East. We all know the difficulties. But what about a **Nuclear Test Free Zone**? No States in the region conduct nuclear tests. Key States such as Egypt, Iran and Israel have signed the CTBT. Egypt has signed the Pelindaba Treaty, of which non-testing is an essential component.

There are existing IMS stations in the region, most of which are already certified, and there is wide collaboration between States in the Middle East on CTBT issues. There is an already existing scientific infrastructure in States in the region as a result of our training and capacity building activities.

Putting in place a Nuclear Test Free Zone – within the context of which I envisage CTBT adherence – will require **leadership**, both regionally and globally. But in the wake of the Iran deal, there is a momentum on which key facilitators and actors can build.

Further positive moves in this direction can be made without significant difficulty. Iran already contributes positively through strong participation in CTBT training and preparedness exercises. Another welcome move would be for Iran to **further build trust** by transmitting data from the monitoring stations it hosts to the International Data Centre in Vienna, and by completing the installation and certification of other monitoring stations.

DPRK

Where the CTBT is concerned, the **DPRK** is a special case among the 8 remaining Annex 2 States. The Korean Peninsula remains under the shadow of military stand-off. The DPRK is the only country to have tested nuclear weapons in the 21st century. The tests were unfortunate, but also a powerful

illustration of how CTBT detection capabilities have matured. They were also a reminder of **how fragile nuclear testing moratoria** are.

These days there is often scepticism that we will see progress on denuclearization in the DPRK. The Six-Party Talks seem a long time ago. Recent media reports speculate about renewed nuclear testing or even thermonuclear capability, however unlikely that is.

This does not mean that steps towards engagement are out of reach. New channels that may foster incremental change in the DPRK can be explored. I believe that **the CTBT can be a part of such engagement**. I have consistently said that I do not believe in isolation but rather in dialogue.

The success of the Iran nuclear negotiations demonstrates that **global security challenges can be addressed if the international community focuses its attention and resources on the issue**.

Also bear in mind how **US – Cuba** relations have changed after decades of mutual antipathy. Rather than take a negative approach on the DPRK we need to reassess our approach to the country and find opportunities for progress.

That is why I met with representatives of the Institute for Peace and Disarmament of the DPRK Ministry of Foreign Affairs on the margins of the International Non-proliferation Conference organized by the Centre for Energy and Security Studies in Moscow last year. Participants from the DPRK showed interest in the benefits of the CTBT. And I expressed readiness to engage to show these benefits including through promoting scientific engagement. I have said then and I will repeat it now: **I am ready to engage with the DPRK and to help those who would engage with them**.

Entry into force / Anniversary

Though enjoying near universal support in the international community, the lack of ratifications by the **eight remaining Annex 2 States** has prevented the CTBT from becoming legally binding and enforceable international law.

I mentioned four of the eight. I could also talk at length about the dynamics in South Asia that might bring India and Pakistan on board, or our strong engagement with China.

But people often ask me more about prospects in the United States. A few weeks ago, Secretary Kerry **pledged** in Washington to spend his last year in office making the case for why the US should ratify the CTBT.

Kerry emphasized that the factors that led some US Senators to oppose the Treaty in 1999 have changed, and “so choices should change as well”. In this context he **called to action for scientists involved to educate US lawmakers** about the realities of nuclear testing and verification in 2015.

The political complexities preventing some Annex 2 States from completing the ratification process will not be resolved overnight. But together we can provide a constructive framework to help resolve those issues.

I promised to come back to the 20 years of the CTBT. When we began to think about commemorating the anniversary, one prominent Ambassador said to me: “Lassina, there is nothing to celebrate! If anything we should observe a moment of silence!”

It may not be a reason for celebration, it does provide a unique opportunity to reflect on the Treaty and its entry into force. I hope that each of you, from all your respective institutions, will put aside some time to do so. Even 30 seconds a day!

The CTBTO will hold a number of events to commemorate the anniversary. The centrepiece will be a major **Ministerial-level event in Vienna in June**. Other events will bring together the Group of Eminent Persons that I established to promote the Treaty. EU High Representative Mogherini is a member of the Group, and is planning to host an event in Brussels.

We are launching the anniversary year with a **Symposium** titled “Science and Diplomacy for Peace and Security: the CTBT at 20”, which takes place in Vienna from 25 January to 4 February 2016. It will bring together negotiators of the Treaty, diplomats, scientists, civil society, academia and others. Some of you have already confirmed participation. I would encourage all of you to look at our website, where full details of the Symposium are available.

Conclusion

The challenges we face requires leadership and dedication, but more than that, they require action through multilateral leadership and collaboration. Finishing the job of securing the CTBT will bring us to that near shore, and help calm the stormier seas.

So let me finish by reiterating how grateful I am to be with you all here today. All of you are experts who have been dealing with arms control, non-proliferation, and disarmament issues for most of your professional careers. I want to turn any frustration or fatigue on the CTBT into an international call to action through a clear plan in 2016. Please let's not miss another opportunity.

Thank you.

Merry Christmas and a Happy CTBT Year 2016 to you all.