

# **Evening Keynote: Executive Secretary, CTBTO Lassina Zerbo to EU Non-Proliferation and Disarmament Conference 2016, hosted by the International Institute for Strategic Studies**

**4 November 2016, Brussels**

Good evening. Normally I should start by thanking the EU Consortium and especially Mark Fitzpatrick but, before I do that, let me say thanks to Sanam Shantyaei, because Sanam is an example of how somebody can come from a completely different field and then become slowly an expert in non-proliferation and disarmament journalism. That's basically what she's doing.

I met Sanam, indeed, in Paris, and she came to interview me in the lobby of a hotel, and she was mixing French and English, and then told me she's from Iranian origin, and then I think I told her I'm from Japan. That's what I must have done. But I was impressed by Sanam. But then what we did, I said okay, I told my team, how about getting Sanam to interview the Secretary-General when we invite him to Vienna to our symposium at the beginning of the year. And the SG came, together with Kim, and Kim, you will agree with me that not only you but the SG was pretty impressed by her performance. So, Sanam, thank you for being here, and I hope this will lead you into more and more disarmament and non-proliferation issues in journalism to help us move this agenda forward and forward. So, thank you.

So Mark, thank you for inviting me, and, indeed, the EU Consortium. So I was wondering, when you told me that I would come for the dinner speech, now people tend to take me as a keynote dinner speaker, I'm wondering if they think that I like food. But they don't realise that when I talk to dinner speech, I don't eat. And that's it. But anyway, thank you, Mark, for having me.

And I understand that this morning – you know, I'm sorry, I couldn't be here – that the CTBTO was referred to as a zombie organisation. But when I heard this, I went back to the mirror and I looked at myself. I said, 'Do I look like a zombie? I don't think so.' But anyway, the good thing is that you never kill a zombie, and you know that. And you will never kill the CTBTO. Whatever you do in disarmament, non-proliferation, arms control, you have to go through the CTBTO. We can jump, we can have new ideas, but we will never forget about the CTBTO. So please agree with me, the CTBTO is not a zombie organisation.

So, why it isn't a zombie organisation. Let's take 2016. What a year. We started by this symposium, and the symposium brought to you a young bright journalist from Iranian origin, British Iranian, who is now becoming an expert in what we've been working on for so many years. And we move on into many events. We had a successful symposium, where we launched the youth group – the youth group that gave an energy and dynamism to the CTBTO. There is one member of the youth group, Anastasia, where is she? She's somewhere hidden in the back, but I just met her. So here's Anastasia. She's one of the young members of the youth group. But she told me one thing in Moscow that I want to share with you. Anastasia said to me, you know, I thought she wanted to tell me, I want to be an intern in the CTBTO, I'm looking for a job in the CTBTO. She said, 'No. I have a dream. My dream is to be part of the Russian delegation to the NPT conference in 2020.' That's her dream. So if

there's a Russian high official, make sure that this happens. Because she's not looking for a job. That's what she wants. She wants to represent Russia and make a difference. So this is what I wish, Anastasia, a member of the CTBTO youth group. And she's a lady who ... because gender balance is important – I understand that Mark has had trouble this morning with balancing gender, so I feel Anastasia could be a solution for you in the future as well.

So now, I've talked about 2016, I've talked about the symposium, and then we went into a series of events, including the 20th anniversary of the CTBTO on 13 June in Vienna, where I had a dream, and my dream was: how, for once, can I bring the foreign minister of North Korea with a group of foreign ministers in Vienna to talk about the CTBTO as a means to get North Korea to stop testing? So I saw in that dream, and then we try, we try, we try, but I'm sure most of you are diplomats, you know how it works. They are asking, 'Who else is going to this conference?' If they don't hear the name they want to hear, they say 'Okay, I'll give you my answer later.' And then some, in that sense, have refrained from being there.

And then the same people are asking me, 'Have you invited North Korea?' And I said, 'Yes, I did. And I did send an invitation. But if you had come, maybe North Korea would be there.' Because Kim will confess with me, whenever we have an opportunity to talk to those people, their one wish is to talk to a few numbers of countries in this world. That's what they say. When you talk to them, they don't say, 'We have our brothers who are our enemies.' They say to us, 'We want to talk to people up north. Tell them we want a dialogue with them.' And yet we talk about sanctions. And then I'll come to that. I'll come to the sanctions.

But I wanted to say that during these 20 years, we've tried it all. And you've heard many Security Council resolutions talking about North Korea, but not even adding the CTBT in that context. And that was an issue for me. How can you talk about North Korea testing nuclear weapons and not mention the CTBT as part of the solution? For me, this is a problem. And this is why ... and I'm asking many of you to bear with me when I say that the Security Council Resolution 2310 is a good one, I'm not going against a region or against a group of countries. If for a long, long period of time, people don't talk about an important issue like the CTBT in the framework of getting North Korea to stop testing, and for once they do it, as ahead of the organisation, what do you want me to do? To say that it's not a good thing? Of course not. For me it's a good thing. I know some have told me, why do I do that? Because, you know, we're part of a group where people are not very serious about this issue. We think that the Security Council shouldn't take up the issue of the CTBT. But, I mean, for once, you have the nuclear-power countries that are coming together and talking about an issue and finding ways to advance the treaty. And this is what I'd done. And this is what I commend them for.

I'm not going into analysing whether they're wrong or right; what is right here is that for once, they came together and issued something on the CTBT and they're asking us to set up ourselves a milestone as we move forward to advance arms control, non-proliferation and ultimately disarmament. And this is what I thank the P5 for, as head of the organisation. Not as somebody from Burkina Faso; as the head of the Comprehensive Nuclear Test-Ban Treaty Organisation. That's why, for me, the Security Council Resolution 2310 is for me a good thing. And I want to thank Kim for that, for inviting me to the Security Council chamber, under the Australian presidency, and then to be there and witness what to us was an important milestone.

So when we talk about DPRK, we have to ask ourselves, as the several responses in terms of sanctions, have we been strong enough? Are sanctions the one and only real effective measure? Do we risk becoming desensitised to the importance of any further tests by North Korea? Those are the questions we should ask ourselves. And I think there have been mixed signals, and this is what I certainly think. Both tests have received worldwide condemnation – in March, the Security Council 2270, and then, later on, increasing sanctions, increasing sanctions, increasing sanctions. But I've talked to experts as well, like Sieg Hecker, who visited North Korea eight times.

And yesterday, I met a lady who just returned from North Korea. And I asked her, 'What can you tell us? What can we do?' And then she said, 'Look, this idea of thinking that North Korea would collapse and that things would go sour, and that we have to start looking at how South Korea will deal with it, or how China will deal with it, or how the US will deal with it', she didn't feel that when she was in Pyongyang. Because she said, 'They are still building. They're still working.' And then they showed her many things that gave her the impression that sanctions are not working, because they have the means to do what they want. So when we see this, we should ask ourselves, what else should we do?

And yesterday I was told, 'We've tried dialogue with them, it never worked. Why do you want to talk to them again? We have to put pressure on China, we have to put pressure on North Korea.' You know, when I hear putting pressure on China, China is a different country in this twenty-first century than it was before. We can dialogue with China. And I've said – at the last Munich security conference I was asking a question to two officials, one from the US and one from China – I said, 'How about you two coming out with the way of talking to North Korea by committing to ratifying together the Comprehensive Test-Ban Treaty?' I didn't get an answer.

But I see Tom Countryman here; we can talk about this. But what I can say, Tom, I saw a tweet referring to you and the priority that your government set forth for the future in terms of policy in arms control and non-proliferation. And you mention the Comprehensive Test-Ban Treaty. But I am asking you, mention it more, because people don't see it. People don't even know sometimes that the US is supporting this treaty. People refer to you, or to the US, as part of a group of people who don't believe in this treaty and who will not give you the numbers enough to ratify or to consider the ratification of the CTBT. But when you say that this is your priority, mention it, talk about it wherever you are. If you don't talk about it, we don't know it. And if you talk about it, it changes the dynamics with regard to the other seven countries because they are all waiting. They say, you know, 'Why the US is always asking us to clean our doorstep if they don't clean theirs?' But tell them that you're moving and that you're doing concrete steps forward. And this is what we need from you, Tom. Now, I want to congratulate you on your new job, and then hope that under your term we will get the US ratification.

Now, that leads me to the next point, which is keeping the momentum. Tom, you will help me to keep that momentum because people might think that after the 20th anniversary, Lassina Zerbo and his team will have nothing to do in 2017, and then the CTBT will be, not a zombie, because you can't kill a zombie, but something close to that.

But, you know, one thing I often say is that God is magnificent. As we finish 2016 and the 20th anniversary, it brings 2310. And 2310, whether you like it or not, you will talk about it, because 2310 is asking us to report on the international monitoring system, the International

Data Centre, the on-site inspection capability. And what 2310 does, 2310 basically shows to the international community that they have in their hand one of the wonderful achievements of the modern world. That's not from me; that's from people who have witnessed the achievement of the CTBT. The achievement of the zombie.

So, what 2310 does, it is an inspiration. An inspiration for finally securing a legally binding global ban on nuclear testing. Not only does it express determination to bring the treaty into force, it also recognises and puts at the disposal of you, the international community, the international monitoring system and the verification regime that we are building. So what we must do now is increase the momentum towards the entering into force of the CTBT. And then you might ask me how. Our slogan during the 20-year anniversary was 'let's finish what we started'. And many of you have seen crazy posters. You know, a lady's shoe without a heel; and many think that showed that the job is not yet finished. The job is not yet finished in 2016. It's still not finished in 2017, in 2018, and maybe longer. But that is not the reason why we should stop. We should push. And that's what keeps me going. And what keeps me going is because, as Sanam said, I'm so happy to have met a community like yours where I can learn, where I have learned, and where I am still learning. A community that taught me that you have to be patient. Don't rush. Because in science, you lock yourself in the room, you want to find a solution, you come up with the solution, and then you give it to people, but in diplomacy, one step at a time.

So you guys say one step at a time, and sometimes you want to jump. And I'm going to say something that might be provocative to some. This is the idea of the ban on nuclear weapons. I am in favour of a world free of nuclear weapons, like all of you who are here today. We all are.

I was telling my friend Wael ... where is Wael? Thank you. I was telling Wael, look, you know, if you want, I'll come and work for you. Why I want to work for Wael is because I want to pursue with Wael issues on the Middle East. Because when people ask me, what you want to do after being Executive Secretary of the CTBTO, I say I want to be a Special Envoy in the Middle East. It's a reality. It's a difficult task, but Wael, why it is important? I've mentioned step-by-step. You know, we've been talking for 40 years about banning nuclear weapons, having a WMD-free zone in the Middle East, and so on. But have we moved? No.

But forget about me being the head of the CTBTO. If you're talking to somebody who just looks at the arms-control and disarmament framework, you know, I was born in a country where harvesting is important. What you do, you come under the tree, the first thing you do is to get the best fruit that is hanging, and the lowest possible that you can catch. And especially because, when we were kids, we weren't that tall to jump. So for me, if I ask Wael and I ask many of you, in this arms-control and disarmament framework, what is the lowest-hanging fruit? You can come up with other solutions, and the CTBT is one of them. So grab it. Grab it and you move on other issues. You can try to grab them at the same time, but don't forget that the CTBT is pending. If you do that, you will not advance any other field.

And, in the nuclear-weapon-ban treaty, can we have a weapon-ban treaty without getting the P5 countries to join? I was talking to a foreign minister this afternoon, and that is the question that he was asking me. It's difficult. So how can we bring them all together to move on this issue? We can talk, we can fight, we can separate ourselves, we can say, 'Look, I don't believe in this, they haven't been doing this for 40 years, but let's get them to do the CTBT.' And this is what I've been trying with the eight remaining countries, and that's what led me

to talk to Prime Minister Netanyahu and then to talk to many others, including North Korea. I just came back from Cuba. When you talk to the Cubans, they don't have an issue with the CTBT as we always believed. Cuba is pro-CTBT; Cuba is pro-peace and stability. And Cuba will consider the CTBT. They don't have an issue with it. There are other issues and other priorities that they have to deal with. But what they are saying is, 'Okay, you are asking us to do that, but what about our brothers from the North?' So Tom, here's your task. Okay? You help us to move on this issue, and then we will give you the Nobel Peace Prize.

So, Sanam, I'm probably taking much longer, but I think I'll come and sit shortly with you. But I wanted to say that after talking about maintaining this momentum, the other path we need to travel is maintaining our operational readiness. There is no better way to convince people to ratify the CTBT than showing them that they have a sustainable international monitoring system and the verification regime that can serve their purpose. And this is what we are doing at the PTS (Provisional Technical Secretariat). And this is what makes us so resilient. And this is what makes us the zombie that you guys are talking about, because the international monitoring system will never die. Never. If it dies in Vienna, it will survive in your own respective countries, because you need it. And this is how strong is the international monitoring system.

So, universality and a reliable verification regime are the two engines that make any disarmament and non-proliferation treaty more than just symbolic in nature. But CTBT, as I mentioned, we almost have the first, and already have the second. When I say almost have the first, we are nearly universal, but we have a robust international monitoring system, and the sustainable verification regime that we are building. So, I hope and I pray that this discussion on the ban on nuclear weapons, the nuclear-weapon ban, will include the CTBT. It should include the CTBT. It should move together. I believe in non-proliferation and disarmament. And if you include the CTBT in that, you will find – it's like, you know, if you have a dog around you, if you don't give him a bone to bite he will be barking all the time. But if you give him a bone, that's it. So the CTBT can be that bone that we can chew and do whatever we want; when we solve that, we will move on other issues.

And I will conclude by talking, because I cannot be here without talking about our cooperation with the European Union. And you heard in a video message, Federica Mogherini today, one of the strongest advocates of the Comprehensive Test-Ban Treaty. And Jacek Bylica and many of you. But the EU represents 40% of the budget of the Comprehensive Test-Ban Treaty. Without the EU, we would not be here. And this is a region where 28 of them have signed and ratified a Comprehensive Test-Ban Treaty. That shows how strong their support is. And you know, there are many issues in the EU that we can't solve, because it is difficult to get 28 to agree on one thing. But they all agree on the CTBT. So, and I'm sure, when they fight, Jacek will come and say, 'Let's start with what we agree about, which is the CTBT.' And that will bring the smile and then they can move on other issues.

So, thanks to the EU and thanks to you guys, we have a research and technology development framework that works strong, we have cooperation with not only Belgium but with the whole of the European Union, and this is something that I want to thank this consortium for, because you've given an opportunity for us to not be forgotten, and to talk about what the EU does for us and what you can do for us in the future.

So let me close, then, by saying that although we live in a time of uncertainty, a time of great challenges, we should focus on opportunity. And when I say opportunity, opportunity is what brought me to this field. You have to grab opportunities. If you don't grab them, you miss them, and that's it. So let's make sure the opportunity that we have here to advance some of the issues that we have, that we are able to grab them. And then be strong, and strong as we move to advance the entering into force of the Comprehensive Test-Ban Treaty, and contribute to non-proliferation and disarmament. Thank you.