

Past Time to Finish What We Started

Civil Society Statement to the 10th Article XIV Conference on Facilitating Entry Into Force of the CTBT

Sept. 20, 2017

A global, verifiable, legally binding comprehensive ban on all types of nuclear test explosions has been a goal for international nuclear-risk reduction, nonproliferation, and disarmament since the beginning of the nuclear age.

The Comprehensive Nuclear-Test-Ban Treaty (CTBT) is the result of years of campaigning by civil society organizations and ordinary people around the globe concerned about the adverse health and environmental effects of nuclear weapons testing and the dangers of the nuclear arms race. The CTBT is the result of the courageous leadership displayed by key political and diplomatic leaders.

Two decades after the opening for signature of the CTBT, the treaty has near universal support and has established a global norm against nuclear test explosions. Nations that conduct nuclear tests are now considered outside the international mainstream and bear the consequences of global isolation. Only one country—North Korea—has conducted nuclear test explosions in this century.

By prohibiting all nuclear weapon test explosions, the CTBT creates an important barrier against the development of new and more advanced nuclear warhead designs, which, in turn, helps prevent dangerous nuclear competition and advance the twin goals of nonproliferation and disarmament.

The CTBT Organization (CTBTO), established by the international community to provide international oversight for verification of the CTBT, has developed increasingly sophisticated tools and techniques to effectively verify compliance with a “zero-yield” nuclear test ban.

The CTBTO’s International Monitoring System, which is more than 90% complete and is operating on a continuous 24/7 basis, already serves to detect and deter nuclear test explosions, and provides additional data for other applications. The CTBTO, with technical support and financial contributions of key member states, has also refined the advanced tools and techniques necessary for on-site inspections, which can, once the treaty enters into force, be used to investigate suspect events.¹

International support for the CTBT has been reaffirmed over the years through multiple UN General Assembly resolutions and UN Security Council (UNSC) resolutions.

- UNSC Resolution 2310, adopted in September 2016, reaffirmed the widespread global support for the CTBT, reinforced the norm against testing, expressed strong support for the work of the CTBTO, and recognized that the 183 state signatories of the CTBT are obliged not to take any action contrary to the object and purpose of the treaty, including by conducting nuclear test explosions.

- The new Treaty on the Prohibition of Nuclear Weapons (TPNW) negotiated earlier this year, though not endorsed by all of the CTBT's signatories, further reinforces the CTBT and the non-testing norm. Under the TPNW, states-parties may not "test" nuclear weapons or other nuclear explosive devices.

But our work is not yet done. In order to realize the full potential of the CTBT and to close the door on further nuclear testing, we need to secure the entry into force of the treaty.

Supporters of the CTBT need to undertake new and sustained diplomatic and outreach efforts to help underscore the political and security value of the treaty for each of the eight remaining CTBT "hold-out" states and the international community.

It is essential that the incoming co-chairs of the Article XIV process Belgium and Iraq—in coordination with the previous co-chairs Japan and Kazakhstan, other key CTBT states-parties, and civil society—develop a pragmatic, effective, and dynamic action plan to advance prospects for ratification and entry into force. That plan must also be designed to ensure that the financial and technical support for the CTBTO remains steady and strong so as to maintain the capacity to verify compliance with the treaty pending its entry into force.

Concrete action on ratification of the CTBT by the remaining hold-out states would strengthen international and regional security, advance the goals and objectives outlined by Article VI of the nuclear Nonproliferation Treaty (NPT), and advance the interests of the eight states listed in Annex 2 that must still ratify to trigger the treaty's entry into force.

- ***India and Pakistan:*** Since their destabilizing tit-for-tat nuclear detonations in 1998, India and Pakistan have refused to reconsider the CTBT even though neither country has an interest in, or technical justification for, renewing nuclear testing. India and Pakistan could advance the cause of nuclear disarmament and substantially ease regional tensions by converting their unilateral test moratoria into legally binding commitments through the CTBT. Pakistan has said it supports the principles and goals of the CTBT and would welcome a legally binding test ban with India, but leaders in Islamabad have failed to take the first step by signing the CTBT.

India's bid for membership in the Nuclear Suppliers Group (NSG) and its effort to win support for a permanent seat on the UN Security Council would get a strong boost if leaders in New Delhi would signal their commitment to sign and ratify the CTBT. Pakistan could make a more convincing case that it is a "responsible" nuclear-armed state if it were to sign and ratify the CTBT. UN member states—particularly those in the Non-Aligned Movement (NAM) and in the NSG—that claim to be serious about their commitment to the CTBT and nuclear nonproliferation should insist that India and Pakistan sign the CTBT before they are considered for NSG membership.

- ***The Middle East:*** Ratification of the CTBT by Israel, Egypt, and Iran—all of which must ratify to trigger CTBT entry into force—and Saudi Arabia would reduce nuclear weapon-related security concerns in the region. It would also help create the conditions necessary to achieve their common, stated goal of a Middle East zone free of nuclear and other weapons of mass destruction. "As a stepping-stone towards this long-term objective, a 'nuclear-test-free zone' could be created in the Middle East, by way of CTBT ratifications by the remaining states of the region," EU foreign policy High

Representative Federica Mogherini suggested in June 2016 at the special ministerial meeting in Vienna to mark the twentieth anniversary of the treaty.

Israel was among the first nations to sign the treaty in 1996 and has been actively involved in the development of the treaty's monitoring system and on-site inspection mechanisms. In 2016, Israel's Permanent Representative to the International Atomic Energy Agency and CTBTO Merav Zafary-Odiz said: "a regional moratorium [on nuclear testing] could enhance security, and potentially lead to a future ratification of the CTBT. Israel has announced its commitment to a moratorium, it would be useful for others to do the same." Unfortunately, Israel has hesitated to take the next steps toward its own ratification of the CTBT—a move that would bring that nation closer to the nuclear nonproliferation mainstream and lend encouragement to other states in the region to follow suit.

In September 1999, at the first Conference on Facilitating the Entry Into Force of the CTBT, Iranian Foreign Minister Mohammad Javad Zarif, then Iran's deputy foreign minister, spoke in support of the CTBT and later endorsed a UN conference statement calling for cooperation aimed at bringing the treaty into effect. Iran is understandably focused on the implementation of the 2015 Joint Comprehensive Plan of Action (JCPOA) and eventual approval of the Additional Protocol to its nuclear safeguards agreement. But if Iran fails to ratify the CTBT and fully cooperate with the operation of its IMS monitoring stations in the years ahead, it will add to concerns about its commitment under the JCPOA not to undertake prohibited weaponization-related activities. Iran could help assuage such concerns by making clear its support for, and intention to ratify, the CTBT in a timely manner.

- **China and the United States:** China decided two decades ago to join the CTBT regime and became one of the treaty's early signatories. China's leaders and officials have consistently expressed their support for the CTBT, but it is clear that China has made a quiet decision to stop short of ratification until the United States completes its ratification process. To most observers outside of China, there do not appear to be any serious political impediments to Chinese ratification at this time, aside from U.S. non-ratification. Beijing's failure to ratify has likely given cover for India not to consider ratification more seriously and has undermined the credibility of Beijing's overtures to Pyongyang to refrain from further nuclear test explosions.

Chinese leadership is important and overdue, but stronger U.S. leadership is also essential. Much has changed since the Senate last examined the CTBT in 1999 and rejected the treaty by a 51-48 vote after a brief and highly partisan debate that centered on questions about the then-unproven stockpile stewardship program and then-unfinished global test-ban monitoring system.

The United States no longer has a technical or military need for a nuclear explosive testing option and it is clearly in U.S. national security interests to prevent other states from testing, which would create new nuclear tensions and enable advances in other states' nuclear weapons arsenals.

President Trump's administration has expressed support for the global nuclear test moratorium and the CTBTO's international monitoring system. At the same time, his

administration is being pressured by some in Congress to repudiate the U.S. commitment not to conduct nuclear explosive tests and to develop new types of low-yield nuclear weapons with “tailored” effects that could require nuclear explosive testing to confirm their performance.

Now is the time for U.S. partners to remind the White House that the pursuit of new types of “more usable” nuclear weapons is destabilizing and that the current global testing taboo cannot be taken for granted. All states at this conference must make it a priority to remind the current U.S. administration, at the highest levels, that Washington has a responsibility and opportunity to reconsider and pursue ratification of the CTBT.

- **North Korea:** The Democratic People’s Republic of Korea (DPRK) is the only nation continuing to flout the global norm against nuclear testing. Their sixth nuclear weapon test was measured by the CTBTO as a magnitude 6.1 seismic event, which means the nuclear bomb produced an explosion in excess of 120 kilotons TNT equivalent, and perhaps much higher. This test, and any future nuclear tests, will undoubtedly help North Korea optimize its nuclear warhead designs for ballistic missile delivery. Although North Korea’s leaders may no longer be willing to negotiate away their nuclear weapons program altogether, they still appear to be willing to halt further nuclear testing in exchange for a reduction of tensions on the Korean peninsula. In a rare statement on the CTBT delivered in Moscow in 2012, a senior DPRK official said: “Once the CTBT becomes effective ... then there is no doubt that it would make a great contribution to the world peace and stability. [However,] unless the U.S. hostile policy and its nuclear threats are completely withdrawn and a solid and permanent peace regime is in place on the Korean peninsula, the DPRK is left with no other choices but to steadily strengthen its self-defensive nuclear deterrent to the standard it deems necessary.”²

It is in the security interests of Washington, Beijing, and their allies and neighbors in Asia to seek to leverage the international sanctions against Pyongyang and immediately engage in negotiations to halt to further long-range ballistic missile testing and secure a permanent ban on further nuclear testing through its signature and ratification of the CTBT, which are key steps toward the denuclearization of the Korean peninsula.

Moving closer to the goal of the CTBT’s formal entry into force is the task of every CTBT state-party because the CTBT is and will continue to be an essential pillar in the global nuclear nonproliferation and disarmament enterprise.

Doing so will, however, take political energy, and a more serious and sustained commitment.

North Korea’s most recent nuclear test explosion is yet another reminder of why CTBT entry into force and the ongoing work of the Comprehensive Test Ban Treaty Organization is so vital to every state’s security interests: nuclear-armed and non-nuclear-weapon states; supporters as well as skeptics of the TPNW; and states inside and outside the NPT regime.

Finally, the devastating health and environmental effects of decades of nuclear testing around the world, which have adversely affected the lives of millions of people—particularly women and children and those in indigenous and underrepresented societies where a majority of the 2,056 nuclear test explosions have been conducted—serve as one reminder of what is at stake.

Our generation of governmental and nongovernmental leaders has a responsibility to those who have suffered the effects of nuclear testing and to future generations to do our part to finally bring the CTBT into force.

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¹ As outlined in UNSC 2310 and mandated in the charter for the establishment the CTBTO Provisional Technical Secretariat (UN document A/54/884, dated 26 May 2000), the UN General Assembly and the UN Security Council may call upon the Executive Secretary to supply information or provide other assistance relating to the treaty,

² Jang Song Chol, Statement to “The Comprehensive Test Ban Treaty (CTBT): Prospects for Making Its Global Benefits Permanent,” presented at the Moscow Nonproliferation Conference, September 6, 2012. See: http://ceness-russia.org/data/page/p915_1.pdf