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**Address by Mr Lassina Zerbo**

**Executive Secretary**

**Preparatory Commission for the**

**Comprehensive Nuclear-Test-Ban Treaty Organization**

**Conference on Facilitating the Entry into Force of the**

**Comprehensive Nuclear-Test-Ban Treaty**

**New York, 25 September 2019**

[Mr Secretary-General]

Your Excellencies the co-Presidents, Minister Boukadoum and Minister Maas,

Excellencies,

Ladies and Gentlemen,

It has been exactly twenty-three years since the Comprehensive Nuclear-Test-Ban Treaty was opened for signature here in this building. Little did those first signatories suspect that – now in 2019 – we would be holding the eleventh Conference on Facilitating the Entry into Force of the Treaty.

This speaks for itself, and I am sure that many of the distinguished speakers here today will reflect in their remarks on the need to overcome the roadblocks in the way of entry into force.

For my part, I wish to turn your attention to the positive. Without seeking to minimize the difficulties we face, we should also recognize that real progress has been made.

Since the last Article XIV Conference, we have moved forward on universalization. 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 which have ratified.

For understandable reasons, the focus on adhesion to the CTBT tends to be on the remaining Annex 2 ratifications, but each and every new member should be celebrated.

And with the support of many of the States and institutions represented here today, we continue to reach out to countries around the world. This approach is reaping dividends – I was delighted to participate in the fiftieth Pacific Islands Forum in Tuvalu last month, where leaders agreed a communiqué that called for signature and ratification of the CTBT in a region where a number of countries have yet to do so.

We should cherish this real, ongoing, progress.

Progress has been made, too, on the CTBT 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.

The International Data Centre continues to process and analyse data registered at monitoring stations, which are shared with 1,300 institutions in 130 countries.

The CTBTO is also continuing to prepare for entry into force by strengthening its on-site inspection capabilities.

In June this year, 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 capacity-building and training exercises we 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.

Excellencies,

Next year will see the NPT Review Conference, a chance to take stock of global commitment to what is the cornerstone of nuclear non-proliferation and disarmament.

The intrinsic link between that Treaty and the CTBT is always worth recalling.

The desire for a comprehensive nuclear test ban is contained in the preamble to the NPT. Moreover, the CTBT has long played a critical role in its review process. The conclusion of a test ban treaty was one of the key decisions that allowed for the NPT’s indefinite extension in 1995, and furthering the CTBT was the first of the practical steps for disarmament agreed to by NPT States Parties in 2000.

States have always seen the CTBT as a practical and effective measure for nuclear non-proliferation, and as a necessary element of a nuclear weapons-free world.

As we approach the Review Conference, let us not give in to negativity. We must instead ask ourselves *what we can achieve* for the CTBT – and for the entire nuclear non-proliferation and disarmament regime.

A key aim must be 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.

I hope – and expect – to see the CTBT emerge from the Review Conference strengthened, and to witness renewed determination among States Parties to make tangible progress on entry into force.

Excellencies,

Despite the challenges, I do see progress – and many reasons for optimism. A new generation is engaging on the CTBT and the need to eliminate nuclear dangers.

The vast majority of the world’s nations have embraced the Treaty, and even those which have not are adhering to moratoria. And of course, our verification regime is delivering. I have spoken before about the emergence of a ‘de facto’ norm against nuclear testing. While this is arguably more the case than ever before, the risk of back-sliding remains.

We rely on your determined leadership and resolve to build on this progress, and to use all opportunities – from the NPT Review Conference to your bilateral engagement with non-ratifying States – to achieve a legally binding, verifiable, test ban for all time.

Thank you.