

**STATEMENT OF THE MINISTER OF FOREIGN AFFAIRS OF  
THE  
REPUBLIC OF CROATIA  
H.E. Mr. TONINO PICULA  
TO  
THE CONFERENCE ON FACILITATING THE ENTRY INTO  
FORCE OF THE COMPREHENSIVE NUCLEAR TEST BAN  
TREATY (CTBT)  
Vienna, 3-5 September 2003**

Mr. President,

On behalf of the Government of the Republic of Croatia, let me join previous speakers in congratulating you on your elections as President of this Conference on Facilitating the Entry into Force of the Comprehensive Nuclear-Test-Ban Treaty. Let me also express our gratitude to the UN Secretary General for convening this Conference and greet Mr. Antonio Maria Costa, Director General of UN Office in Vienna. I would also like to extend our thanks to Ambassador Patricia Espinosa Cantellano of Mexico and Ambassador Tom Groenberg of Finland for the preparatory work carried out by them and their delegations during this year. We also thank the Host Country of the CTBTO and the Preparatory Commission – Austria.

I would like to express deepest sympathies that people of Croatia feel for victims of the terrorist attack in Baghdad and their families. We hope that in spite of this tragedy and death of the UN envoy for Iraq Sergio Vieira de Mello - our dear friend from the period he served in Croatia and the region - United Nations will find the way to continue the work helping the Iraqi people to rebuild their country and regain their sovereignty.

Mr. President,

We would like to use this opportunity to express our gratitude for the work of the Provisional Technical Secretariat of the CTBTO Preparatory Commission under the leadership of the Executive Secretary Mr. Wolfgang Hoffmann.

Croatia fully supports the establishing process of the verification system, which is under way and is expected to be completed when the Treaty enters into force. Also we are of the opinion that the work of the Preparatory Commission and its bodies is of special importance to the future of the CTBTO.

In that respect we find that international cooperation is crucial for spreading knowledge about the verification system and activities of the Preparatory Commission as well as the Provisional Technical Secretariat.

Mr. President,

The Comprehensive Nuclear-Test-Ban Treaty was adopted by the United Nations General Assembly in September 1996 after long and extensive negotiations. This was one of the milestone achievements within the international community's contributions to global peace and security.

Since its adoption we have witnessed the progress in signing and ratifying the Treaty. As of today 168 States have signed the Treaty and 104 States have ratified it.

However the Treaty has not yet entered into force since, out of the 44 States listed in Annex 2 to the Treaty - whose ratification is required for its entry into force -, only 41 have signed it, and of these, only 32 have ratified it.

Mr. President,

Seven years have passed since the Treaty was opened for signature and this is the third time that Conference in accordance to the Article XIV of the Treaty is convening, aiming to facilitate its early entry into force and finally become a universal instrument in the field of nuclear disarmament and non-proliferation. We are of the opinion, taking into account just

mentioned facts, that the possibility of an early entry into force of the CTBT is not encouraging.

We believe that all countries should contribute to further promotion of the Treaty. Therefore I associated myself with the Joint Ministerial Statement in which fifty Foreign Ministers of ratifying countries reaffirmed political support of the Treaty. I thank my colleagues –Foreign Ministers of Australia, Japan and Netherlands for this initiative.

Croatia welcomes all multilateral and regional meetings, which stress the importance of the Treaty and aim to accelerate the ratification process in order to facilitate the early entry into force.

Mr. President,

We do hope that both –this Conference and the Final Declaration and Measures to promote the entry into force of the CTBT - will be the step forward for the CTBT to enter into force as soon as possible.

It is our firm belief that we have gathered here to express our strong support to the Treaty calling upon those countries which have not yet signed or ratified, to do so without delay. The shadow of the proliferation of weapons of mass destruction is a threat continuously present in the conscience of mankind. This is the reason why we have the responsibility to support CTBT, which has an essential role in strengthening global peace and security. The efforts in promoting early entry into force of the CTBT must remain in the focus of our activities.

We should exercise our wisdom and mobilize ourselves to achieve the goal of a world free of nuclear weapons. Croatia believes that entry into force of the CTBT will be the crucial step forward in the history of nuclear non-proliferation and disarmament and is committed to playing an active role in contributing to its early realization.

Thank you Mr. President.