



**CTBTO**  
PREPARATORY COMMISSION

COMPREHENSIVE  
NUCLEAR-TEST-BAN  
TREATY ORGANIZATION

**Opening Statement of the Executive Secretary  
delivered at  
Sixty-third session of the Preparatory Commission**

**Dr Robert Floyd, Executive Secretary**

**11 November 2024**

Excellencies, colleagues, friends.

It's a pleasure to be back here with you again.

First thing is first! Ambassador Kaifu - this is your final session as Chairperson of the Preparatory Commission.

I think we all agree that this sort of role is never easy.

But you've made it look easy.

Your dedicated, collegial approach has been inspiring.

It's epitomised the values that underpin our shared endeavour. We thank you as the chair.

Today, I am going to do something a little different. A statement in two halves.

I'll begin with my summary report on recent achievements. The full detailed statement will be uploaded on the ECS as usual.

Then, of relevance if you decide to renew my appointment in this session, I want to share with you my vision and plans for the years ahead. But more on that in the second half of this statement.

Since the last session of the Commission, I've spoken at major international events, including the NPT PrepCom for the 2026 Review Conference, the UN General Assembly plenary meeting, marking the International Day Against Nuclear Testing, the UN Summit of the Future, and the 11th Ministerial Meeting of the Friends of the CTBT.

And I've visited Australia, China, Kenya, Mongolia, Turkmenistan, the United States of America, and Zambia.

I've met heads of State, foreign ministers, officials and experts, National Data Centre staff, and local station operators.

Everywhere, I have heard their commitment to ending nuclear weapons testing. It's remarkable how so many people give their time, even their careers, to achieve this noble goal.

In particular, I admire those colleagues who do this work in some of the Earth's harshest and most remote places.

As always, we're looking for more Treaty signatures and ratifications.

A team effort by us all, but with the Article XIV co-chairs working especially hard. I hope to report more good news at our next meeting.

So much practical work is going on, as the full statement describes. And here are just a few of the highlights.

Our On-Site Inspection Workshop-26 last month brought together 70 experts from States Signatories with 30 PTS staff. Drawing on June's excellent On-Site Inspection Build-Up Exercise (BUE), hosted by Hungary, it produced recommendations for consideration for the next Integrated Field Exercise (IFE).

We're capturing a lot of lessons learned from the BUE, into our training materials and into our methods. And we're looking at new ideas for software and equipment.

However, you will be aware that due to unforeseen circumstances we've taken the difficult decision to postpone the IFE. We, of course decided this in close partnership with the host country, the government of Sri Lanka.

We're focused on delivering the IFE as soon as we can, and We'll come back with further advice in due course.

Our work on the IMS network and supporting facilities continues. Radionuclide station RN49 has been revalidated with a new noble gas system. Work to repair HA08 is moving forward, including a study on the submarine cable route.

We have had a lot of training and workshop events this year.

By the end of 2024, we'll have seen nearly forty different sorts of events. In Austria, Belgium, China, France, Indonesia, Kenya, the Russian Federation and Sweden.

I joined the National Data Centre workshop last month in Beijing. It brought together some 90 participants from 59 countries, and that included, for the first time, some States that don't yet have an NDC.

I also joined a regional training course for the African region in Nairobi. This time, 40 participants from 24 countries.

For the first time in over 10 years, we have held an international workshop for Atmospheric Transport Modelling: 41 countries participated.

Next month in Algeria, there's a workshop on CTBT Technologies for Arabic Speaking NDCs.

And thanks to the French government for reviving NDC Advanced Training on Infrasound Data Analysis in September, that's the first after the COVID-19 disruption.

A generous voluntary contribution by France.

The common theme here? Teamwork!

Smart, purposeful, teamwork on a global scale, to give all States Signatories their fair chance to benefit from the Treaty.

Under the NDCs4All initiative, some States are using IMS data and IDC products for the very first time.

The PTS has assisted 10 States Signatories in the creation of Secure Signatory Accounts. And 14 States Signatories have nominated NDCs.

12 Capacity Building Systems have been installed in a wide array of States this year alone. Four since June - Uruguay, Tajikistan, Angola and, just last week, Bangladesh.

And another CBS system was installed this year, in an NDC not targeted by the initiative in- Iraq.

Thanks again to all supporters of the NDCs4All initiative, and especially the European Union.

Next? Money and the budget!

Working Group A has recommended accepting the final draft of the programme and Budget proposals for 2025 presented to States Signatories at the informal consultation back on 13 September.

The 2025 final Budget is \$139 million, some \$5.5 million higher than the 2024 Budget.

We expect a good part of that budget increase will be offset by miscellaneous income of \$4.5 million, thus reducing billing for States Signatories.

A full 80% of the Budget will be spent on verification-related costs.

As the full statement explains, these price adjustment pressures are real. Any further downward revision of weighted average price adjustment below zero real growth is not sustainable.

What about sustaining the IMS network?

This issue is not on the agenda of this meeting. But I want to emphasise today that sustaining the IMS, your billion-dollar investment, is of critical importance

Staying at the current level of funding won't work. It poses high risks to the network.

The formal statement describes how our IMS and Administration Divisions have done a huge amount of work to analyse two other funding scenarios: an optimal scenario, and a sensitivity analysis derived from the optimal scenario.

With helpful feedback from the Advisory Group and WGA, we're refining these options, and the results will be presented early next year.

The first biennium of this long-term strategy will be 2026-2027. We really need Commission agreement in 2025 to approve the budget for that biennium.

As for the wider budget, all States Signatories can help by paying promptly their assessed contributions.

This is going quite well, but we are a little behind last year at this time. However, I am confident your assistance, we are still on track to exceed last year's record collection rate. So, I thank you all.

So much for Money. What about People?

The formal statement gives a lot of detail on everything we've been doing to improve gender and geographical diversity.

For many years, the percentage of women at the Professional or higher-level category hovered around 31%. The numbers naturally fluctuate as people come and go and we are currently at 37% after reaching an all-time high of 40% last year.

We need to do better. We, in the Secretariat are redoubling our efforts and I ask that you keep encouraging and supporting qualified women to apply.

In 2024, we conducted two global careers fairs uniquely targeting women in STEM.

And then, there were two other joint webinars with OPCW and IAEA for nationals from the Latin America and the Caribbean region and South-East Asia, the Pacific and the Far East. We are seeing some early encouraging results in geographic diversity with a strong uptick in staff numbers from a number of the less represented regions.

Our CTBTO Jobs Bulletin is getting results. This year, applications are up by 19% and from all geographic regions, led particularly by the African region.

Let me end this section by informing you, as per Financial Regulation 11.1, of my intention to appoint Mr Marc Kervella to the post of Chief of the Internal Audit and Oversight Section.

Mr Kervella has over 15 years of experience in internal audit and investigation in the private and government sectors, and most recently in a range of international organizations in senior positions.

Colleagues, that's my first section – how things stand today.

Now the second part. A look to the future and my priorities as Executive Secretary.

I've been touched and heartened by the support I've received from all of you through these last three and a half years and I thank you

This job has been a fantastic opportunity to contribute to our shared noble cause – establishing a verifiable ban on nuclear testing.

Together, we're making progress towards it.

It's a goal I believe that is in sight, despite the challenges we face.

Over the last three years we've done some remarkable things: We've seen nine new ratifications, one new signature on the journey towards ratification, new stations certified in 3 different regions, 19 countries helped to set up Secure Signatory Accounts, establish National Data Centres, or install Capacity Building Systems.

States, large and small, have benefitted from our work. Not only in national security, but also in disaster management, and other civil and scientific capabilities. We've built knowledge and capacity around the world. And we've done it together.

That's a lot. And there's still more to do.

I've been clear in my response to the PrepCom Chair and with you, dear colleagues, that I'm available for reappointment for a second which would also be my final term, if that is your collective wish.

Continuity is important, particularly in turbulent times. But so too are change, fresh perspectives and revitalisation. This makes for a strong and healthy Organization.

So, we have plenty more work to do together and I look forward to continuing this journey with you all.

My priorities for a second term?

I'll continue my focus of working with you to achieve the entry into force of this most important Treaty.

In these challenging times, we need the entry into force of the CTBT more than ever. I'll keep doing what I can to help the Article XIV co-chairs and all of you to make this happen.

In this time of uncertainty and global anxiety, we must protect and strengthen what we have: this Organization, our work, the IMS, the skills we've built, working together.

In fact, it's precisely because the global landscape looks so gloomy that our bright CTBT achievements need to be championed with pride.

In the coming years, I intend to place even stronger emphasis on establishing and/or certifying those stations in the Treaty that aren't yet contributing data.

I want to work more closely with those States with stations yet to be certified, to see how we can help, and to see what we can do.

I intend to set up an internal task force, working across the Organization, to ensure all the pieces are in place for those stations to be completed.

Experience shows me this!

Sometimes it takes more than just technical support to get things done. It also takes some political will, capacity building, knowledge-sharing and above all, determined teamwork, and that teamwork is with you, our States Signatories to achieve our goals.

Of course, wherever we build a station we need to operate, maintain and sustain it. We've discussed sustainment a lot in the last few months! And we'll keep talking about it into the future.

Sustainment is not only about equipment and infrastructure. It's about people, operators, experts, technical staff. Everyone who makes it happen and run the policies that frame it.

To fund IMS sustainment, we need to rebase the budget to protect your billion-dollar investment. To guarantee the benefits and the reliability of this wonderful network.

That will be a key part of my agenda - implementing the decision that you reach next year. The decision that is in your hands.

Building capacity, sharing the benefits of our work, is more than just training and good systems.

It means community. Working together, building skills, building awareness, advancing knowledge to keep pace with the fast-paced developments in a fast-paced world.

Here, my goal will stay unchanged: No one is to be left behind. We've made great progress. But let's do more.

The NDCs4All initiative will continue to be a priority. We will build on the capabilities it's helping to establish.

But we also need a plan: a plan for people - building capacity, in the years ahead. That's something that we'll develop.

I'll continue to urge my team to give you the best knowledge that we can share. I'll use the funding you provide to maximise the learning and opportunities, the national benefits that each State can derive from participating in this Organization.

This isn't just about NDC capability, vital as that is. It's also about ensuring that the IMS and IDC keep running well - providing you with data 24/7, so that you can quickly determine if a nuclear explosion has taken place anywhere on earth.

Regarding On-Site Inspection and the upcoming Integrated Field Exercise. Unfortunately, as I've already mentioned, we have to delay IFE25. But completing the IFE and learning the lessons from the current OSI cycle remain critical.

It's clearer than ever that we must be ready for OSIs on the day the treaty enters into force. The IFE is central to that. I am working closely with the Government of Sri Lanka to ensure its delivery as soon as possible.

Regarding people - I'll continue to prioritise the three Gs of diversity – geographic, gender and generational.

The PTS is strongest when it includes a diverse mix of highly competent people from across the globe, younger and older, women and men.

I'm proud of our team: increasingly strong and increasingly diverse, because we're making progress on each of the 3 Gs!

On the gender G, as I mentioned earlier, we've moved from 31% of women in the professional staff to over 40% last year but now, sadly, back at 37%. Progress but not enough. Together we can do even better.

The generations G? We're targeting the pipeline of future staff, particularly young women.

Our Mentoring Programme for early career women in STEM has been a great success, with 22 of the 26 participants this year from developing countries.

G for geographic representation? We're a small Organization, and we have a little over 200 staff at the professional and higher levels. Today, 93 countries are represented.

We've made substantial gains in the last three years. Number of staff from historically less represented regions are on the increase.

This is clear progress. And we're achieving it while ensuring that recruitment is entirely competency based.

Getting the right people into the right jobs makes our Organization more resilient, and more capable to deliver on our agenda.

And I want the CTBTO to be known as the employer of choice. An Organization where people love to work, and one that the best people from around the world want to join.

Friends. There's so much more to talk about!

But those are my key priorities for the years ahead, and if I would be honoured to have a second term, I would pursue them

How to sum it all up?

The real progress and all the changes we've made have been made together.

It's the power of a strong Secretariat working fairly and transparently with all States to achieve the best possible outcomes. Consultation, collaboration, cooperation.

And all with a clear eye toward our collective goal - a world without nuclear tests.

That's what we're here for.

The power of together. The power to shape a safer, more secure world. Now and for the generations to come.

And I thank you all for your partnership. Thank you!