

CHECK AGAINST DELIVERY

Statement to the First Session of the Preparatory Committee for the 2020 Review Conference of the Parties to the Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons (NPT)

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**Preparatory Commission Comprehensive Nuclear-Test-Ban Treaty Organization
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Mr Chairman, Ladies and Gentlemen,

The NPT embodies the greatest struggle of the nuclear age: how to come to terms with humanity's mastery of the technical means to instantaneously bring about its own destruction, by putting in place the diplomatic, legal and normative tools to prevent such a terrible calamity.

The treaty emerged from a growing consensus in the 1960s that international peace and security required immediate steps to halt a cascade of proliferation looming on the horizon. And this consensus was possible because of the grand bargain between States on the NPT's three pillars: nuclear non-proliferation, disarmament, and peaceful uses of nuclear energy.

Even if disagreements persist, it should be acknowledged that this arrangement has succeeded in preventing a massive expansion of nuclear weapons-capable States over the past half century. Through norm-setting and evolving verification standards, tools and techniques, the NPT has ensured that the world has not become awash in possessors of nuclear weapons.

But let us also acknowledge that we are gathered here in Vienna for the start of the 2020 NPT review cycle under a cloud of apprehension and uncertainty. This not only reflects heightened tensions and growing instability in many parts of the world, but also concerns that the fabric holding together the international nuclear non-proliferation regime may be showing signs of wear and tear.

Yet there is still common ground to stand on: shared beliefs and principles about the nature of these devastating weapons; about the human, environmental and security consequences of their testing; about the absolute necessity of preventing their use; and ultimately, about the need to eradicate them completely.

Mr Chairman, Ladies and Gentlemen,

The indefinite extension of the NPT in 1995 showed the real value that States Parties saw in the treaty and its impact on global security. Nonetheless, it was also clear that additional measures were needed to progress nuclear disarmament among the nuclear-weapon States. These disarmament measures – the Principles and Objectives – were headlined by the requirement to conclude a Comprehensive Nuclear-Test-Ban Treaty (CTBT).

A multilateral, effectively verifiable, and credibly enforceable nuclear test ban has been a key objective of the international community from the very early years of the nuclear age. The achievement of such a goal was, in fact, sought out well before the origins of the NPT were first established at the General Assembly in 1959 upon the initiative of Ireland.

After more than six decades of efforts to put a halt to nuclear testing, we find ourselves once more asking why this long-sought objective still eludes us.

This is despite the fact that, more than twenty years since the CTBT was opened for signature, we have clear and conclusive evidence that the Treaty is achieving its stated intent. Its verification regime is functioning as envisaged.

The international community now has at its disposal the most far-reaching and sophisticated global monitoring system ever built. Today, the International Monitoring System is nearly complete and is operating to detect and deter nuclear explosive tests. There are 302 detection facilities already in place, out of 337 envisaged by the treaty, in over 90 countries. The state-of-the-art International Data Centre here in Vienna can pinpoint a suspected nuclear test location, magnitude and time. In fact, the CTBTO is already providing a level of nuclear test detection capability that few thought would be possible when the Treaty was first negotiated.

The CTBTO's detection capability has been demonstrated during each of the five nuclear tests carried out by the Democratic People's Republic of Korea. In every case, the CTBTO was able to provide timely and accurate data on the nature of the events. Even as an interim organization, we stand ready to detect nuclear tests anywhere, by anyone, at any time. And, as demonstrated by a full-scale exercise in Jordan in 2014, the CTBTO can carry out short-notice on-site inspections in case there is a suspicious event.

Mr Chairman, Ladies and Gentlemen,

As we set out together to work towards a successful 2020 NPT review cycle, it is crucial that we recall the decades of effort, and immense political and human capital that have been invested by you, the NPT States Parties, in putting in place a complete prohibition on nuclear testing.

We have the legal framework. We have a well-functioning verification system that has proven its value time and time again. We have near universal political support from the international community for the CTBT and its objectives. This was evinced by the adoption of the annual CTBT resolution by the United Nations General Assembly last year by the largest margin since it was first introduced – 183 votes in favour, with 1 against and 3 abstentions.

But what we do not have is the final authority to conduct our work as envisioned, and provide the international community with a legally enforceable prohibition on nuclear testing.

The Treaty's opening for signature was a historic milestone in the efforts to curb the threat of nuclear weapons. But this achievement simply cannot be taken for granted. This reality is even starker given escalating tensions and mounting security challenges facing the international community.

In this century only one State continues to violate the global norm against nuclear testing, but a breakdown in this norm through the continued failure to bring the CTBT into force could prove perilous.

Many NPT States Parties are focusing on additional measures to advance nuclear disarmament through the negotiation of a legally-binding instrument. The aim is understandable. However, we should not lose sight of the risk of just taking the test ban for granted. A failure to bring the CTBT into force would be a devastating blow to the NPT and the international nuclear non-proliferation regime that has been built around it.

Mr Chairman, Ladies and Gentlemen,

During these challenging times, we simply cannot rely on a business as usual mentality. We need determined leadership from all States – not only the remaining Annex 2 States – in order to achieve the Treaty's entry into force. The power lies with you.

Let us not be distracted by the divisions and disagreements that may arise. Let us instead set our aim on progressing the entry into force of the CTBT, the most practical and achievable step toward a world free from the threat of nuclear weapons.

Thank you.

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