

Elevating the Profile of the CTBT in the NPT Context: A Rationale and Recommendations from the Next Generation

by

Joseph Rodgers, Margaret Rowland, Raymond Wang, Paul Warnke, Sylvia Mishra,
and Sarah Bidgood¹

Executive Summary and Key Findings

Efforts to ban the testing of nuclear weapons and to stop both their horizontal and vertical spread have been pursued in tandem for more than six decades. In a paper entitled, “Elevating the Profile of the CTBT in an NPT Context: A Rationale and Recommendations from the Next Generation,” members of the CTBTO Youth Group trace the historical arc of this relationship—one defined by close political and normative linkages. They emphasize that the Comprehensive Nuclear Test Ban Treaty (CTBT) and the Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons (NPT) have historically formed the backbone of the global nonproliferation order and are therefore mutually reinforcing. In this light, they demonstrate that discourse surrounding nonproliferation and disarmament in the NPT context today is less holistic and more fractured when the importance of the CTBT is deemphasized, minimized, or absent. Likewise, a fundamental rationale for the entry into force of the CTBT—to curb nuclear testing in advancing nonproliferation and disarmament—lacks urgency if the Treaty is divorced from the NPT.

On this basis, the authors argue that the CTBT, which opened for signature in 1996 but has yet to be ratified, should occupy a place of prominence during the 2020 NPT review cycle. To actualize this recommendation, they identify new and creative places where these two Treaties reinforce one another, and they propose four ways to raise the profile of the CTBT more generally in the context of the NPT.

Recommendation 1: States Parties Should Examine and Capitalize Upon the Shared History of the CTBT and the NPT

Attempts to negotiate a nuclear test ban began as early as 1954, when Indian Prime Minister Jawaharlal Nehru issued calls for a moratorium on nuclear testing.² In 1958, U.S. President Dwight D. Eisenhower and Soviet Premier Nikolai Bulganin advanced these efforts and proposed convening a group of experts to discuss the cessation of nuclear testing. The years that followed saw a groundswell of international support for the conclusion of a nuclear test ban that would help curb vertical as well as horizontal proliferation. By 1963, the U.S., Soviet Union, and United Kingdom signed the Partial Test Ban Treaty (PTBT) in Moscow, marking a significant international legal constraint on nuclear weapons by restricting nuclear testing to underground locations.

The PTBT served as a stepping stone to the Treaty on the Nonproliferation of Nuclear Weapons, on which negotiations began in the 18-Nation Disarmament Conference in 1962. Opened for signature in 1968, the NPT recalled language from the PTBT’s preamble and expressed the determination of the signatories to continue negotiations for the “discontinuance of all text explosions of nuclear weapons for all time.” Because of this linkage, many States Parties view the negotiation of a comprehensive test ban as a barometer for the fulfillment of Article VI of the NPT. Thus, for much of the NPT’s early history, the failure to conclude a CTBT produced fissures among the treaty’s States Parties and often contributed to the foundering of various Review Conferences. The mutual dependence of these two treaties was perhaps best exemplified at the 1995 Review and Extension Conference, where States Parties agreed to extend the NPT indefinitely in exchange for a series of time-bound measures

¹ The authors are CTBTO Youth Group (CYG) members based in Monterey, California, USA.

² Pierce Corden, “Timeline of the CTBT’s Evolution,” *The Nonproliferation Review* Vol. 23, Nos. 3-4, pp. 259

relating to the “full realization and effective implementation of article VI,” including the “completion by the Conference on Disarmament of the negotiations on a universal and internationally and effectively verifiable Comprehensive Nuclear-Test-Ban Treaty no later than 1996.”³ The CTBT opened for signature one year later by the date specified in the final document.⁴ This linkage codified the relationship between the CTBT and the objectives of the NPT and has been further reinforced in the 13 Practical Steps agreed to in the 2000 NPT Final Document, the 64-point Action Plan adopted by consensus in 2010, and the 2015 NPT Draft Final Document.

In light of the long-established interrelationship between the CTBT and the NPT, States Parties should consider:

- Reexamining explicit references to the CTBT in the 2015 NPT Draft Final Document and identifying ways to strengthen these in the current review cycle.
- Linking the CTBT to the commitment of nuclear weapons States to fulfill their Article VI obligations and recalling the historical relevance of banning testing in achieving nuclear disarmament, which is explicitly referenced in the NPT’s preamble.
- Recalling language from past consensus final documents regarding practical steps toward disarmament and nonproliferation objectives and identifying ways to incorporate the CTBT more overtly into these sections. Examples might include calling upon the nuclear weapons States to report on their progress toward ratifying the CTBT under Action 5(d) of the 64-point Action Plan and identifying support for nuclear-weapon-free zone treaties as a step toward CTBT entry into force under Action 9.

Recommendation 2: States Parties Should Emphasize the Importance of the IMS to the NPT and International Security

The International Monitoring System (IMS) consists of 337 facilities that monitor for signs of nuclear explosions throughout the world. These stations operate in 89 countries and transmit data to the International Data Centre located in Vienna, Austria, where they are processed and shared amongst member states. The IMS has already demonstrated its unique utility in detecting both military activities and natural occurrences.⁵ For example, IMS stations have provided significant data on each DPRK nuclear test, and they detected the 2011 earthquake that caused the Fukushima Daiichi nuclear accident with each of the IMS’ 140 seismic stations that were operational at the time.⁶ The IMS therefore represents not only an important contribution to the nuclear nonproliferation regime, but also a contribution to greater global security.

On a political level, the establishment of IMS monitoring facilities, including the conclusion of facility agreements between NPT States Parties and the CTBTO, can be seen as a demonstration of commitment in good faith to the NPT. For example, NWS can sign and ratify facility agreements as a

³ 1995 Review Conference of the Parties to the Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons, Final Document, Decision 2: Principles and Objectives for Nuclear Non-Proliferation and Disarmament (NPT/CONF.1995/32 (Part 1), Annex) <<http://www.reachingcriticalwill.org/images/documents/Disarmament-fora/npt/GENERAL-DOCS/outcome1995-2.pdf>>

⁴ Susan Welsh. “Delegate perspectives on the 1995 NPT review and extension conference,” *The Nonproliferation Review* 2, No. 3 (Spring-Summer 1995), pp. 2

⁵ 58th Regular Session of the General Conference of the International Atomic Energy Agency, Vienna, 22-26 September 2014, Address by Mr. Oleg Rozhkov on behalf of Mr. Lassina Zerbo <<https://www.iaea.org/sites/default/files/ctbto.pdf>>

⁶ “One Year After Fukushima: The CTBTO’s Contributions,” CTBTO Press Release, March 9, 2012 <<https://www.ctbto.org/verification-regime/the-11-march-japan-disaster/one-year-after-fukushimathe-ctbtos-contributions/>>

demonstrable step toward fulfilling their obligations under Article VI of the NPT. Additionally, the IMS system serves as a mechanism to engage both NPT States Parties and non-NPT states on disarmament issues in a constructive way. For example, Israel, which is not party to the NPT, hosts certified IMS facilities. In this regard, continued engagement through facility agreements builds capacity and confidence across regional and political groupings and can serve as a channel between NPT States Parties and nuclear weapons possessor states outside of that Treaty in advancing the entry into force of the CTBT. Bridging this gap represents a step toward the fulfillment of Action 10 of the 2010 NPT Final Document, which underscores the special responsibility of nuclear weapon States to “encourage Annex 2 countries, in particular those which have not acceded to the Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons and continue to operate unguarded nuclear facilities, to sign and ratify” the CTBT.

In light of the important relationship between the CTBT’s IMS and the NPT, States Parties should consider:

- Noting the contribution by the CTBT through the IMS as a technical means to maintaining the integrity of the NPT in conjunction with IAEA safeguards, particularly with regard to Article II of the Treaty, which commits each non-nuclear weapons State “not to manufacture or otherwise acquire nuclear weapons or other nuclear explosive devices.”
- Underscoring the importance of the CTBT and the IMS, as demonstrated in the aftermath of the Fukushima Daiichi accident in 2011, to assessing risk following nuclear accidents and natural disasters, as well as ensuring the safety of surrounding personnel especially in light of the emphasis placed on enhancing nuclear safety in the 2010 64-point action plan.
- Highlighting the potential for the CTBT to serve as a forum for engaging with non-NPT nuclear armed states through building IMS stations.
- Emphasizing the importance of signing IMS facilities agreements as a sign of good faith toward fulfilling the obligations set out in Article VI of the NPT.

Recommendation 3: Emphasize the Importance of the CTBT to Disarmament and Nonproliferation Education during the 2020 Review Cycle

The importance of Disarmament and Nonproliferation Education (DNPE) is well established in the UN context. For example, in 2000 General Assembly resolution 55/33 E proposed a study on nonproliferation and disarmament education, which resulted in 34 recommendations aimed at promoting disarmament education as an integral part of peace education. In the context of the NPT, the importance of DNP education is less well-established but has nevertheless garnered wide-reaching support, as demonstrated in the 2010 64-point Action Plan. While NPT States Parties have been encouraged to implement the recommendations of the UN Study on Disarmament and Nonproliferation Education,⁷ specific proposals for how to do so have not appeared in NPT final documents.

The CTBTO advances disarmament and nonproliferation education in several ways, including through activities that enable the technical, scientific, and diplomatic communities to learn from experts at the Organization and from each other. The CTBTO further expanded its contributions to DNPE by launching the CTBTO Youth Group (CYG) in February 2016. The CYG is a unique forum for engaging

⁷ William Potter, Patricia Lewis, Gaukhar Mukhatzhanova, and Miles Pomper. *The 2010 NPT Review Conference: Deconstructing Consensus* (Monterey, California: Center for Nonproliferation Studies, 2010) pp. 10

youth from around the world in nonproliferation and disarmament issues that empowers them to make real contributions to international security. By supporting the next generation in deepening and deploying its understanding of nonproliferation and disarmament topics through a wide range of projects, the CYG has made a significant and unique contribution to DNPE.

In light of the demonstrated multilateral recognition of education as a way to advance the disarmament and nonproliferation agendas,⁸ States Parties should consider

- Discussing proposals for how to implement the 34 recommendations made in the 2002 UN Study, including through coordination with International Organizations such as the CTBTO.
- Highlighting the work of the CTBTO in supporting the mission and purpose of disarmament and nonproliferation education as identified in the UN study, including through empowering individuals to make contributions to the achievement of general and complete disarmament.
- Recognizing the CTBTO for supporting the efforts of the next generation in deepening their understanding of nonproliferation and disarmament issues (including, especially, the CTBT) and providing them with opportunities to share their findings with many different audiences.

Recommendation 4: Increase the Role of Women in Disarmament and Nonproliferation Discourse

Because nuclear weapons affect everyone on the planet, it is essential that each individual—regardless of gender—has a say in determining their future. However, women continue to be underrepresented in the fields of nonproliferation and disarmament, which gives them disproportionately less opportunity to impact the discourse on these topics than men. It is therefore vital to identify concrete mechanisms that will give women, particularly those in the next generation, access to the spaces where they can make their perspectives heard and the agency to do so. The contributions of women in this regard are essential to resolving complex questions relating to nuclear weapons, as the nuanced and creative approach they require must necessarily come from diverse individuals with different viewpoints and experiences. Thus, any discussion on elevating the status of the CTBT in the 2020 NPT review process needs to be intrinsically tied with the importance of creating a gender-equitable space in both the CTBT and NPT.

The CTBTO's effort to raise the salience of women's contribution in nonproliferation is noteworthy: As of 2016, 110 of the CTBTO's 256 staff members (43%) are women. A large number of women especially have been on the front lines of detecting nuclear tests and monitoring huge volumes of data collected by the International Monitoring System (IMS). These contributions have been recognized by Executive Secretary Dr. Lassina Zerbo. By emphasizing the importance of women in advancing its mission, the CTBTO recognizes and encourages women's participation in nonproliferation and disarmament, the importance of which has been repeatedly emphasized in the UN over the past decade. As UN Member States have acknowledged, it is not enough to attempt to address arms control from local, national, regional and international levels; these challenges must also be approached from the perspective of gender. Continuing to engage women in both the CTBT and NPT contexts will be critical to achieving the objectives of both of these Treaties.

⁸ William Potter, Patricia Lewis, Gaukhar Mukhatzhanova, and Miles Pomper. *The 2010 NPT Review Conference: Deconstructing Consensus* (Monterey, California: Center for Nonproliferation Studies, 2010)

In light of both the efforts of the CTBT to engage women and the emphasis placed on gender equality in nonproliferation and disarmament issues in the UN context, States Parties should consider:

- Noting the contribution of the CTBTO in recognizing the importance of women to its mission and engaging them in the Organization in a wide range of capacities, both technical and otherwise.
- Calling for the development of a roadmap to give shape to the UN resolutions on women and disarmament, which would empower women through capacity-building efforts, provide funding, and design women-centric programs to assist states in promoting the role of women.
- Raising the importance of upending the dominant discourse on gender and security issues through disarmament and nonproliferation education in order to cultivate the next generation of women leaders on these issues.

Conclusion

While far from comprehensive, the areas highlighted here represent ways to raise the profile of the CTBT and to emphasize its relationship with the NPT during the 2020 review cycle. Our hope is that, by highlighting the ways in which the profile of the CTBT can be both elevated and further linked to the NPT in the 2020 review cycle, the Treaty can move that much closer towards entry into force.