

- Check against delivery -



Opening of CTBT Exhibition at the German Foreign Office

Message by the Executive Secretary of the Comprehensive Nuclear-Test-Ban Treaty Organization

Dr Lassina Zerbo

Berlin, 2 September 2015

Vice-Minister Roth,
Ambassador Hoffmann,
Excellencies,
Ladies and gentlemen,

It is a great pleasure to open this exhibition in the presence of Ambassador Wolfgang Hoffmann. He was the CTBTO's first Executive Secretary who built up the organization from nothing and took me on board as Director of the CTBTO's International Data Centre in 2004.

Today, he is one of the members of the Group of Eminent Persons (GEM), a high-level group comprising eminent personalities and internationally recognized experts bolstering international efforts to advance the entry into force of the Comprehensive Nuclear-Test-Ban Treaty (CTBT). The group met last week in Hiroshima to plan its next steps and adopted a strong joint declaration.

In Japan at the 70th commemoration of the bombings of Hiroshima and Nagasaki last month, I was honoured and humbled to meet Makoto Takahara, who was 17 when the nuclear bomb detonated over his home city Hiroshima.

Hearing his first-hand account of the horrors he witnessed then, put me in a situation where I see that we are doing with right job. It gives us reassurance that the trust and funds invested into our organization by countries like Germany – the cumulative amount in the range of one billion dollars – is justified. Germany has a leading role in what we do, and through this exhibition makes an important contribution to showing the public what nuclear disarmament and non-proliferation is all about.

Excellencies,
Ladies and gentlemen,

Over 2,000 nuclear test explosions have been conducted since 1945 in the atmosphere, underground, underwater and in outer space. These tests paved the way for the development of weapons that dwarf the Hiroshima and Nagasaki bombs in explosive power. Atmospheric tests alone accounted for 428 megatons of explosive power, equivalent to over 29,000 Hiroshima size bombs. Populations downwind from the test sites paid with their health and often their lives.

Four days ago, on 29 August, we celebrated the International Day against Nuclear Tests. This international day serves as reminder that banning nuclear testing remains unfinished business. The Comprehensive Nuclear-Test Ban Treaty (CTBT) has yet to become legally binding due to its exceptionally demanding entry into force clause.

This clause prescribes that all 44 countries listed in the Treaty as nuclear technology holders must ratify. Germany was one of the first countries on this list to do so, in August 1998. Of the others, eight still remain: China, Egypt, India, Iran, Israel, North Korea, Pakistan, and the United States.

People often ask me whether the United States have signed this Treaty: Yes, they were the first country to do so and are active members of the CTBTO. President Obama made ratification of the CTBT a priority in his Prague speech. Important allies such as Germany can help the U.S. administration build support for the Treaty's ratification.

The good news is that in spite of this, the 183 countries who have signed the CTBT adhere to it as if it were legally binding, 164 have already ratified it. With the vast majority of countries having endorsed this Treaty, we often say that entry into force is held hostage by eight countries.

Excellencies,
Ladies and gentlemen,

We will not be able to abolish nuclear weapons if the process to develop these weapons is still ongoing. That is why the CTBT is so important. After the successful conclusion of the Iran nuclear deal, let's do something for the CTBT.

The European Union alone accounts for around half of the CTBTO's budget. Europe is the only region in the world where each and every country has signed and ratified the Treaty. Europe is therefore ideally placed to exercise leadership on the CTBT.

On 29 September, on the margins of the UN General Assembly in New York, CTBTO Member States will meet for the ninth Article XIV Conference, named after the entry into

force provision of the CTBT, to adopt measures to “accelerate the Treaty’s entry into force”. Although, almost 20 years after the CTBT’s adoption, I doubt that one can still speak of “acceleration”. I know I can count on Germany and Foreign Minister Frank-Walter Steinmeier as one of the CTBT’s key supporters to make full use of this possibility to keep the Treaty on the international agenda.

Excellencies,
Ladies and gentlemen,

This exhibition gives you an excellent insight into our verification system, for example into the technology that helped to assess the dispersion of radioactivity after the 2011 Fukushima power plant accident.

You can also see equipment used at our major on-site inspection exercise, the Integrated Field Exercise IFE14 in Jordan in late 2014, which brought together experts from around the world including from Egypt, Iran and Israel.

To sum up, the CTBTO owes a lot to Germany, and I am here to express this gratitude. At the same time, we need Germany’s unwavering dedication to make further progress towards the CTBT’s entry into force – not so much as a goal in itself, but because this will be the world’s first concrete step towards abolishing nuclear weapons, this is my firm belief.

Exhibitions like this one are an excellent means to raise awareness for the Treaty and its verification regime. It is my hope that other countries will follow Germany’s example in hosting such exhibitions. I now would like to invite you to join me for a walk-through.

Thank you.