
Statement by Dr Robert Floyd

Executive Secretary

**High-Level Meeting of the General Assembly to
Commemorate and Promote the International Day against Nuclear Tests**

New York, United States of America

8 September 2021

Excellencies,

Ladies and Gentlemen,

Mr President,

Allow me to begin by thanking President Volkan Bozkır for the invitation to address the General Assembly on this important issue. I would also like to convey my appreciation to High Representative Izumi Nakamitsu for her remarks on behalf of the Secretary-General of the United Nations.

It is a pleasure to share the podium today with Sue Coleman-Haseldine, Kokatha and Danity Laukon. As we commemorate this important day, it is essential that we continue to listen to the voices of those affected by the tragic consequences of nuclear testing.

Thirty years ago, the First President of the Republic of Kazakhstan, Nursultan Nazarbayev, signed a decree closing the Semipalatinsk nuclear test site, known as the Polygon. A bold and visionary act!

Just two weeks ago, I stood at one of the ground zeros at Semipalatinsk. It was a sobering experience. With more than 450 nuclear tests conducted at the Polygon, and a total explosive yield equivalent to 2,500 Hiroshima bombs, the scope of the impacts on human health and the environment may never be fully understood. Yet

for the communities affected by exposure to nuclear tests, there and at other nuclear test sites around the world, including in my own country, the pain and anguish is representative of the sad legacy of an era of unrestrained nuclear testing.

But let us also not lose sight of the even greater suffering and loss that would result from a nuclear war, which would tear apart every shred of our collective humanity.

The Comprehensive Nuclear-Test-Ban Treaty (CTBT) is a non-proliferation and disarmament objective decades in the making. It was negotiated with the aim of pulling the world back from the nuclear precipice and putting us on a stable path towards the elimination of the most destructive force conjured by humankind.

The CTBT is a success story even though it has yet to become legally binding. Since its opening for signature twenty-five years ago this month, there has been near universal adherence to the norm against nuclear testing underpinned by the Treaty. With 185 States Signatories and 170 ratifying States, support for the Treaty continues to grow.

However, the only way to put in place an enduring and verifiable prohibition on nuclear testing is through the entry into force and universalization of the CTBT. The promise of a world without nuclear weapons is not possible unless the international community comes together on this important cause.

Excellencies,

Ladies and Gentlemen,

The CTBT has proven to be an effective measure for nuclear non-proliferation and disarmament. But we cannot rest easy on the successes of yesteryear. We must acknowledge that our work is not yet fully done, and we must do all we can to bring the Treaty into force and complete its verification regime.

Let us commit together:

- to making sure that the world never again suffers from the disastrous consequences of nuclear testing;
- to reducing nuclear risks and preventing nuclear war; and
- to building a safer and more secure world for future generations by taking concrete actions to advance nuclear non-proliferation and disarmament.

We can achieve these noble goals by taking every opportunity to advance the entry into force and universalization of the CTBT. In so doing, we will have demonstrated that the promise of a nuclear-weapon-free world is within our reach.

Thank you.