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CTBT conference – important window of opportunity

There is an “important window of opportunity” and a “unique occasion this year” to bring the Comprehensive Nuclear-Test-Ban Treaty (CTBT) closer to entry into force. Speaking about the upcoming [Conference](#) to Facilitate the Entry into Force of the CTBT, the conference’s two Coordinators – Ambassador Florence Mangin of France and Ambassador Omar Zniber of Morocco – expressed their optimism at a press briefing in Vienna, Austria. Tibor Tóth, the Executive Secretary of the Preparatory Commission for the Comprehensive Nuclear Test-Ban Treaty Organization (CTBTO) also attended the gathering.

New atmosphere

Ambassador Mangin stressed the importance of the conference, which will take place on 24 and 25 September 2009 in New York, U.S.A, especially in view of the current political atmosphere. This positive climate can to a large extent be attributed to the “new atmosphere created by the Obama administration since the speech in Prague and the American willingness to ratify the Treaty”. She referred to the fruitful disarmament talks between Russia and the United States and recalled recent announcements by other countries, namely China and India, about the CTBT, which have also contributed to the current positive atmosphere.

Ambassador Mangin expressed her firm belief that this year’s conference provides a good opportunity for countries to make significant announcements in relation to the Treaty, saying “this conference will help the process of entry into force of this very important Treaty.”

Speaking about the current favourable context for the CTBT, Ambassador Zniber declared that Morocco is convinced “that the time has arrived more than ever before to push ahead the non-proliferation regime and achieve concrete steps in nuclear disarmament.” He referred to the various declarations made by U.S. President Barack Obama when he assumed office.

Special responsibility of U.S. and China

The importance of focusing efforts on those nine countries whose ratification is still needed for the CTBT’s entry into force was reiterated. These countries are: China, Democratic People’s Republic of Korea (DPRK), Egypt, India, Indonesia, Iran, Israel, Pakistan and the United States. Ambassador Zniber pointed out that China and

the United States, as nuclear weapon States, bear particular responsibility. Their ratification will have a real impact on other hold-out States, said Ambassador Mangin, adding that the progress towards ratification of the CTBT in the U.S. and in China which had previously been blocked, is now underway.

Ambassdor Zniber mentioned recent positive signals from China, which became very clear during the consultations prior to this year's conference. He said that the process of ratifying the CTBT had entered the legislative body of China and "that there is a political will to go ahead and achieve this very important step."

"Walk the Walk"

Executive Secretary Tóth said that it is now time for countries to follow through on their announcements. Referring to the expression "talk the talk and walk the walk", he maintained that "it's not enough to announce measures but to deliver measures."

"Non-proliferation and disarmament powerhouse"

The UN Security Council meeting, which is to take place at the Heads of State level on 24 September 2009, will also tackle issues of nuclear non-proliferation and disarmament, Ambassador Zniber said, adding that this would provide a good opportunity for discussions on the CTBT.

Executive Secretary Tibor Tóth likened the UN Security Council meeting to a symbolic birthday present as it scheduled to take place on the same day that the CTBT was opened for signature in 1996. Pointing out the high level of attendance that is expected for this meeting and for the conference on the CTBT at the same time, he referred to it as a "nuclear non-proliferation and disarmament powerhouse". Such high level attendance at a meeting on these issues was last seen when the CTBT was opened for signature, he stated.

Treaty close to deliver on year-long investment

Tóth referred to the failed U.S. ratification in 1999, saying that countries could have bailed out then. Instead, countries have invested over 1 million US Dollars in the build-up of the [CTBT verification regime](#) over the last ten years. All of the existing 270 [monitoring facilities](#) have been built since 1999 and over one hundred of the current almost [150 ratifications](#) have been achieved since 1999. This, he said, signifies a firm belief in the Treaty as an important instrument of nuclear non-proliferation and disarmament. Now "the Treaty is close to delivering and to pay off the political investment of the last years".

Just how close the Treaty is to delivering the dividend was demonstrated earlier this year, Tóth pointed out. The Democratic People's Republic of Korea (DPRK) detonated a nuclear device in [May 2009](#), putting the CTBT global alarm system to the test. As with the DPRK's first nuclear test in [October 2006](#), the CTBT verification regime performed swiftly, providing Member States with timely and reliable information on the explosion.

In June 2009, a large [scientific gathering](#) in Vienna bringing together more than 500 scientists from all over the world examined the detection capabilities of the CTBT verification regime. Scientists acknowledged that the verification regime's infrastructure and analysis methods had improved greatly over the last decade leading to a higher sensitivity in event detection.

Important Consensus

Asked about the expected results of the conference, Ambassador Mangin mentioned that there has been consensus when developing the final document of the conference, the Final Declaration. This bears particular importance in international diplomacy. In this context, it was recalled that the Final Declaration of the [2007 conference](#) to promote the CTBT, which called upon outstanding countries to sign and ratify, was also signed by the 18 participating signatory States, including the [Annex 2](#) States China, Colombia, Egypt, Indonesia, Iran and Israel. In addition, Pakistan addressed the 2007 conference as the only non-signatory Annex 2 State.

Shared presidency

For the second time, the conference presidency is being shared between two States, France and Morocco. Tóth stressed the symbolism of a country from the north and a country from the south jointly presiding over the conference, reflecting the global nature of the Treaty and its verification regime.

For further information on the CTBTO, please see www.ctbto.org – your resource on nuclear testing, or contact:

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