

Ministerial meeting 'Group of Friends' of the Comprehensive Nuclear-Test-Ban Treaty (CTBT)

Intervention by H.E. Didier Reynders, Deputy Prime Minister, Minister of Foreign Affairs and European Affairs of Belgium

New York, 27 September 2018

Excellencies,
Ladies and gentlemen,

The CTBT works. The International Monitoring System makes use of top end technology to detect nuclear tests worldwide. This global network of monitoring stations collects a wealth of data, whose use is not limited to the identification of nuclear tests or the measurement of their yield. The scientific exploitation of this information has helped with early warning for tsunamis or the analysis of nuclear accidents.

The CTBT has not lost its appeal – the recent ratification by Thailand and the signature by Tuvalu are testimony to the slow, but steady progress in universalizing the Treaty. Moreover, even States not yet party to the Treaty play an important role in its success, for instance by allowing and expanding monitoring stations on their territories.

Most importantly, the CTBT is a trendsetter. The legal norm it creates has been violated by only one country this century, the DPRK.

However, difficult challenges remain. The Treaty has yet to enter into force and the last adherence by an Annex II State dates back to 2012. Reluctance towards a global rules-based order has increased. Respect for some of the major nonproliferation and disarmament agreements has diminished.

Fortunately, some hope has grown regarding the issue of the DPRK. The start of high-level negotiations and North Korea's announcement of its suspension of nuclear tests are welcome developments. However, a lasting solution lies in complete, verifiable and irreversible denuclearization. The CTBT offers the framework to translate DPRK's stated commitment regarding nuclear tests into a lasting, internationally verified obligation. Signature of the CTBT would constitute a strong first step, demonstrating the durability of the recent North Korean announcement.

Beyond the DPRK, we should continue to press for the other 7 States of Annex II to join the Treaty, so it can enter into force. Universality of the Treaty also depends on 21 other States joining. Let us use Thailand's ratification as a starting point for renewed momentum. We hope that Thailand's example will serve as an incentive to some of the States in Asia that still remain outside of the CTBT. In Asia and

elsewhere, a geographic approach can be helpful in promoting adhesion. Why not promote nuclear test-free zones in regions where mutual distrust can make States reluctant to take the first step alone? Coordinated steps towards the CTBT would promote regional confidence-building and could provide the basis for further progress regarding nonproliferation and disarmament.

As current coordinator of the article XIV process, together with Iraq, I have made it my endeavor to not limit our outreach to governments only. I therefore welcome the presence here today of a representative of the CTBT Youth, an initiative we are Executive Secretary Zerbo thankful for. The younger generation has a stake in a future without nuclear tests, and hopefully one day, a world without nuclear weapons. Indeed, if we cannot ban nuclear tests, how could we ever ban nuclear weapons?

Thank you.