

Conference on Facilitating the Entry into Force of the Comprehensive Nuclear-Test-Ban Treaty

New York, 21-23 September 2005

Report of Ambassador Jaap Ramaker, Special Representative to promote the ratification process of the CTBT

Mr Chairman, Excellencies, Distinguished Delegates,

1. Today's report of the Special Representative to promote the ratification process of the Comprehensive Test Ban Treaty is the first of its kind in a Conference on Facilitating the Entry into Force of the CTBT. As you will recall, during the last so-called Article XIV Conference, held in Vienna, Austria, from 3 to 5 September 2003 under the Chairmanship of Finland, a number of specific measures were decided to enhance our common objective to see the CTBT take effect before long. One of these measures was the decision to appoint a Special Representative with the mandate "to assist the co-ordinating State in the performance of its function in promoting the early entry into force of the Treaty".
2. It was an honour for me to be appointed a little later that year as the Special Representative. My appointment marked the beginning of a particularly fruitful co-operation with the co-ordinating State, Finland. I wish to take this opportunity to express my profound gratitude for the manner in which Ambassador Grönberg, until recently Finland's Permanent Representative in Vienna, and the members of his staff have supported my activities as Special Representative in the period that lies behind us.
3. At the same time I wish to say how much I am looking forward to working closely together with the incoming co-ordinator, Australia. In fact, our co-operation started already well before this Conference.
4. I also look back with gratitude at the by now more than ten years of co-operation I had the privilege of having with the Executive Secretary of the Provisional Technical Secretariat, Wolfgang Hoffmann who recently stepped down. Once the test ban negotiations in Geneva were over back in 1996 he carried on the torch and created almost single-handedly, and literally out of nothing, the well-functioning Organisation we now have in Vienna. He has my deepest respect.
5. May I finally warmly welcome the new Executive Secretary Ambassador Tibor Tóth who took over from Ambassador Hoffmann last month. We have known each other for a long time. I am sure that he will show exemplary leadership. I am looking forward also to closely co-operating with him.

6. Let me say a few words on where we stand today with regard to the ratification process of the Comprehensive Test Ban Treaty.
7. Focussing first on those forty-four States whose ratification is required for the Treaty to formally enter into force I note that we see here a slow but steady increase in numbers. Of late thirty-three of these forty-four States have ratified.
8. Three of the five declared NWS, France, Russia and the United Kingdom have now ratified the CTBT. From 18 - 20 April of this year I visited the fourth of these five States, China. When in Beijing I was received by the Foreign Minister H.E. Mr Li Zhaoxing and other high-ranking officials. During my various meetings I was given the assurance that China is fully committed to the Comprehensive Test-Ban Treaty. As to the ratification process itself it was put to me that the Chinese Government had completed its work and had sent the Treaty on to the National People's Congress to take further action on. Since my visit to Beijing the Head of the Chinese Delegation to the NPT Review Conference held here in New York last May declared: "China supports an early entry-into-force of the CTBT and is now working actively on its internal legal proceedings for ratifying the Treaty." Let me add that my Chinese interlocutors showed themselves very supportive for my work as Special Representative for which I am grateful.
9. As to the United States, the fifth declared nuclear weapons state, the present Administration as you know has, unlike its predecessor, fundamental objections against this Treaty. I would hope the United States in due course would wish to revisit the question of the Comprehensive Test Ban Treaty and analyse whether or not, on balance, one would indeed not be better off with the Treaty than without it.
10. In a number of cases of countries whose signature and or ratification is required for entry into force of the CTBT this issue has, realistically speaking, to be seen in its wider regional context. I have in mind South Asia, the Middle East and the Korean Peninsula.
11. As to South Asia, I visited Pakistan from 21 - 24 November 2004. My overall impression of my visit to Islamabad was that for Pakistan its relations to India, not in the least its strategic nuclear relationship, is paramount. Things as they stand, I regret to say that Pakistan does not give priority at present to issues relating to the CTBT. Needless to say, that notwithstanding this, I conveyed the wish of the Ratifying States to see Pakistan join their ranks before long. I regret to report that the Ambassador of the co-ordinating State Finland in New Delhi was given to understand not too long ago that - unlike in Pakistan - I was not welcome in India. While this seems to be a reflection of the long-standing critical attitude of India vis-a-vis the CTBT, I note nevertheless that India is on record for not intending to stand in the way of the CTBT's entry into force. The best way forward, it seems to me under the present circumstances, is for the two countries to continue their process of bilateral nuclear confidence building and build on what they have agreed so far including in the realm of nuclear weapons testing.

12. In the Middle East Israel, Egypt and Iran, all have signed the CTBT. As you know, their ratification too, however, is a prerequisite for the Treaty to take effect. I stand ready to be helpful if indeed it would be clear that this could further their respective internal legal proceedings aimed at early ratification.
13. On the Korean Peninsula the DPRK, a so-called annex 2 country as well, still needs to sign and to ratify. It seems to me that once the on-going six-party process reaches the desired outcome nothing should stand in the way for the DPRK to do so.
14. While in all of these cases the question of ratification of the CTBT is in one way or the other tied to wider regional security issues which complicate matters, this is clearly not the case with three other annex 2 countries whose ratification is still pending, Vietnam, Indonesia and Colombia.
15. I visited Vietnam on 4 and 5 November 2004. The Treaty is at present being analysed by an interdepartmental working group, chaired by the Vice-Minister of Science and Technology. In my working session with the members of that working group I explained the merits of the Treaty and addressed a few concerns that seemed to exist in that country with regard to the Treaty. It is my impression that Vietnam is diligently working on the constitutional requirements for ratification. Since my visit I have been – informally – given to understand that the process is making good progress and that ratification may be expected in the not too distant future.
16. So far I my planned visit Indonesia had to be postponed two times for agenda reasons. I hope to be in touch with our Indonesian colleagues here in New York during this Conference. Together we will try and find a convenient date for visiting Jakarta soon.
17. Colombia is now the only remaining of those countries in Latin America that is required to ratify the CTBT. Let me express the hope that the ongoing efforts to eliminate the impediments that stand in the way of Colombia's ratification will soon bare fruit.
18. It is a little over seven years ago that the world witnessed for the last time nuclear weapon test explosions. While this in itself is to be welcomed it goes without saying that a series of unilateral moratoria as these are now observed cannot take the place of the Comprehensive Test-Ban Treaty which, once entered into force, would ban nuclear weapon test explosions once and for all. Nevertheless, the conclusion of the CTBT in 1996 and the absence of any nuclear weapon test explosions - with the exception of 1998 - ever since illustrates the norm against nuclear testing that has taken hold in the mean time even before the CTBT will have taken effect.

19. This norm against nuclear weapons testing, however, should not be taken for granted. It is in permanent need of strengthening. And strengthening that norm is in the hands of all states represented here today. Increasing the overall numbers of States Signatories and Ratifying States, regardless of whether or not their ratification is a legal requirement for the CTBT to take effect, will by the same token strengthen that very norm.
20. Here there clearly is a task also for the Special Representative. It is my intention, therefore to take up contact with all relevant countries in order to explain the wider importance of their early signature and/or ratification. In the coming year or two, as need may be, I intend to do so through bilateral visits, through bilateral discussions in the margins of the appropriate international fora either here in New York or elsewhere, or by any other means that could be useful.
21. The appointment of a Special Representative is no magical formula. The road to the eventual entry into force of the CTBT is steep and full of hurdles. We negotiators at the time realised this from the start. Our common objective that brings us together here today requires a genuine political commitment from all our countries, a commitment in particular at the political, sometimes the highest political, level. A Special Representative can be no substitute for that.
22. Twice in the last few months agreement on the vital issue of nuclear non-proliferation and disarmament eluded us. Commitments earlier taken up, in the first place on the Test Ban, could not command consensus at the last Review Conference of the NPT here in New York. Last week's Summit of World Leaders saw no bridging of the gaps that were already clearly visible last May. With Secretary General Kofi Annan and many other world leaders we profoundly regret this. Despite all of this our objective remains the same: to make, admittedly slow, but surely steady, progress towards banning nuclear weapon test explosions for now and for ever. That progress, distinguished Delegates we are making.

I thank you.