

**Address by the Executive Secretary
Of the Preparatory Commission for the
Comprehensive Nuclear-Test-Ban Treaty Organization**

Dr. Lassina Zerbo

Exhibitions “A Lesson in Peace: The History of Dismantling of Soviet Nuclear Weapons in Kazakhstan”, and “Looking for Peace”, a presentation of paintings by artist Karipbek Kuyukov, Honorary ATOM Project Ambassador

**Monday, 28th October 2013
Rotunda of the VIC**

Ambassador Abdrakhmanov,
Ambassador of the ATOM Project Kuyukov,
Excellencies,
Ladies and Gentlemen,

Welcome to all of you. A special welcome to you Mr. Kuyukov, the ATOM project Ambassador and artist who has created the works we see here today. I had the pleasure of meeting you for the first time last September in New York, where your work has received the same outstanding reception and admiration.

Nearly two decades after President Nazarbayev’s bold step to close the Semipalatinsk test site, there are those who still question that nuclear testing does not make any one safer. On the contrary, it threatens peace, security and sustainable development

Since the development of the nuclear weapon, the world suffered over 2000 nuclear tests. In four decades, the people of Kazakhstan had experienced more than one fifth of these. The lives of 1.5 million people have been disrupted; families robbed of their normality, children cruelly denied their future.

Human suffering of victims exposed to radiation, the environmental degradation, and economic loss should never be forgotten. The ATOM Project is an expression of the strength of the people of Kazakhstan: in suffering, they found determination; in despair, they found awareness; in tragedy, they found firm conviction of a better world. While telling the stories of the survivors of nuclear tests, the ATOM Project creates awareness of the human and environmental cost of nuclear testing, and acts as a strong voice for millions of citizens all over the world united in their desire to stop nuclear testing forever and to choose a different future.

Twenty-two years ago President Nursultan Nazarbayev opened a new chapter by shutting down the Semipalatinsk Nuclear Test Site. Kazakhstan renounced nuclear weapons stockpile inherited from the USSR and joined the NPT as a non-nuclear weapon state, clearly stating that a country can deal away with nuclear weapons without putting its own security in danger. Kazakhstan also demonstrated steadfast commitment for the creation of a NWFZ in Central Asia. In 2009, Kazakhstan initiated the resolution in the General Assembly to establish the International Day against Nuclear Tests.

I visited the city of Semey and the former test site several times. I was struck by the scars that nuclear tests left on the land and in the hearts of its people. Today's exhibition is an attempt to heal those wounds.

Also in Semey, there is a memorial – a woman shielding her child from a nuclear explosion. It is a powerful symbol of Kazakhstan's past and its strong commitment for the future generations. But the woman shielding her child is not alone. Peoples, decision-makers and thinkers, and the international community stand united.

The Comprehensive Nuclear-Test-Ban Treaty stands as the legally binding barrier to completely shut the door on nuclear testing. By adopting the CTBT, more and more States are clearly stating the will to renounce nuclear testing. Once they sign the Treaty, they say “no” to nuclear testing. After ratifying, they reaffirm the importance of “never again”.

Now is the time for the eight states whose ratification of the CTBT will bring it into force to show the political will and fully endorse it. The CTBTO's entry into force institutionalizes the framework to achieve a nuclear-weapon free world. Not a unilateral or temporary decision by some, but the collective action of the international community to accept a legally binding, verifiable and democratic norm for collective security.

The final investment by the few states who remain outside of the treaty will put an end to nuclear explosions once and for all. Ending nuclear explosions is a goal on the road to nuclear disarmament that must be reached.

I have no doubt that it will, sooner rather than later.