



**Preparatory Commission for the  
Comprehensive Nuclear-Test-Ban Treaty Organization**

**Executive Secretary Dr Lassina Zerbo**

**Keynote Dinner Speech:**

**The CTBT – A Cornerstone of Disarmament and Non-proliferation**

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**Introduction**

Thank you for your very kind introduction and thanks to Darja Bavdaž Kuret, State Secretary at the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the Republic of Slovenia, for hosting this dinner. It is an honour to participate and to deliver the keynote speech here this evening.

**NATO's Role in Disarmament and Non-Proliferation: the CTBT Link**

This is the twelfth of NATO's annual conferences on arms control, disarmament and non-proliferation. It may be the first time that an Executive Secretary of the Preparatory Commission for the Comprehensive Nuclear-Test-Ban Treaty Organization (CTBTO) has made an appearance, but it is not the first time that the CTBT has been a topic of consideration in NATO circles, even if only on the margins.

Arms control and disarmament have been key elements of the Euro-Atlantic security architecture for decades. Although NATO as an organization is not part of any multilateral treaty on the issue, it can play an important role in encouraging its members and partners to fully engage and implement their national obligations.

It can also act as an advocate beyond its own membership. The decision taken at the Bucharest Summit in 2008 that NATO should raise its global profile in arms control, disarmament and non-proliferation was a welcome one. I believe there is a lot the Organization and its members can do to contribute to international efforts in those fields.

NATO has consistently repeated its commitment to creating conditions for a world without nuclear weapons. All NATO States are parties to the NPT. And all of them are Signatories to

the CTBT, the entry into force of which would certainly go a long way to bringing those conditions closer.

So at the outset there is already a clear link between the CTBT and NATO's policy objective of a stable, secure, world where the threat of proliferation of nuclear weapons is reduced and removed.

And, in a year in which we commemorate the twentieth anniversary of the opening for signature of the CTBT, I hope we can find a way to increase our cooperation in support of entry into force of the Treaty. I know the final panel tomorrow will deal with NATO's contribution to other international organizations' efforts. No doubt action on the CTBT will be an important part of that discussion. I will give my own views on that in a few moments.

### **The State of Play and Future of Multilateral Non-Proliferation Regimes**

One thing I very much admire about this series of conferences is how it has expanded into a truly global forum, bringing in guests like myself to add to the conversation. You have consistently brought together key players and organizations involved in disarmament and non-proliferation.

And, very importantly, you have created a space for frank and open dialogue. This is all the more important in a time of rising regional and global tensions – and even talk of a new cold war in Europe.

This year's Conference programme focuses clearly on threats and challenges in two regions: the Middle East and Asia. Although I understand why you might frame it in that way, I would also add "opportunities" to the analysis. I do believe there is reason for hope and opportunity for progress in those regions in the CTBT context.

Before I explain why, I wish to say a few words about this afternoon's topic of discussion: the state of play and future of multilateral non-proliferation regimes and initiatives.

I know that many of you expressed disappointment with last year's inconclusive NPT Review Conference. You are not alone in that. And we can already see some of the frustration felt by certain States turning into policy initiatives. For example, the discussions outside the NPT framework on the humanitarian impact of nuclear weapons, and the Open-ended Working Group meeting this week in Geneva.

These initiatives have emerged in response to a perceived lack of progress in fulfilling obligations under the NPT, including Article VI. Years of logjam in the Conference on Disarmament have not helped matters either. Whatever does result from these new processes, we must take great care to maintain the integrity of the NPT and its entire web of responsibilities.

One bright light in the 2015 NPT Review Conference was the widespread support expressed for CTBT entry into force.

Moving forward on the CTBT could help create momentum on other, related, issues and rebuild trust among parties to the NPT. NATO States could have a particular role to play in this regard.

### **CTBT at Twenty: What NATO can do**

This year we commemorate the 20<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the CTBT's opening for signature. NATO Member States were among the first to sign and ratify the Treaty. Today, many are our staunchest supporters, both financially – 60% of the regular budget – as well as politically.

We have organized a number of events in the context of the anniversary, culminating in a Ministerial Meeting on June 13 in Vienna. Many NATO Member States have already indicated that their Foreign Ministers will attend.

You will notice that I did not refer to a “celebration” of the twentieth anniversary. We do have a lot to be proud of: over the past twenty years we have built up the world's only reliable and multilaterally verifiable means of monitoring and detecting nuclear explosions. But 2016 is also the 20<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the Treaty not being in force. It is a call to action rather than a cause for celebration.

The CTBT verification regime is largely in place. The Treaty has 183 States Signatories. 164 of these have also ratified. Nevertheless, we still need ratifications by 8 remaining countries listed in Annex 2 to the Treaty before the nuclear test ban is a legal reality.

In the meantime, we still have a “Preparatory Commission” and a “Provisional Technical Secretariat”, even though our work can in no way be considered preparatory in nature. Only this Organization had the capability and the international legitimacy to provide its Member States with data on the four tests announced by the DPRK between 2006 and 2016. And we are ready should they conduct a fifth test.

On top of that, the Integrated Field Exercise in Jordan in 2014 demonstrated that our on-site inspection capabilities have reached a high level of operational readiness. The added value of the CTBTO's International Monitoring System has also been demonstrated through the provision of data for tsunami early warning and in the response to the tragic events in Fukushima in 2011.

So we are ready. The only thing missing is a Treaty that is in force. And it's here where I believe that NATO, as a major global defence and security alliance, can play a definitive role. You need to keep the CTBT on the agenda. Not just at the WMD Conferences, but at meetings of the NATO Parliamentary Assembly and, most of all, at NATO Summits. A clear and unambiguous reference in the July NATO Summit Declaration to the CTBT as a

cornerstone of the disarmament and non-proliferation agenda is the boost we need as we approach the Treaty's twentieth anniversary.

### **Promoting success in the Middle East**

WMD proliferation in the Middle East will be on the agenda tomorrow morning. The establishment of a WMD free zone in the Middle East has been a common interest among NATO Member States for decades. And of course this has been a sticking point in progress on the NPT.

As I mentioned, I prefer to focus on opportunities in the region. The success of the P5+1 talks with Iran shows the value of determined high-level diplomatic efforts. While the scope of discussions with Iran did not leave room for the CTBT, I think that the P5+1 model could be utilized to bring the CTBT back into focus with regard to Iran. To begin with, construction and certification of IMS stations by Iran would send a clear signal of Iran's commitment to the CTBT.

The prospects for a WMD-free zone in the region remain dim at present. But the establishment of a nuclear *test* free zone could be a first step, as well as a significant confidence-building measure.

All of the principal actors – Egypt, Iran and Israel – have signed the CTBT. Why not push a non-test agreement in the form of joint-CTBT ratification as a means to build confidence among the parties pending entry into force of the Treaty?

They have already said no to nuclear testing. They need to turn this “no” into a “never”. A nuclear test free zone would be an important start.

I have made this suggestion on a number of occasions this year. The Ambassador to the UN in Vienna, has spoken of her enthusiasm for such an idea. And there have been many other supportive voices.

NATO could play a part too, by reaching out on the subject through its Mediterranean Dialogue and Istanbul Cooperation Initiative.

### **CTBT and proliferation threats in Asia**

Tomorrow this Conference will discuss the issue of proliferation threats in Asia. Again, I want to look at where the CTBT can bring opportunities, particularly in the cases of North Korea and India/Pakistan.

## **DPRK**

The fourth announced nuclear test by the DRPK reminds us all of the threat caused by proliferation and the urgency of entry into force of the CTBT.

With the Workers' Party Congress meeting take place for the first time in 36 years, there have been indications that a further test might come.

Additional tests could further destabilise East Asia and beyond, and lead to aggravated relations with China on how to deal with a nuclear DPRK.

We should also remember that each additional test brings a degree of learning, regardless of whether a test is considered "successful" or not. This poses a great threat with regard to potential transfers or sales of fissile material and tangible and intangible nuclear "assets" to third parties.

The North Korean leadership has so far used the Party Congress to paint itself as a "responsible" country in nuclear matters. I believe we should not close the door to dialogue with North Korea to at least bring it towards a *moratorium* on nuclear testing. This would be a first step towards at least a de-escalation of the current crisis.

This is in the mutual interest of the NATO and its partners as well as the Russian Federation and China.

The success of the P5+1 talks with Iran also showed the value of high-level cooperation between the P5, especially between the Russian Federation and the United States – as well as with China. This cooperation could spark similar success in talks with the DPRK.

And I am ready to help in any way I can. I have consistently promoted engagement with the DPRK on the nuclear testing issue. For example, an invitation to attend the CTBT Ministerial Meeting in June has been extended to Mr Su Yong Ri, the foreign minister of the DPRK.

## **South Asia**

We still need India and Pakistan to ratify the CTBT. I believe there is room to establish a framework for dialogue on the Treaty in South Asia.

Concentrating on the technical aspects of the verification regime, including the civil and scientific applications of the monitoring technologies, is a sensible way forward. For this reason, we have engaged with Indian and Pakistani scientists through our series of Science and Technology Conferences, as well as Scientist-to-Scientist workshops.

NATO Member States could address questions related to the Treaty through an international security-focused dialogue with these States. This could help build confidence in the region on the benefits to be gained through entry into force.

I have often heard that there is an “allergy” to the CTBT in South Asia, but in my experience I’ve not heard anyone sneezing. If we are serious about bringing the Treaty into force, we should not miss these opportunities for engagement.

## **Conclusion**

The CTBT can be a rallying point for further confidence building, non-proliferation and disarmament issues.

As I have said, there is much NATO can do to help. In 1999 the NATO Parliamentary Assembly endorsed the Treaty in a resolution. The NATO Council in 2000 highlighted the importance of the CTBT as a confidence building measure. The Warsaw Summit to be held in July this year would be an opportune moment to elevate and re-affirm this support.

Twenty years after the opening for signature of the Treaty, it still remains unfinished business. As we seek to bring back trust into the multilateral nuclear non-proliferation and disarmament regime, action on the CTBT provides an excellent opportunity to move forward.

Thank you.