

**Remarks by the  
Executive Secretary of the  
Comprehensive Nuclear-Test-Ban Treaty Organization**

**Dr Lassina Zerbo**

on the occasion of  
**International Women's Day**

**Vienna, 5 March 2015**

**- Check against delivery -**

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Excellencies,

Ladies and gentlemen,

It is my honour to be here with you on International Women's Day. This commemoration is of utmost significance for me not only professionally, but as a father of three young girls and the husband of a woman whose professional career is a source of gratification and pride.

It is a day of celebration of women all around the world. We celebrate women's strength, willpower, determination and value in our lives and in shaping the world as we know it. For over a century, this day has served as an important call for the international community and humanity at large to double its efforts to deal with the discrimination and inequality that women still face in political, educational, economic and social areas in many parts of the world.

Gender equality is a crucial driver for sustainable peace, and a key element in fostering economic growth and social development around the globe. As Secretary General Ban Ki-

moon stated during the 2014 Annual Commemoration of the International Women's Day, "countries with higher levels of gender equality have higher economic growth. Companies with more women on their boards have higher returns. Peace agreements that include women are more successful. Parliaments with more women take up a wider range of issues – including health, education, anti-discrimination and child support."

This year marks the 20<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action – a historic roadmap signed by 189 governments that sets the agenda for realizing women's rights. It also marks the deadline for achievement of the Millennium Development Goals and the beginning of a new sustainable development agenda for the period beyond 2015. It is time to assess what has been achieved so far and to carefully identify the challenges to be tackled in the future that will make gender equality a reality.

For many decades, science and technology – particularly in the nuclear field – have been male-dominated fields. But I can assure you that times are changing. You can hardly get more technical than the CTBTO: it is an international organization that operates a sophisticated monitoring system capable of detecting any nuclear explosions conducted underground, underwater or in the atmosphere. I can share with you today some encouraging statistics. Of the CTBTO's current 256 staff members, 109 (42%) are women, 58 in the Professional category and 51 in the General Services category. Capacity building through training and educational activities have been expanded and the number of women involved in technical training and workshops has increased over time. Indeed, the contribution of women in of the build-up and sustainment of our verification regime is valuable and has become more necessary than ever to establish the trust and confidence necessary for the Treaty's entry into force. As the father of three girls, I am particularly pleased to see more and more young female scientists joining our ranks.

I would like to pay tribute to the women of the CTBTO. Women are on the front lines of detecting nuclear tests. They are a driving force in all areas of the CTBTO. They are monitoring the huge volumes of data collected by our monitoring system. CTBTO women have gone to the four corners of the earth to install and maintain. They have worked diligently on the political and legal aspects of the entry into force of the Treaty.

I am very proud to note that Ms. Nurcan Meral Özel, was appointed Director of the International Monitoring System (IMS) last November, which is one of the most senior positions in the CTBTO. Dr. Özel is one of the many women who contribute daily to the enhancement of the Treaty's verification regime. More precisely, she is responsible for the installation and certification of the network's stations, systems and facilities as well as for their engineering and sustainment – a critical task that requires the highest level of technical knowledge and experience.

Excellencies,

Ladies and gentlemen,

Gender equality is not merely a women's issue, it is a precondition for sustainable development, peace and security, and a future without weapons of mass destruction. We cannot afford to deny the next Marie Curie or the next Esther Conwell the opportunity to learn and share their learning with others.

On this International Women's Day, let us all remember that the struggle for gender equality must be borne by all of us: women and men together. I personally look forward to the day when we no longer celebrate International Women's Day, for only then will it mean that we have achieved equality for women worldwide. Until that time, I will do all I can to help bring us toward that goal... not just to ensure a better future for my daughters, but to ensure the continued amazing contributions that women bring to the betterment of business, society, science, development and the future of the world in which we live.

Thank you