

Keynote Speech by the Executive Secretary Of the Preparatory Commission for the Comprehensive Nuclear-Test-Ban Treaty Organization Lassina Zerbo

“The CTBT, Parliaments, and a Nuclear Weapons-free World”

First Standing Committee (International Peace and Security)
IPU Assembly, Geneva, Switzerland, 17 March 2014

1. Introduction: the role of Parliamentarians

Chairperson,
Honourable Members of Parliament,
Ladies and Gentlemen

It is my distinct honour to address the Inter-Parliamentary Union Assembly’s Standing Committee on Peace and International Security here in Geneva, just before you embark on the important task of considering the draft resolution “Towards a Nuclear Weapon-free World: the Contribution of Parliaments”. The two distinguished rapporteurs, Mr. Calkins of Canada and Ms. Ferrer Gómez of Cuba, have done a sterling job in bringing such a rich draft to the floor.

In keeping with the spirit and practice of democratic debate, the fate of this text is entirely in your hands and I will not seek to comment on it in any detail. However, I do want to express my appreciation to you, the Parliamentarians of 163 members and 10 associate members, for keeping the important topic of nuclear disarmament and non-proliferation on your agenda.

The IPU Assembly, particularly through this Standing Committee, has shown its leadership over many years by adopting resolutions on the non-proliferation of nuclear weapons and on nuclear disarmament.

As Executive Secretary of the Preparatory Commission for the Comprehensive Nuclear-Test-Ban Treaty Organization (CTBTO), especially close to my heart are the two resolutions you agreed in 1999 and 2009, advocating strongly for the entry into force of the Comprehensive Nuclear-Test-Ban Treaty (CTBT). It is support of this nature that helps me and the staff of the CTBTO to maintain momentum towards a global ban on nuclear testing.

The CTBTO has been an official observer at the IPU since 2007. We explicitly sought this status for several reasons. First, because we realise that national parliaments play a key role in international arms control, non-proliferation and disarmament – above all through ratifying international treaties

and enacting the legislation required for their implementation. Second, that parliamentarians, as they reflect the will and desires of their constituencies, are the embodiment of the growing global consensus to rid the world of all nuclear weapons. Third, because we understand that Parliamentarians, both individually and through the many networks in which they participate, can spread the message on banning nuclear testing better than almost anyone else.

And this is a message we need to keep spreading.

2. *CTBT Background*

I would like to make use of my few minutes with you this morning to reiterate the need to finish what we started. We must bring the CTBT into full legal standing without delay. I hope that, by updating you on recent developments, you can join us in making this a reality.

Over 2000 nuclear tests were conducted before the CTBT was opened for signature in 1996. Move forward 18 years and we find ourselves in a unique situation. The main purpose of the Treaty – to ban all nuclear explosions, everywhere – has clearly taken on normative quality. With the exception of one outlier, no country has conducted a nuclear test explosion since the last century. This norm is backed up by a global verification regime that even goes beyond what could have been imagined in the 1990s. I will return to that shortly.

183 countries have signed the Treaty, and 162 of those have ratified it. We are likely to see more ratifications in the months to come. The CTBT is one of the most adhered-to arms control conventions of all time. Without it, nuclear testing would have undoubtedly continued to the present day. I shudder to think of the added mistrust and insecurity that would bring during times of international tension.

Despite this, the Treaty is not yet in force. For that to occur, we still need the ratifications of eight more countries out of a list of forty-four. These are China, the Democratic People's Republic of Korea, Egypt, India, the Islamic Republic of Iran, Israel, Pakistan and the United States of America. The last time a CTBTO Executive Secretary stood before this Committee, the number remaining was nine. We hope that others among the so-called "Annex 2 States" will follow the lead of Indonesia, which formally submitted its ratification in 2012.

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No-one wants to see a return to the dark days of the past, when we lived under the existential threat of nuclear conflict. The shadow of dread under which we all lived - from the ashes of Hiroshima and Nagasaki to the Cold War arms race - was unacceptable.

It was in this city that the negotiations for the CTBT were successfully concluded in 1996. Diplomats in the Conference on Disarmament rightly grasped a generational opportunity to make progress on disarmament and non-proliferation .

While the way ahead since then has proved difficult, I refuse to regard entry into force of the CTBT as a naïve hope. When I consider the value of the verification regime we have established, I cannot but be filled with optimism for the future.

3. *Verification regime*

The fact that we have a transparent verification regime, open to all State signatories, proves that it is possible to create a truly effective, non-discriminatory, mechanism for security cooperation. The regime is based on three mutually-reinforcing pillars – an International Monitoring System (IMS) that monitors the Earth for any sign of a nuclear test explosion; an International Data Centre (IDC) that collects and produces related data products for all States signatories in near real time; and an On-Site Inspection (OSI) process as the final verification mechanism. The first two of these are already in operation, while on-site inspections can only take place once the Treaty is in force.

This verification regime operates around the globe and around the clock, representing an investment of US\$1 billion. The equivalent of 10,000 years of scientists' lives has gone into building it up. Once completed, the regime will comprise 337 monitoring facilities supported by a global communications and data-processing infrastructure. Over 85 per cent of the monitoring system is already up and running. This network is truly multilateral and unprecedented in terms of worldwide reach. No one State could build and deploy something like this alone.

Even before entry into force, the CTBT verification system has proven its worth. When the DPRK conducted nuclear tests in 2006, 2009 and 2013, we were able to provide information about the location, magnitude, time and depth within two hours. And because our monitoring system consists of seismic, hydroacoustic, infrasound and radionuclide stations, man-made explosions in any environment can be detected and reported.

The huge amount of data we collect can also be used for civil and scientific purposes. We can provide tsunami warning centres with almost real-time information about underwater earthquakes, thus helping to warn people earlier. In the aftermath of the devastating East Japan earthquake in March 2011, the network's radionuclide stations were able to track the dispersion of radioactivity resulting from the Fukushima power plant accident.

We continue to work on the build-up and maintenance of the verification regime. This involves political dialogue, technology foresight, and ongoing evaluation of our current capabilities. Let me give you some examples.

As a result of talks I held in Beijing, China recently started to transmit data from the stations hosted on its territory to the International Data Centre in Vienna. This greatly improves our coverage in East Asia – the only region to have witnessed nuclear test explosions this century.

Frequent outreach to the scientific community, including through biennial Science and Technology Conferences, ensures that we remain at the cutting edge of scientific knowledge.

And we are currently preparing for a full-scale Integrated Field Exercise in Jordan, to take place in November this year. This "IFE 14" will simulate a man-made event suspected to be a nuclear test explosion in order to help us evaluate our readiness for on-site inspections.

4. *Closing*

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The capabilities of the CTBTO in its Preparatory Commission phase prove that we have come far. But we must not allow ourselves to be complacent. The status quo, in which a certain degree of security is achieved through a treaty in operation but not fully in force, is no substitute for a truly binding global legal commitment.

In order to speed up the process of ratification and the entry into force of the CTBT, I recently announced the establishment of a new Group of Eminent Persons (GEM). The GEM consists of high-level officials and public personalities of political standing as well as internationally recognized experts, including a number of current and former Parliamentarians. Through their expertise, experience, and political standing, this Group serves to reinvigorate international efforts in support of the CTBT. I hope that many of you will have the opportunity to connect with GEM members in the time to come.

Lastly, as you turn to the task before you in this Committee, allow me to wish you all the best in the discussions ahead. I am sure that the steadfast support you have always shown for our shared quest to finally ban nuclear testing will once again find a strong echo in the 130th Assembly of the Inter-Parliamentary Union.

Thank you.