CTBTO PREPARATORY COMMISSION | preparatory commission for the comprehensive nuclear-test-ban treaty organization

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Address by the Executive Secretary
of the Preparatory Commission for the
Comprehensive Nuclear-Test-Ban Treaty Organization
Mr Tibor Tóth

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International Atomic Energy Agency
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Mr President,

1. At the very outset, allow me to congratulate you on your election to the General Conference. I have the honour to report to you today on the status of the Comprehensive Nuclear-Test-Ban Treaty (CTBT) and on progress achieved by the Preparatory Commission. The purpose of the Commission is to promote the entry into force of the Treaty and to establish a global verification regime to monitor compliance with its provisions. I am pleased to report that with the recent signatures we have become a 180 member strong organization. Nine countries remain whose ratification is still necessary for the Treaty to enter into force. We are five ratifications away from crossing soon the 150 barrier, a robust increase from around one hundred ratifications five years ago.

2. We are approaching the universalization and implementation of the CTBT – a comprehensive ban on nuclear testing, for all and for all time. And so we, as a preparatory commission, are making all necessary preparations to ensure that the verification regime is ready from day one. You can appreciate that this is not a small task. The system itself is to comprise 337 facilities traversing the territory of 89 countries, each hosting a diverse range of recording equipment across four key technologies. A system operated and maintained by nearly five hundred operators around the globe and around the clock. A Global Communications Infrastructure of 250 VSAT communication assets relaying recorded data through six geostationary satellites back to Operations in Vienna in real time. A team of experts in the International Data Centre analysing incoming information and comparing the data, to Treaty-specific timelines. While at the same time those data are being viewed by Member States and institutions across the globe in possibly the most open verification democracy of its kind. And ultimately, should the need arise, the launching of an on-site inspection team to survey an area of approximately 1000 square kilometres for a potential nuclear blast.

3. A number of important steps have been made in the build-up of the verification regime since I last stood before you. Nearly 70 per cent of the International Monitoring System has been certified to date. You will recall that the system was able to record and attribute the nuclear event in the Democratic People's Republic of Korea (DPRK) in 2006 with 180 facilities in place at that time. By the end of this year we will have 250 facilities transmitting data back to the International Data Centre here in Vienna. During the present mid-term cycle we have tripled the number of facilities in operations. The build-up has been steady across all key technologies of the verification system. The event in the DPRK underscored the importance of the noble gas element of the radionuclide network. Compared to the limited noble gas network we had at that time the number of our noble gas stations will be doubled by the end of this year. Had the new stations with improved geographical saturation been in place at the time of the DPRK event, the readings would have been 50 times higher than those recorded in 2006.

4. This year we undertook the migration to a new platform for our Global Communications Infrastructure. This is virtually complete and "GCI II" is now up and running and relaying data back and forth across the globe. And it is just as well. The volume of data being transmitted from monitoring facilities to the International Data Centre has tripled in recent years. The daily volume of data products provided to States Signatories has doubled. Software improvements have led to the delivery of more detailed and significantly higher quality data products.

5. As the benefits derived from these products have expanded, so has access to them. Recently we have crossed two important numerical barriers: as of now more than 1000 authorized institutions in over 100 countries have direct access to the data generated by the International Monitoring System. And those data are proving themselves more and more useful not just for verification but in civil and scientific applications as well. For example, in providing more time-efficient information to tsunami-warning alert centres. Our system is the fastest, most reliable and highest quality data provider to international and national tsunami-warning centres. These are important life-saving applications. Data provision arrangements have been signed in the past few months with Japan, the Philippines and Australia. Similar arrangements will soon be signed with Indonesia, with more countries to follow.

6. With the CTBT verification regime a new standard of transparency has been achieved. It represents a new democracy in the verification of multilateral disarmament and non-proliferation instruments. But you need not take our word for it. Recently the Commission initiated an International Scientific Studies (ISS) project in cooperation with the international scientific community. The main purposes of the ISS are twofold. Firstly, the purpose is to assess the capability of the verification system that is now approaching full implementation. Secondly, the purpose is to explore if the scientific community can provide additional tools that will further improve our data analyses. This process will conclude next year with a conference in June for all participants. We look forward to a wide participation of the Member States, institutions and the scientific community in the project and the conference itself.

Mr President,

7. In September of this year, a team of trained inspectors journeyed to Kazakhstan to conduct the first integrated field exercise of its kind under the concept of Treaty on-site

inspection. The exercise provided a unique opportunity for the Commission to test in an integrated manner most of the major elements of the on-site inspection regime. 200 participants were deployed in the former nuclear weapon test site of Semipalatinsk, an area roughly the size of a small country. They brought with them over 50 tonnes of equipment to be tested over 30 days in the field. Mock negotiations were conducted and technical procedures were practised. Integrated analysis took place on location. A wide range of equipment and technologies were thoroughly put through their paces. Radionuclide surveys were conducted, as well as ground and aerial gamma arrays, environmental sampling and passive seismological monitoring. Given that the Agency has pioneered international inspection techniques and procedures for so many years, participants at this conference can appreciate the scale of this undertaking. Many valuable lessons were learned, which will be fed into our OSI preparations as we move forward. I am confident that the field exercise will stand as a significant turning point on our path towards achieving on-site inspection readiness by the time of entry into force.

Mr President,

8. We have progressed to quite an advanced state. Instead of talking about separate components of the regime, we can now talk of an integrated system of systems, functioning in a holistic way. In many respects, the system is achieving a high level of maturity. But, let us not get ahead of ourselves. As with any journey, the last mile is often the longest. Much work remains. Many of the stations to be completed are the most difficult ones, for technical, financial and political reasons. Sustaining the investments we have already made is proving itself a significant challenge as operation and maintenance issues come to the fore. Then there is the financial situation, which, in many ways, dictates the realities of what we can achieve.

Mr President,

9. The ban on nuclear testing is now more necessary than ever. Looking to the future, we see compelling reasons to establish the CTBT proper in the international rule book. Nuclear energy is expected to experience its renaissance. Concerns about energy security are moving alternative energy solutions to the forefront. So too the potential threat posed by global warming, as its effects become more apparent in our daily lives. The potential resurgence of nuclear energy rests at the crux of these two defining issues on the international agenda.

10. The IAEA has forecast annual growth rates over the course of the next 20 years that give reason to pause and think: How will the international community deal with an increase of nuclear energy as predicted? How can we ensure a system of access to nuclear energy for peaceful purposes that is fair, secure, safe and safeguarded? These questions fall to all of us to answer. Such resurgence will almost certainly lead to an increase in the numbers of countries, facilities, institutions and individuals managing a wider array of sensitive nuclear fuel cycle components with a significantly enlarged amount of fissile material. Such a surge across the board will make it more difficult than ever to differentiate between prohibited and permitted nuclear activities. We are moving in a direction where the decision between nuclear energy for peaceful or for weapons purposes will be based more on political grounds than on technical ones.

11. As nuclear energy is promoted to address energy security and climate change challenges, this promotion must go hand-in-hand with a strengthening of the non-proliferation and disarmament regime. A regime that has been weakened in recent years. Holes are developing in the barriers erected in front of nuclear weapons for much of the latter part of the 20th century. The Comprehensive Nuclear-Test-Ban Treaty together with other measures urgently needed can fill these holes. The Treaty is the last and most visible legal and technical barrier to the development of nuclear weapons. It can keep the non-proliferation and disarmament regime from unravelling, as we progress through the 21st century and attempt to navigate the compound challenges facing our world. Challenges that, in the midst of an increasingly complex global security environment, must not be left simply to forces of competition. Challenges that, as in other volatile areas of our daily lives, require regulation, if they are to be managed. And challenges that must be faced collectively, if they are to be overcome.

Mr President,

12. It is clear that the CTBT is essential in the fight against non-proliferation. And it is essential if we are to achieve nuclear disarmament. Not only is the CTBT an important measure in its own right, it also has the potential to act as a catalyst for progress in other crucial areas of the disarmament and non-proliferation regime. To illustrate this point, I would simply ask you to contemplate the importance for the 2010 NPT Review Conference of progress on CTBT entry into force. What could better demonstrate the international community's commitment to non-proliferation and disarmament at this critical juncture? This Treaty, our Treaty, is around the corner. What we have to do and what we will do is turn the corner.

Thank You.