
**Statement to the 66th regular session of the
General Conference of the International Atomic Energy Agency**

26-30 September 2022, Vienna

Excellencies,
Distinguished delegates,
Ladies and Gentlemen,
Mr President,

Let me congratulate you, Mr. President, on your election as President of the General Conference.

I am pleased to deliver this statement on behalf of Dr Robert Floyd, Executive Secretary of the Preparatory Commission for the Comprehensive Nuclear-Test-Ban Treaty Organization (CTBTO).

The International Atomic Energy Agency is our partner in addressing the pressing issues facing the international community. Despite the distinct nature of their mandates, the CTBTO Preparatory Commission and the Agency have always shared much in common, by upholding the global non-proliferation and disarmament regime.

Both organizations cherish the same goal of achieving a world free of nuclear weapons. This is as challenging now as ever.

Today, the General Conference is taking place in the context of a deteriorating geopolitical landscape. The deepening distrust between countries, heightened rhetoric, new military conflicts, and the potential prospect of the use of nuclear weapons render our task more critical.

Against this geopolitical backdrop, I would like to take this opportunity to brief you on the latest developments related to CTBTO, that gives cause for optimism.

As you all know, the Review Conference of the Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons (NPT), recently concluded deliberations. Regrettably, no consensus on a final document could be reached.

Nevertheless, we witnessed the tireless efforts made by participants of the NPT Review Conference to bridge gaps within the international community. Those four weeks of intense negotiations have laid the groundwork for real progress in the future.

The CTBT was extensively supported by NPT States Parties, and more fervently this year. Particularly, the draft of the final document recalled the importance of the entry into force of the CTBT and reaffirmed the responsibility of all States that have ratified the Treaty to promote the CTBT. This is a call to action to help us achieve universalization and entry into force.

Mr President,

We have just concluded the 25th anniversary year since the opening for signature of the CTBT. For this year we set an ambitious goal: to see at least five new ratifications of our treaty in one year. I am pleased to note that this goal has been surpassed. During the past 12 months, the Gambia, Tuvalu, Dominica, Timor-Leste, Equatorial Guinea, and Sao Tome and Principe, and ratified the CTBT. Now, with 186 signatures and 176 ratifications, we are getting closer to the Treaty's entry into force.

With these six new ratifications, we have complete adherence to the CTBT in the West and Central Africa, Latin American and Caribbean region and South-East Asia. These are historical milestones.

Let us look back.

Just a few decades ago, in the period between 1945 and 1996, when the Treaty was opened for signature, more than 2000 nuclear tests were conducted: that is about one test every nine days. Since then, the CTBT has created and sustained a norm against nuclear testing so powerful that less than a dozen nuclear tests have been conducted; a norm breached by only one country since the turn of the century.

That norm is backed up by the CTBT's state-of-the-art means of verification, comprising the International Data Centre (IDC) and our International Monitoring System (IMS), which ensure no nuclear test can go undetected, any time, any place. With this critical verification asset, the CTBT is undeniably a key element of the global nuclear non-proliferation and disarmament regime.

Despite all the progress achieved, we continue exploring new ways to support our States Signatories in benefiting from the data collected by our monitoring system, including civil and scientific applications, such as tsunami warning systems, earthquake and climate change studies, and a multitude of others. With this in mind, we launched the 'National Data Centres for All Initiative this year.' This project aims to ensure that all States Signatories of the CTBT, especially the developing countries, can use this data to the fullest and for the benefit of all.

Mr President,

Despite these impressive achievements and exciting initiatives, the mission is not yet accomplished. Nuclear disarmament and non-proliferation are the cornerstones of a safer and more secure future. We are convinced that global challenges and crises can only be overcome by strengthened multilateral cooperation and collective efforts to reinforce the global nuclear non-proliferation and disarmament regime, including the efforts of both the Agency and the CTBTO. Only in this way can we build a safer world, free from nuclear weapons.

Thank you.