

In lieu of the International Day against Nuclear Tests 29 August

High level workshop: From here to 2015: Meeting the targets of the Nuclear Non-Proliferation Treaty (NPT) Action Plan

Organized by the Mission of Kazakhstan and the EastWest Institute

Thursday 1 September 2011, UN headquarters, New York

Remarks by Dr Annika Thunborg, Spokesperson and Chief of Public Information of the Preparatory Commission for the Comprehensive Nuclear-Test-Ban Treaty Organization (CTBTO)

- Many thanks for this kind invitation. Special thanks to the organizers - the Mission of Kazakhstan and the EastWest Institute
- I don't believe I will surprise anyone in this room when I state the obvious: that the CTBT in force constitutes the natural next step on the non-proliferation and disarmament agenda. Actually, most would agree that it constitutes a step long overdue, a step that should have been taken more than ten years ago, but unfortunately it is still outstanding.
- As the final document from 2010 underlines, the vital importance of the CTBT's entry into force is a core element of the international nuclear disarmament and non-proliferation regime. The CTBT constrains the development and qualitative improvement of nuclear weapons and ends the development of advanced new types of nuclear weapons. So, it curbs the further development of nuclear weapons both for those that already have them, and for those who may wish to develop them.
- In a couple of weeks, on 23 September here in New York, the next ministerial conference to promote CTBT's entry into force will take place. It is the 7th conference of its kind and as usual we expect around 100 high level representatives, mainly foreign ministers, to attend the meeting. They will issue a Final Declaration, which we expect will urge the nine outstanding countries whose ratification is necessary for entry into force to fully join the Treaty, and they will commit themselves to address the CTBT's entry into force at the highest political level.
- What is particularly important about these conferences is that although it is the ratifying States (and we have 154 ratifiers at this point) that request that the conference take place, many signatory States that still have to ratify the Treaty also participate actively. They speak, they have participated in the negotiations of the Final declaration in Vienna, and they endorse the declaration as it is issued. The countries that participated actively in previous years include, the United States, China, Egypt, Israel, Iran and Indonesia (worth highlighting that these six States have signed the CTBT and are active members of the CTBTO in Vienna. And all of them host CTBT monitoring stations.). Also Pakistan – a non-signatory State – has participated in some of the conferences in the past as an observer. (This leaves India and North Korea, two countries with which we have little interaction.)

- (This situation reminds me of the voting pattern on the annual UNGA CTBT resolution which enjoys almost universal support. This means that outstanding countries also commit themselves to a CTBT in force as well as committing themselves to ratifying the Treaty. There are few other treaties that enjoy that much support – at least declaratory support. Of course, what we need is action.)
- Each one of the nine outstanding States is responsible for moving the entry into force-process forward. Any one of them can take steps forward that would make a difference and lead the way.
- Here I'd like to quote Dr Christine Wing of New York University. She has written an article in the forthcoming issue of our publication Spectrum, which is called Why Wait? and in which she argues that it is implied that the remaining countries don't take the first step because their security interests will be threatened if other countries don't ratify. But to forgo the option to conduct tests, is this really a loss, she asks rhetorically. After all, many – if not all - of the outstanding countries agree that there is no need for further testing. There are also outstanding countries that hold out ratification as a bargaining chip in other international transactions. And there are the domestic politics of the CTBT in which governments may not want to take on divisive domestic opposition and deem this more costly than the benefits of ratification. So besides the perceived security threats, there is – as Scott Sagan already wrote in the 1990s – also the question of domestic debates and internal bureaucratic struggles, and the outdated but unfortunately still prevailing notion that keeping the nuclear test option open is a status symbol of power and identity.
- As soon as any of the outstanding non-ratifying States adopts the Treaty, and especially the nuclear-armed states, the international political context would change immediately. The log-jam would be broken, both security and domestic arguments would need to be revisited.
- A decision to lead – to take leadership - would also reaffirm the CTBT as the strong international norm that it is. And it would reaffirm the unique value of the comprehensive verification regime that we are building worldwide. This system is currently over 80 percent complete and already showed its worth when North Korea tested in 2006 and 2009 by detecting those tests confidently and reliably. It has also already shown its worth in regards to civil uses, such as in March when the devastating earthquake and tsunami hit Japan. The disasters could have taken even more lives if speedy tsunami warning alerts hadn't been issued. CTBTO data helped with this. It also helped track the levels and dispersion of radioactivity worldwide after the harmful nuclear accident.
- Before ending, I want to go back to the 2010 NPT Final document which reaffirms the importance of upholding the moratoria pending the CTBT's entry into force.
- You may know that today is another anniversary, the 50th anniversary of the broken test moratorium between the United States and the Soviet Union in 1961.
- An op-ed about this event and its relevance for today has been written by the CTBTO Executive Secretary Tibor Tóth and is published and distributed today by Project Syndicate (copies available in the room)
- To recap history: There had been a three year moratorium from October 1958 to allow for negotiations of a nuclear test ban in Geneva.

- The moratorium had been fragile from the beginning; nuclear weapons establishments had been pushing hard for the resumption of nuclear testing. Political tensions were building up behind the scenes. France conducted its first nuclear test in 1960. The Berlin Wall was erected in 1961; the Soviet Union broke the moratorium on 1 September 1961, joined shortly thereafter by the United States.
- What followed was a veritable nuclear testing frenzy. In the 16 months that followed, over 250 nuclear bombs were exploded. And in 1962, we had the Cuban Missile Crisis.
- Faced with nuclear Armageddon, President Kennedy and General Secretary Krushchev were shocked into action; they tried to reach an agreement on a comprehensive ban on nuclear testing, but they failed.
- Now, 50 years and 1,500 nuclear explosions later, we have another chance to learn from the failures of the past. Without the CTBT in force, we rely on moratoria, just as we did 50 years ago. And history has shown us just how unreliable moratoria can be. So let us go the extra mile and close the door on nuclear testing once and for all. Let us bring the CTBT into force.

Thank you!