

# THE BAN ON TESTING NUCLEAR WEAPONS

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**The Ministerial Meeting (Follow-Up Article XIV Conference)  
For Latin American and Caribbean States**

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Your Excellency Minister Bruno Stagno Ugarte,  
Excellencies,  
Ladies and Gentlemen,

I am honoured to address this Ministerial Meeting in support of the entry into force of the Comprehensive Nuclear-Test-Ban Treaty (CTBT). On behalf of Mr. Sergio Duarte, the United Nations High Representative for Disarmament Affairs, who regrets that he is not able to join you today, I am pleased to extend his greetings to all the participants and his best wishes for a successful meeting. I also wish to express my sincere gratitude to the Governments of Austria and Costa Rica, not just for organizing this timely meeting, but also for their longstanding support for progress in the field of disarmament.

It is fitting that distinguished representatives of Latin American and Caribbean states would gather here today to promote the entry into force of the CTBT. Forty-one years ago, states from this region demonstrated their foresight, solidarity, and leadership in concluding the historic Treaty of Tlatelolco, which created the first continental nuclear-weapon-free zone, while also outlawing the conduct of any nuclear tests in this region. Though the fundamental goals and full regional membership of the Treaty of Tlatelolco have been accomplished, states in this region can still contribute in achieving a world free of nuclear weapons.

A truly comprehensive and global prohibition of nuclear tests constitutes an absolutely indispensable step toward that goal. This is a goal that combines two great assets—it is both legitimate and achievable. It serves both the ideals and self-interests of all states, without discrimination.

Although twelve years have passed since the CTBT was opened for signature, it has gained 180 signatories and 145 ratifying States, and this in itself is a great achievement. Only nine of the 44 States whose ratifications are required for the Treaty to enter into force have yet to do so. The fact that we are meeting here today, at this regional follow-up meeting to the Fifth Article XIV Conference on Facilitating the Entry into Force of the CTBT, testifies to the importance of this Treaty to the states of this region.

Last week, the Fourth Biennial Ministerial Meeting in support of the CTBT organized jointly by Austria and Costa Rica took place at United Nations Headquarters New York. It was encouraging indeed both to witness the high attendance at that meeting and to hear the strong statements of support for the treaty. Foreign ministers from some forty countries participated in that meeting, which produced a joint statement that has already been endorsed by more than 80 States. This is further testimony to the great importance that governments from the four corners of the world attach to the entry into force of this Treaty. As the United Nations Secretary-General Ban Ki-moon aptly stressed in his remarks at the meeting, *“The Treaty’s entry into force would be a major step in our effort to build a safer, more peaceful world and would move us towards the larger goals of ridding the world of nuclear weapons and preventing their proliferation”*.

Today’s meeting is part of a much-broader, indeed global, process aimed at achieving this great goal, as reflected, for example, in the numerous resolutions in support of this Treaty that have been adopted by overwhelming majorities in the General Assembly. In recent years, the Executive Secretary of

the Preparatory Commission for the CTBT Organization, Mr. Tibor Toth, has participated in the thematic debate during the deliberations of the First Committee.

The overall relationship between the United Nations and the Preparatory Commission of the CTBTO is governed by a bilateral agreement that features a joint commitment to cooperate in facilitating the early entry into force of this Treaty. As the depositary of the CTBT, the Secretary-General has convened five Article XIV conferences from 1999 to 2007 to promote this Treaty, and he has also repeatedly advocated this goal in his public statements—most recently, in his August 4 address at an Extraordinary Session of the Agency for the Prohibition of Nuclear Weapons in Latin America and the Caribbean (OPANAL) in Mexico City, and also in his remarks at the Fourth Ministerial Meeting on the CTBT on 24 September at UN Headquarters.

The Preparatory Commission's numerous efforts to promote the treaty have included activities jointly organized with the United Nations Regional Centres, including the United Nations Regional Centre for Peace, Disarmament and Development in Latin America and the Caribbean, based in Lima, Peru. These events not only serve to underscore the merits of a nuclear test ban for regional and international peace and security, but also demonstrate the many different ways that the Treaty advances and benefits the civilian and scientific interests of states, including through the various applications of the verification technologies, in such areas as the environment, earth science and technology, tsunami warning systems, and possibly other disaster alert systems.

As might be expected, given the strong and genuine commitment of the states of this region to nuclear disarmament and non-proliferation, it is no surprise that the Latin American and Caribbean states have demonstrated overwhelming support for the entry into force of the CTBT. Among the 33 states in this region, 29 States have signed the CTBT and 28 have ratified it. In short, only four states from the region have yet to sign the Treaty, and one has already signed but not yet ratified.

I believe that by achieving full universal membership in the CTBT, the states of this region can achieve a remarkable goal. The entry into force of the CTBT will, in a sense, extend to a global dimension the scope of the regional prohibition on nuclear tests found in the Treaty of Tlatelolco. In other words, just as Latin American and Caribbean states led the world in creating nuclear-weapon-free zones, so too can they work together to achieve a world without nuclear tests. This will be an especially positive and significant achievement, particularly if it occurs prior to the opening of the 2010 Review Conference on the Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons.

All states recognize, of course, that while a ban on such tests is neither a panacea for all nuclear threats nor an end in itself, it remains a vitally important means to advance the mutually reinforcing goals of nuclear disarmament and non-proliferation. No state in this region wishes to witness the acquisition of nuclear weapons by additional states or non-state actors. And no state wishes to see the further development of nuclear weapons by states that currently possess such weapons.

The great benefit of this Treaty is that it advances both disarmament and non-proliferation. It offers a fair and non-discriminatory standard, one that requires all states—large or small, rich or poor—to

abide by the same legal standard. It is a legitimate aim for all states to pursue and its entry into force would be a milestone achievement for the rule of law in the field of disarmament and non-proliferation.

Today, more than ever, there is a collective need to consolidate and build upon existing disarmament and non-proliferation agreements and to join together in a common commitment to multilateral cooperation as an important means of pursuing our shared objectives in disarmament and non-proliferation.

For these valid and logical reasons, I wish once again to thank the organizers of this meeting for their untiring and dedicated work on behalf of this Treaty, and to thank as well the representatives of all states of this region for their resolute support for a ban on nuclear tests, and for the achievement of global nuclear disarmament. Working together towards a common goal, the states of this region have only begun to show the world what they can accomplish in this field, to the great benefit of international peace and security and for building a safer and more secure world for future generations.

The Office for Disarmament Affairs at the United Nations looks forward to working with all concerned states, and with representatives of civil society, to achieve precisely such goals.

Thank you for your attention.