

Opening Remarks

By

Sergio Duarte

High Representative for Disarmament Affairs
United Nations



Special Briefing and Strategy Session:
**Contributions of the United Nations System in Advancing
the Entry Into Force of the Comprehensive Nuclear-Test-Ban Treaty**

Permanent Mission of Austria to the United Nations
New York, NY
3 April 2009

I wish at the outset of my brief remarks today to thank Ambassador Mayr-Harting of the Permanent Mission of Austria to the United Nations, and Jonathan Granoff, President of the Global Security Institute, for organizing this meeting on measures to advance the entry into force of the Comprehensive Nuclear-Test-Ban Treaty (CTBT).

This is clearly not the occasion for me to explain the benefits of this treaty. We all know what they are. We all know about the long history of efforts worldwide to achieve such a ban, starting back in April 1954 with Prime Minister Nehru's proposed "standstill agreement." We are all aware of the more than 2,000 nuclear tests that followed that historic proposal, a record that has fortunately not led us to despair, but to strengthen our resolve to achieve a permanent and comprehensive ban on such tests.

While some of the early efforts on behalf of a CTBT began outside the United Nations, the treaty has literally for decades been the subject of deliberations in several institutions of the UN disarmament machinery. The treaty was of course negotiated in the Conference on Disarmament, yet it was also the subject of countless resolutions by the General Assembly, as well as the focus of numerous UN studies and reports.

In addition, the treaty is associated with many other multilateral efforts in the field of arms control and disarmament. It was a key part of the "package deal" that led to the indefinite extension of the NPT in 1995 and was again endorsed in the final document of the 2000 NPT Review Conference, which specifically called for its "early entry into force." The goal of a comprehensive test ban is found in the Partial Test Ban Treaty of 1963 and in the Preamble of the NPT—and the taboo on testing is also found in each of the five treaties establishing regional nuclear-weapon-free zones. Including Mongolia's nuclear-weapon-free status, this particular taboo is now a legal norm in 113 states.

I am encouraged that the goal of bringing the CTBT into force has also been echoed in virtually every serious nuclear disarmament proposal that has appeared in recent years. It was strongly endorsed by the 2006 report of the international Weapons of Mass Destruction Commission, chaired by Hans Blix, and also by the much-cited op-ed by George Shultz, William Perry, Henry Kissinger, and Sam Nunn in the *Wall Street Journal* in 2007.

Secretary-General Ban Ki-moon has repeatedly added his own voice to this cause. He included this as point number three of his five-point proposal for nuclear disarmament, offered in a major speech to the East West Institute last October. He of course supported the treaty long before becoming Secretary-General. In 1999, he served as Chairman of the Preparatory Commission for the CTBT Organization.

As far as a strategy to achieve early entry into force, I see now two possible trends—with one tending toward a more favourable outcome than the other.

On the optimistic side, I believe that a decision by the US Senate to agree to ratification would help enormously in creating—to use a popular phrase these days—a “cascade” of states that will follow suit. What a great achievement that would be: instead of the much-predicted “cascade of proliferation” we would see instead a cascade that I believe would not only de-legitimize nuclear tests but go some distance in de-legitimizing nuclear weapons themselves. Entry into force would of course be especially welcome before the 2010 NPT Review Conference.

This action by one state does not however guarantee that all of the remaining 44 required states will promptly join the treaty, as we have recently been reminded in various official statements. Nevertheless, the closer the treaty gets to entry into force, I remain hopeful that its substantial merits for the security interests of all countries will become more and more clear and compelling.

My less optimistic scenario would involve procrastination and further delays in efforts to bring the treaty into force, as could well happen if this goal gets pushed aside by many other important items on the public agendas of the states that have not yet ratified. Alternatively, there are other risks inherent in the various bargains that might be struck to achieve entry into force—including, for example, the often-cited deal that would combine ratification with various programmes to modernize existing arsenals.

All proponents of the treaty know that a test ban is not an end in itself, but a step to the de-legitimization and eventual elimination of nuclear weapons. The treaty’s preamble makes it quite clear that one of its goals is to prevent modernization of the nuclear arsenals. It says specifically that the treaty—and I now quote—“by constraining the development and qualitative improvement of nuclear weapons and ending the development of advanced new types of nuclear weapons, constitutes an effective measure of nuclear disarmament and non-proliferation in all its aspects.”

I believe the future of this treaty will indeed be determined by a political process involving many actors, from the individual concerned citizen, to non-governmental organizations, legislators, national leaders, and governments worldwide. The combination of voices from the people and from the international community can accomplish a lot in this world and I believe that together they will forge the political will needed to bring this historic treaty into force.

As contributors—each in their own way—to this process, I salute all who are participating in this session today and wish you the very best in all the work that lies ahead.