

Opening Remarks

By

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Pugwash Consultation on the Status of the CTBT and Prospects for its Entry into Force

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I wish at the outset of my brief remarks today to thank Pugwash for organizing this consultation on the status of the Comprehensive Nuclear-Test-Ban Treaty (CTBT) and its prospects for entry into force.

We are meeting today at a remarkable time for global nuclear disarmament efforts. After years of neglect and disappointment, disarmament is once again receiving the high-level attention it needs and deserves. I am greatly encouraged by the many recent events that have helped create much needed political momentum toward finally realizing long-awaited disarmament goals, such as the CTBT.

Achieving the entry into force of the CTBT remains near the centre of the global disarmament agenda. The Secretary-General cited the need for new efforts toward this goal as part of his five point disarmament plan. Since President Obama's pledge to seek US ratification we have seen momentum build, most importantly including from the remaining Annex 2 States whose ratifications are required for the Treaty to enter into force. Already, Indonesia has pledged to ratify once the United States does so. In addition, China has expressed a renewed commitment to pursue ratification.

Beyond the optimism generated by the promise of US ratification and its stimulating effect on the cause for the CTBT, this one action will not guarantee all the remaining Annex 2 States will promptly join. We should recall that most of these remaining States are situated in regions of simmering tensions, where the contagion of nuclear deterrence has set in or where it threatens to continue spreading.

Some of these remaining States continue to publicly link their support for the CTBT to the achievement of a variety objectives, including completion of the verification regime, objectives related to the implementation of the Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons (NPT) and the final agreement of all nuclear-weapon States to nuclear disarmament.

Any condition maintained by States related to their joining the Treaty should not constitute a barrier toward achieving further practical steps toward achieving a world free of nuclear weapons. There is a risk that such conditions could undermine not only the CTBT but also the whole disarmament enterprise. Indeed, one oft-cited bargain links ratification to various programmes to modernize existing arsenals and their associated infrastructure.

As we all know, the test ban is not an end in itself, but a step toward the delegitimization and elimination of nuclear weapons. The treaty's preamble clearly envisages the goal of preventing the modernization of the nuclear arsenals. It says specifically that the treaty—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.”

In light of recent developments, many have expressed heightened expectations in the outcome of the upcoming NPT Review Conference. The pursuit of additional ratifications of the CTBT over the next few months would undoubtedly contribute to maintaining political momentum and a positive atmosphere. It should be noted that all NPT States Parties are signatories to the CTBT. This near-universal level of support, coupled with the maintenance of voluntary testing moratoria, should continue to have a positive effect on the work within the NPT context.

As the international community continues to work toward permanently closing the door on nuclear explosions, we should seize the current momentum to also ensure progress is made toward nuclear disarmament more broadly. I wish all the participants in this consultation the very best in their work to achieve these objectives.