

2 September 2011

**Statement of H.E. Mr. Joseph Deiss,  
President of the 65<sup>th</sup> Session of the General Assembly,  
at the Informal Plenary Meeting on the Occasion of the International  
Day against Nuclear Tests and the 20<sup>th</sup> Anniversary Closure of  
Semipalatinsk**

Excellencies,  
Ladies and Gentlemen,

The resolution 64/35, approved by consensus by the General Assembly, was a landmark in the work of its First Committee in 2009 as it established 29 August as the International Day against Nuclear Tests.

Nuclear tests have been shaping military power throughout the 20th century. During the Cold War and its logic of nuclear deterrence, these tests were used for advancing nuclear technology and they were displayed as a demonstration of power, since the actual use of nuclear weapons could lead to the destruction of the entire planet.

Nuclear testing and explosions were carried out underground, under water and in the air, with dreadful dangers for human beings and the environment. The fallout of nuclear tests caused diseases, poisoned the food chain and contaminated the water and its ecosystems; these effects are still felt today. Nuclear tests and, ultimately, nuclear weapons, constitute a serious threat for civilians. This must not be overlooked: Nuclear tests imply the acceptance of huge possible costs for populations and contradict some fundamental principles of the United Nations.

It took several decades before the international community could agree on an overarching legally-binding instrument that would address the issue. The Comprehensive Test Ban Treaty (CTBT) was approved in 1996; unfortunately it is still not in force. The current international moratorium on nuclear tests, respected by almost all States, is not a substitute for the full implementation of the obligations contained in the CTBT. I urge the international community to undertake all necessary efforts to achieve the universal adoption of the Treaty and to pursue all necessary ratifications for it to be fully operative.

I would like to commend the Government of Kazakhstan for being the driving force in the celebration of the International Day against Nuclear Tests. Kazakhstan set an important example by unilaterally closing down the Semipalatinsk Nuclear Test Site in 1991. By acknowledging this exemplary step, the General Assembly approved Resolution 63/279 which invites Member States to celebrate in 2011 the twentieth anniversary of the closing of this test site.

Alongside with civil society, academia and the media, I encourage all Member States to engage in the celebration of the International Day against Nuclear Tests and to enhance public awareness and education about the effects of nuclear tests. I call on the international community to seize every opportunity to renew its commitments of promoting the ultimate goal of a nuclear weapons free world.