



**REMARKS AT
GENERAL ASSEMBLY EVENT COMMEMORATING THE
INTERNATIONAL DAY AGAINST NUCLEAR TESTS**

Ms. Izumi Nakamitsu

**High Representative for Disarmament Affairs
United Nations**



30 August 2017

Trusteeship Council Chamber
New York

On behalf of the Secretary-General of the United Nations, H.E. Mr. António Guterres, I would like to thank H.E. Mr. Peter Thomson, President of the General Assembly, for convening this meeting.

I also would like to thank H.E. Mr. Roman Vassilenko, Deputy Minister of Foreign Affairs, for travelling all the way from Astana to be part of this meeting, and the government of the Republic of Kazakhstan for their steadfast efforts to spread awareness of the hazardous consequences nuclear testing pose to our health and environment.

I now have the privilege to deliver a message on behalf of Secretary-General Guterres.

“Quote”

Each year, on 29 August, we observe the International Day against Nuclear Tests to respect the victims of the past and to remind the world of the persisting threat these tests pose to the environment and international stability.

More than 2,000 nuclear tests have been conducted over the past seven decades – from the South Pacific to North America, from Central Asia to North Africa. They have harmed some of the world’s most vulnerable peoples and pristine ecosystems.

To ensure that no States can conduct another test, it is essential that the Comprehensive Nuclear-Test-Ban Treaty (CTBT) finally enters into force. Just eight more Annex 2 States need to ratify to accomplish this.

I urge all countries yet to join the CTBT to do so as soon as possible. For almost 20 years, a global norm has existed against nuclear testing based on voluntarily unilateral moratoriums. I applaud this restraint, but it is not enough. Continued nuclear tests by the Democratic Republic of Korea demonstrate that even the strongest norm is no substitute for a legally-binding prohibition.

Last year, the Security Council adopted its first resolution focused solely on nuclear testing. I hope that represents a new momentum towards taking the essential next step in ridding the world of the menace of nuclear weapons.

“Unquote”

This concludes the message of the Secretary-General.

Your Excellency, Mr. Peter Thomson, with your permission I would like to add some remarks of my own in my capacity as High Representative for Disarmament Affairs.

As we commemorate the International Day against Nuclear Tests to honor the victims of past tests, we also need to remind ourselves of the present dangers posed by nuclear testing and to build the necessary momentum to ensure there are no more tests.

The United Nations has tried to play a role in bringing countries together to join efforts towards a world free from nuclear weapons.

The journey has been slow, and often frustrating. But with collective effort and a willingness to compromise, we have reached many important milestones, including the recent adoption of the Treaty on the Prohibition of Nuclear Weapons. It is my hope that this treaty will reinvigorate efforts to bring about a world free of nuclear weapons in different ways, including through an early entry into force of CTBT.

Every milestone we have passed on our journey has been the result of a collective effort of the Member States, civil society, and the general public.

Today's event also coincides with the closure of the Semipalatinsk nuclear test site. The closure of the site of more than 456 tests was testament to what Kazakhstan achieved through this kind of collective effort. In February 1989, responding to the call of the Kazak poet Olzhas Suleimenov, thousands gathered in Almaty to start a movement against nuclear testing. This resulted in a petition signed by two million people asking the government to close Semipalatinsk. In culmination of these efforts, President Nazarbayev signed the decree to close the site on 29 August 1991.

Twenty-six years later, it is beyond time that we bring the CTBT into force, thereby making the legally binding prohibition on nuclear explosive tests a permanent reality. I call upon all of you in this room, as well as others commemorating the International Day around the world, to once again channel your efforts towards this end—and to completing our journey to this critical milestone for a world free of nuclear weapons.

Thank you.

--*--