



Statement by
The Hon Alexander Downer MP
Minister for Foreign Affairs
Conference President
At the
Conference on Facilitating Entry into Force of the
Comprehensive Nuclear-Test Ban Treaty

New York, 21 September 2005
(Check Against Delivery)

Secretary General, Excellencies, Delegates

Observers and friends from international organisations and NGOs

Ladies and Gentlemen

I am pleased and honoured to be assuming the Presidency of this Conference on Facilitating the Entry into Force of the Comprehensive Nuclear-Test-Ban Treaty and as Australia takes on the role of Article XIV coordinating state.

Taking on this task is a further sign of Australia's unwavering support for the Treaty and its entry into force.

I thank the UN Secretary General, Mr Kofi Annan, for his statement and for his good wishes for the success of the Conference.

My thanks also to previous Article XIV Coordinators...

...and to Ambassador Ramaker of the Netherlands who, working with Finland, has done much towards achieving entry into force of the Treaty.

Australia looks forward to working closely with him and to building on the good work of the former Coordinators.

I would also like to welcome and thank Ambassador Tibor Toth, Executive Secretary of the Preparatory Commission, and his staff for their work in preparing for this Conference.

Ladies and gentlemen

Finding ways to address disarmament and proliferation threats is a matter of enormous importance and focus for me as Foreign Minister.

This is all the more so because I know that these are dilemmas and challenges which, if there is international will and cooperation, we can readily make progress on.

Like many others, I was deeply disappointed at the failure of the UN Summit to achieve any outcome on disarmament and non-proliferation.

As I said in my statement to the General Assembly earlier today, this is *an extraordinarily poor outcome given a contemporary global security environment in which proliferation threats are so clearly evident*".

Our priority now must be to put past failures behind and take all the opportunities ahead to strengthen the multilateral non-proliferation regimes.

This conference and the period ahead are one such opportunity.

And Australia, as a strong supporter of the CTBT, is determined to take the process forward...

...much as we did when, in an effort to overcome a deadlock nine years ago, we took the Treaty directly on to the floor of the General Assembly, where it was adopted by an overwhelming majority.

This was one of my earliest experiences as Foreign Minister of Australia and one that I am very proud of.

Australia's strong and consistent support for the CTBT is based on the practical view that a complete and effective ban on nuclear testing will constrain the development of nuclear weapons...

... and thus will make a significant and unique contribution to nuclear disarmament and non proliferation.

The proliferation danger is now even more acute, given the known interest of terrorists in acquiring weapons of mass destruction.

Ladies and gentlemen, Saturday 24th of September will mark exactly nine years since the Treaty was opened for signature.

In that time, great progress has been made. 176 State signatories and 125 ratifiers is a clear demonstration of near universal support for the CTBT.

But the simple fact remains that we have not yet reached our goal.

Let me be clear — we welcome the continuing voluntary moratorium on weapons testing, but this cannot be a substitute for entry into force of the permanent and legally binding Treaty.

The single purpose of this conference is to promote the entry into force of the treaty.

This means that the 44 countries specifically listed in the Treaty must sign and ratify the Treaty to trigger entry into force.

33 of those countries, including Australia, have done so.

But 11 countries, some of whom are attending this conference, have not.

We have over the years heard many reasons as to why this is so. The time for excuses is past.

It is time for them to act.

Ladies and gentlemen, ahead of entry into force, we have been greatly encouraged by the work of the CTBTO Preparatory Commission to establish its verification regime, in particular the International Monitoring System.

This sophisticated global system lies at the heart of the Treaty's verification regime.

When completed, the IMS will consist of 321 monitoring stations and 16 radionuclide laboratories feeding an international data centre in Vienna.

This, along with measures such as the capability to conduct an On Site Inspection will give the CTBT a powerful verification capacity.

There will be nowhere to hide.

And in the aftermath of the tragic and devastating tsunami of 26 December 2004, we recognise that in addition to its essential function, the CTBT verification system has the potential to bring benefits for disaster alert warning.

It is essential that this momentum in creating the verification regime continues and I call on States to maintain strong practical and political support for this work.

Australia, for its part, is pleased to be an active contributor, and will host 21 monitoring facilities — the third largest number of any State.

In conclusion, as President of the Article XIV Conference, the message I want to deliver today is simple.

The entry into force of the Treaty is a task not yet completed...

...and in the current global security environment we, the ratifiers, must redouble our efforts to convince and, if necessary, assist all countries which have so far failed to sign and ratify the Treaty to do so without further excuse or delay.

Those who have not ratified must recognise the near universal commitment that exists for the Treaty.

A draft declaration and list of measures to promote the entry into force of the Treaty will be endorsed on Friday, providing ratifiers with a plan of action for the next two years.

I commend this document to you and trust that it can be adopted unanimously.

I strongly urge those who stand outside the Treaty to reconsider.

They should be in no doubt that the CTBT will enhance their own, and international, security.

Entry into force of this Treaty will be a decisive contribution to world peace and stability for generations to come.