



**STATEMENT BY MS CATHERINE COLONNA,
MINISTER DELEGATE FOR EUROPEAN AFFAIRS,
TO THE CONFERENCE ON FACILITATING THE ENTRY INTO FORCE
OF THE COMPREHENSIVE NUCLEAR-TEST-BAN TREATY**

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Madam President,

Let me begin by congratulating Mr. Downer, the Australian Minister of Foreign Affairs for his election as President of the Conference and by assuring you of my delegation's full support. France associates itself completely with the declaration made by the UK Presidency on behalf of the European Union and the acceding and associate countries.

Madam President,

The improvement in the conditions of international security in the years following the end of the Cold War made it possible for us to conclude forty years of negotiations in 1996 and to open for signing a Treaty banning all nuclear weapon test explosions.

This major success achieved by the multilateral arms control and non-proliferation process was the application of decisions finalised by the international community at the Nuclear Non-Proliferation Treaty (NPT) Review and Extension Conference in 1995. It was intended above all to mark the end of the nuclear arms race in the world.

Madam President,

Almost a decade after the conclusion of the Comprehensive Nuclear-Test-Ban Treaty (CTBT), we are forced to observe that the parameters of international security have changed. The threat of the proliferation of weapons of mass destruction and their means of delivery, and the proliferation of nuclear weapons in particular, has become more sharply defined; it is now present in several locations around the world. This threat is made even more complex by the development of clandestine proliferation networks, and by the ever-present danger that links may come to be formed between the latter and terrorist groups.

France is convinced that in this new context the Treaty continues to be fully relevant. Indeed, its credibility has been affirmed since 1996, in particular through the work done by the Preparatory Commission for the Comprehensive Nuclear-Test-Ban Treaty Organisation (CTBTO).

Recognising that the cessation of all nuclear weapon test explosions will put an end to the appearance of new arms stockpiles and new types of weapons, the CTBT has become one of the

fundamental components of strategic stability. It also preserves the right and the duty of nuclear weapon states to guarantee the safety and reliability of their nuclear arms.

Several States that have not ratified the Treaty have announced moratoria and since 1998 not a single nuclear test has occurred in the world. We know however that this situation is precarious. We must continue to work to ensure that the entry into force of the CTBT, in conjunction with a determined non-proliferation policy, will provide us with the assurance that this halt to nuclear tests is fully definitive.

Madam President,

The last French nuclear test took place in January 1996. In September of the same year, my country signed the Comprehensive Nuclear-Test-Ban Treaty, which it ratified, along with the United Kingdom, in April 1998.

This decision has had implications beyond the effective end to such tests: indeed, we wished to go further, deciding to close down and dismantle our Pacific Ocean test site. My country is alone among the nuclear powers to have made such a gesture. Today, France possesses no facilities allowing it to carry out nuclear test explosions.

The broad scope of our decisions, which have been accompanied by measures for extensive reductions in our weapons stockpile, and by the shutting down of the production of fissile materials for nuclear weapons at Pierrelatte and Marcoule, encourages us to approach the debate on nuclear disarmament in a serious and rigorous spirit. I remind you that the only commitments given by France in this field are those contained in Article VI of the Nuclear Non-Proliferation Treaty. We regret that the draft declaration of this Conference does not reflect this fact appropriately.

Madam President,

Nine years after it was opened for signing, the Treaty has still not come into force. I do however note that the number of States Signatories and the number of countries that have ratified the Treaty have risen constantly over recent years, allowing the CTBT to approach its goal of universality. In this respect, I wish to commend the decisions taken a few days before this conference by three members of La Francophonie: Lebanon, who signed the treaty, and Madagascar and Vanuatu, who ratified it. This is a particularly encouraging sign both for the rati-

fying States and for those who, in the CTBTO Preparatory Commission and in our national governments, are working to ensure its implementation.

The work done since 1996 by the Provisional Technical Secretariat of the Preparatory Commission is outstanding. I should like at this juncture to stress the dedication of its staff, to express our thanks to Ambassador Wolfgang Hoffmann for his unreserved commitment to serving the Organisation, and to express our warm encouragement to its new Executive Secretary, Ambassador Tibor Toth.

Thanks to the efforts made since 1996, a universal, effective and dissuasive verification regime has gradually been put in place, which will strengthen our capacity to prevent the proliferation of nuclear weapons.

The International Monitoring System of nuclear tests is among its most remarkable aspects, despite the fact that there is currently all too little awareness of it. The deployment of this system, whose stations are now spread around the entire globe, including its remotest regions, is an example of successful international cooperation which does honour to the States Signatories.

Madam President,

The principal task of the CTBT verification regime must remain the detection around the world, and if need be the confirmation, of nuclear tests. France does nevertheless support the parallel development of civilian and scientific applications of the technologies it makes use of.

The tragic consequences of the tsunami that devastated South-East Asia on 26 December 2004 must for example encourage us to examine the possible contribution of the CTBT network to natural disasters warning systems. Last March, the CTBTO Preparatory Commission decided to conduct testing for this purpose, while ensuring that it does not stray, on a constant budget basis, from its priority objectives; I welcome this.

Since the birth of the Organisation, my country has regularly made its expertise and scientific resources available to it in all the areas of technology required for the establishment and implementation of the future verification regime.

In particular, France is host to sixteen stations and a laboratory of the International Monitor-

ing System on its territory. It provides experts and equipment for on-site inspections and provides training for the benefit of States Signatories. In this way, France makes a practical contribution to the implementation of the verification regime.

Madam President,

France has never ceased in its bilateral dialogues and in multilateral fora to call on those States which have not yet signed or ratified the Treaty to add their efforts to those of the rest of the international community. France repeats that call here today.

That call, which is also made by the European Union, is directed specifically at those countries whose ratification is necessary under the terms of Article XIV of the Treaty for its entry into force.

In a world marked by proliferation crises that foster regional instability and endanger strategic balances, the Comprehensive Nuclear-Test-Ban Treaty is in our view a major contribution to the organisation of our collective security.

Thank you./.