STATEMENT OF THE G-77 AND CHINA DURING THE CTBTO-WORKING GROUP B 23RD SESSION (FIRST SESSION), 24 MAY - 4 JUNE 2004 DELIVERED BY H.E. AMBASSADOR TAOUS FEROUKHI, PR OF ALGERIA

Mr. Chairman,

On behalf of State Signatories of the Group of 77 and China, I am pleased to see you chairing the first part of the 23rd session of Working Group B. I believe that under your chairmanship and guidance, discussions will lead to fruitful conclusions and I assure you of our full cooperation.

The Group wishes to thank the Executive Secretary, Ambassador Wolfgang Hoffmann, for his comprehensive written and oral reports and we would like to express our appreciation for the diligent efforts of the whole PTS in implementing the mandates of the Preparatory Commission for the establishment of the verification system at the Entry Into Force of the Treaty.

The Group would like to express its views on the following issues, which will be considered during the present meeting of Working Group B.

1. In considering the guidance to the PTS for preparing programme and budget for 2005, the Group takes note with appreciation the efforts of the PTS in implementation of a realistic approach towards the program and budget for 2005 and trying to keep the 2005 at the same level of 2004 with no programmatic increases over the 2003 funding level, or in PTS staffing levels by sticking to the two assumptions of last year namely no programatic or staff increase and accommodation of proposed changes by prioritization and reallocating the resources.

We believe that funding for the Capital Investment Fund (CIF) should further decrease as a lot of progress has already been made in the IMS Major Programme, and the majority of stations have been site surveyed, installed and are being certified and we are at the stage of organizational transition of the PTS and its departure from station installation orientation.

The Group takes note of the decision of Working Group B in its 21st session, as stipulated in para 10-12 of CTBT/WGB-21/1, on the proposed system-wide performance test. We are of the view that this test should be carried out when the majority of the IMS stations, especially certified stations, are in place and connected to the IDC and after enough preparation for this wide scale test had been made by the PTS. The only purpose of this test is to evaluate the performance of the whole system. We take note of the fact that Working Group B in its latest meeting (para 12 of CTBT/WGB-21/1) agreed "the schedule for the phases of wide scale testing as well as their duration should be flexible". However, we believe that the test should be done in a very limited timeframe, taking into account the sole purpose of testing the system. In the light of this position we believe that option one of level of operation as reflected in document CTBT/PTS/INF.664 could be a basis for further consideration subject to reducing the monitoring level by PTS staff to normal working hours. The Group is of the view that the cost of this exercise should be absorbed within the existing resources and there should be no extra budgetary provision to this item. We also believe that Post Certification Costs should be reduced taking into account already approved guidelines in the WGB (CTBT/WGB-19/1 para 15) and WGA (CTBT/WGA-22/1 para 15).

According to the approved guidelines in the 19th session of the Prep Com, there is no verification directly related activities for the IDC before the EIF of the treaty, so the Group is of the opinion that there is no urgent need for replacing all IDC hardware in 2004 and it can be done in a longer term as a progressive process, so that the budget for acquisition of hardware could decrease.

The Group believes that all the elements of the verification regime of the treaty including IMS, IDC and OSI, are important and in this regard attaches great importance to a balanced approach in establishing all those elements. Due to the complexity of the OSI issues, active participation of all members is important so we urge all the States Signatories to actively participate in the OSI discussion. From our point of view elaboration of the draft OSI Operational Manual, based on the Initial Draft Rolling Text (IDRT), remains a priority task for all members of the Commission. We consider that enough resources should be allocated to the OSI major program in order to help the necessary preparations for the establishment of the OSI regime at Entry Into Force of the Treaty. This should include testing and evaluation of all OSI equipments, establishing supporting infrastructures and preparing a comprehensive programme for training of the inspectors and inspection assistants after the EIF of the treaty.

The Group asks for the continuation and increased contribution of the PTS, based on the experience of workshops, tabletop exercises and field experiments, to the discussion of draft OSI Operational Manual.

Mr. Chairman,

2. From the beginning of the initiative of WGB for the review of the organizational structure of the PTS, Member of the Group raised some question about the need of such a review since the present structure is serving the State Signatories well. We are unhappy that the initial appointment and nomination of the team were not in close consultation with the State Signatories although we expected that and its clear in the joint paper. However in the light of very recent development and consultations, we are ready to work with other State Signatories on this issue subject to some conditions.

From our point of view the tasks of the PTS include two main pillars namely political issues and technical issues. In any attempt to restructuring, the balance between political and technical tasks of the PTS should be maintained. Therefore we believe that in restructuring the PTS, unnecessary changes should not be made. The purposes of the restructuring should be only to increase coordination, to enhance efficiency and possible cost efficiency in the PTS. The experiences of the PTS should be taken into account. Should an external evaluation team be appointed to propose some recommendations on restructuring for consideration by the Prep-Com, then the Group attaches utmost importance to the its fair geographical representation within the team. The Group is of the view that the selection of the members of the external team should be identified by State Signatories rather than by the Chairpersons of the Working Group A and Working Group B. However, we should reiterate that this issue is very sensitive and that recommendations can be implemented only after thorough reviewing by the State Signatories and decisions should be taken in the Working Groups and the Prep-Com. We believe that the whole process of restructuring should be fully transparent and in close consultation with the State Signatories. The members of the team should elect the chairperson of the Team and all the appointed members have equal status to be nominated as a chair. With regard to the funding of the team, it is our view that this exercise should be funded within available resources.

3. The Group attaches great importance to the National Data Centers (NDCs). We believe that the PTS should play a more active role in promoting the NDCs of developing countries especially in providing hardware and software. More training courses for NDCs are required to provide the necessary capabilities for the States Signatories, especially for developing countries, to take greater advantage of the data, products and services of the IDC. In this regard we welcome the initiative of the PTS to convene 3 regional training courses on the NDC data analysis for regional groups of the G-77. The Group encourages wider participation of the developing countries in NDC and IDC training courses.
Thank you Mr. Chairman.