



STATEMENT BY THE GROUP OF 77 AND CHINA DURING THE THIRTY-NINETH SESSION OF WORKING GROUP A, 23-25 MAY 2011, DELIVERED BY H.E. AMBASSADOR ALI ASGHAR SOLTANIEH, PERMANENT REPRESENTATIVE OF THE IR OF IRAN

Mr. Chairman,

1. The Group of 77 and China would like to express its deepest condolences and solidarity to the people and Government of Japan following the devastating earthquake and tsunami that occurred on the 11th of March. It also wishes to express to the Executive Secretary and to the Provisional Technical Secretariat its appreciation for the detailed and comprehensive technical briefings offered to Permanent Missions in Vienna. The Group will continue to follow with great attention the information provided by the PTS on this crucial issue.

2. I would also like to express the satisfaction of the Group in seeing you, Ambassador Antonio José Vallim Guerreiro, chairing Working Group A at its Thirty-Ninth Session. The Group takes this opportunity to renew its assurances of its full support and cooperation, and trusts that you will deftly steer the discussions that are to take place in the coming days.

3. The Group also thanks the Executive Secretary, Ambassador Tibor Tóth, for his opening remarks, and expresses its appreciation to him and to the PTS for the three written reports issued prior to the commencement of the current session: the report on verification-related activities for the period July-December 2010 (CTBT/ES/2010/4, dated 25 January 2011); the Annual Report for 2010 (CTBT/ES/2010/5, dated 1 March 2011); and the report on non-verification-related activities for the period January-March 2011 (CTBT/ES/2011/1, dated 9 May 2011).

Mr Chairman,

4. On the review of the recommendations of the Advisory Group under agenda item 3, the Group takes note of its report on the deliberations conducted by it in Parts I and II of its Thirty-Sixth Session (CTBT/AG-36/INF.2, dated 20 April 2011; and CTBT/AG-36/INF.3, dated 12 May 2011, respectively), and thanks the Advisory Group for the work conducted on that occasion.

5. On agenda item 4, the Accounts of the Preparatory Commission for 2010 (CTBT/PTS/INF.1122, dated 7 April 2011), the Group takes note of the unqualified opinion of the External Auditor on the Commission's financial statements for the year ended 31st December 2010.

6. The Group takes note of the recommendations issued by the External Auditor, in conjunction with the additional clarification provided to the Advisory Group at its Thirty-Sixth Session, and, this report being the latest to be presented by the current External Auditor, takes this opportunity to express its appreciation and gratitude for the services rendered by him to the Commission.

7. Regarding recommendation 4 made by the External Auditor, that the PTS should implement the means necessary to obtain the reimbursement of arrears of taxes by Member States, the Group requests the PTS to explore feasible alternatives with the concerned States Signatories, on a voluntary basis, bearing in mind the fact that, insofar as the Treaty has not entered into force, the conclusion of agreements in accordance with paragraph 56 of Article II, is not mandatory.

8. Also in the context of the annual audit conducted by the External Auditor of the financial statements of the Commission, the Group takes note of the "Letter of Comfort" of the External Auditor to the Secretary of

the Management Board of the Provident Fund dated 15 April 2011 (CTBT/PTS/INF.1125, dated 28 April 2011), as well as of the fact that such document was considered by the Advisory Group at Part II of its Thirty-Sixth Session.

9. The Group also takes note of the Programme and Budget Performance Report prepared by the PTS for the financial year 2010 (CTBT/PTS/INF.1120), and of the comments and recommendations made by the Advisory Group in Part II of its Thirty-Sixth Session (CTBT/AG-36/INF.3, dated 12 May 2011).

10. The Group takes note of the initial draft of the 2012 Programme and Budget Proposals (CTBT/PTS/INF.1123, dated 28 April 2011), and commends the PTS for its efforts in keeping the 2012 Regular Budget slightly below zero real growth. The Group supports the recommendation made by Working Group B at its 36th session, to hold the next Integrated Field Exercise (IFE) and is ready to find a suitable mechanism to finance it. Nonetheless, it is concerned with the draft decision contained in Appendix II of the said document, requesting that the Preparatory Commission approve supplementary appropriations for the 2012 Programme and Budget in the amount of 11,300,000 US dollars, to finance the 2014 IFE.

11. While the Group believes that the PTS should be provided with the necessary financial resources it needs to carry out its mandate, it is also of the view that the establishment of the verification regime of the CTBTO should be conducted in a practical, prudent and feasible manner. It therefore earnestly encourages the PTS to continue to explore further reductions, savings and efficiency measures.

12. The Group also notes with satisfaction that attaining a proper balance between all elements of the verification regime and, in this context, granting overall priority to further developing the OSI component, have been identified by the PTS as key priorities in the 2012 Programme and Budget Proposals. We hope that this will be a true and significant stepping stone in, on the one hand, redressing the imbalance among the three Major Programmes of the verification system, and, on the other, in countering for what it believes has been an excessive focus on station-building, deemed by the Group as detrimental to the need of duly safeguarding existing investments.

13. Regarding item 7 of the agenda, the Group takes note of the Note by the Executive Secretary on the Personnel Situation of the Secretariat as of 31 March 2011 (CTBT/PTS/INF.1124, dated 9 May 2011), and, as expressed in its statement to the sixteenth Joint Meeting of Working Groups A and B when commenting on the statistical information contained in the previous report (CTBT/PTS/INF.1112, dated 10 February 2011), is concerned over the imbalance of the staff serving at the PTS both in terms of its geographical distribution as well as of gender at the professional posts.

14. The Group takes note of the Note by the Executive Secretary on Equal Employment Opportunities/Women in the PTS (CTBT/PTS/INF.1126, dated 18 May 2011). At its Fifth Session, the Preparatory Commission requested that the Executive Secretary pursue a target of equal gender representation at all levels of the Secretariat, paying due regard to the importance of recruiting the staff on as wide a geographical basis as possible (CTBT/PC-5/1/Add.7, dated 15 April 1998).

15. The Group believes that the pursuit of a balanced geographical distribution and of equal gender representation is not incompatible with, or detrimental to, the quest for professional expertise, experience, efficiency, competence and integrity, as mandated in this decision, and urges the PTS to take all those factors into account in any recruitment exercise. The Group therefore requests the Secretariat to persevere in its efforts to change the current situation, and hopes that the annual reports of the Executive Secretary on the implementation of this decision will start to depict a more balanced configuration in terms of both gender and geographical distribution in the near future.

16. The Group also takes note of the Summary of Internal Audit activities in 2010 under agenda item 8 (CTBT/PTS/INF.1121, dated 19 April 2011), and appreciates its contribution to the aim of enhancing transparency; considers it a useful summary of the activities, resources and findings of the Internal Audit in

the reporting period; and encourages the PTS to work towards increasing the rate of implementation of the recommendations contained therein.

Mr. Chairman,

17. With these remarks, the Group of 77 and China reiterates its unwavering pledge to a work that is both constructive and committed. May these deliberations be fruitful and result in substantive progress on the important issues coming to our consideration during the current session.

I thank you, Mr. Chairman.