



STATEMENT BY THE GROUP OF 77 AND CHINA DURING THE FORTY-SEVENTH SESSION OF WORKING GROUP A, 26-28 MAY 2015, DELIVERED BY H.E. AMBASSADOR ARMIN ANDEREYA, PERMANENT REPRESENTATIVE OF CHILE

Mr Chairman,

1. The Group of 77 and China is pleased to see you, Ambassador Azeez, chairing the Forty-Seventh Session of Working Group A. The Group takes this opportunity to renew to you the assurances of its full support and cooperation.
2. The Group thanks the Executive Secretary, Mr Lassina Zerbo, for his opening remarks and takes note of his reports on the verification and non-verification-related activities of the Provisional Technical Secretariat (PTS) of the Preparatory Commission, as well as of the Annual Report 2014.
3. The Group also thanks the PTS for preparing the documents for this session, and would like to reaffirm the importance for States Signatories to receive all the documents well in advance of the sessions of the Preparatory Commission and its subsidiary bodies. On a related note, the Group regrets the late issuance of the 2014 Human Resources Management Report and, considering the importance of the issue, requests that agenda item 9 be included on the agenda of the Forty-Eighth Session of WGA, in order to carry on the discussion on this issue. Mr Chairman,
4. On agenda item 3 pertaining to the review of Advisory Group recommendations contained in CTBT/AG-44/1, the Group of 77 and China thanks the Advisory Group and its Chairman, Mr Michael Weston, for their able and dedicated work, and takes note of the report of the Advisory Group at its Forty-Fourth Session
5. On agenda item 4, the Group of 77 and China takes note of the External Auditor's report and its recommendations aimed at strengthening the implementation of Major Programmes in the Preparatory Commission. The Group welcomes with appreciation the unqualified audit opinion of the External Auditor.
6. The Group also takes note of the initial draft of the 2016 Programme and Budget proposals contained in document CTBT/PTS/INF.1320. We thank the PTS for the briefing to States Signatories held on 18 May. In this regard the Group would like to make the following preliminary comments:
7. The Group notes that the overall budget for 2016 was proposed at a level slightly below zero real growth compared to 2015, and takes note with appreciation of the savings made by the PTS. The Group would appreciate receiving further information on the two step approach, which is being applied by the PTS. In this regard, and since allocations to capacity building activities are less than 10% of the current Regular Budget, the Group is of the view that any proposed savings should not harm those activities.
8. The Group of 77 and China continues to uphold the importance of capacity building and training and of the various activities carried out by the PTS in this field aimed at increasing the capabilities of States Signatories to participate in the verification regime. Therefore the Group reiterates its position that capacity building activities should be funded in a sufficient manner through the Regular Budget.
9. The Group also notes that the 2016 proposal at 2016 prices entails a price adjustment of 1.5%, of which 1.2% pertains to adjustments, which exclude costs with an impact on post-certification activities. In this regard, the Group requests the PTS to elaborate further on the methodology used to calculate the price adjustment.

10. The Group thanks Ambassador Azeez for the informal consultations on budgetary issues held on 22 May and looks forward to continue substantive discussions on the Programme and Budget proposals, as well as further clarifications by the PTS on the Major Programmes, as needed.

Mr Chairman,

11. The Group thanks the PTS for preparing initial draft 2016-2017 Programme and Budget proposals, as contained in document CTBT/PTS/INF.1321, and the additional information provided on this issue during the informal briefing held on 18 May. The Group appreciates the efforts made by the PTS in preparing two Programme and Budget proposals in parallel. The Group also welcomes the recommendations made by the Advisory Group on the introduction of biennial budgeting as well as the proposed amendments to the Financial Regulations and Rules in this regard. As previously stated, the Group sees merit in the notion of introducing biennial budgeting as a means to streamline the budgetary process and supports its implementation in the 2016-2017 budgetary cycle. The Group also stresses the importance that this should be done in a way which would not reduce information flow, transparency or accountability to the States Signatories or restrict their control over, or flexibility in, governing the activities of the PTS.

12. The Group welcomes the proposals made by the Advisory Group to amend the Financial Regulations and Rules in order to introduce multiyear funding in the PTS, inter alia the possibility to establish multiyear funds for specific projects that require long term funding upon approval by the Preparatory Commission. The Group thanks the PTS for the informative briefing held on 18 May on this issue. In this regard the Group takes note of the fact that the multiyear funding mechanism will not require additional funding.

13. With regard to the recruitment of staff, the Group, while taking note of the difficulties faced by the PTS, reiterates its principled position that striving for equitable geographic distribution as well as gender balance in the overall composition of the PTS are of utmost importance. We call on the PTS to work proactively in the pursuit of these two objectives when recruiting staff to serve at the PTS. Far from being incompatible with professional competence and expertise, gender balance and geographical distribution are important considerations that need to be factored in during recruitment, in particular at the time of appointing staff in the Professional categories.

14. Lastly, Mr Chairman, the Group of 77 and China takes note of the Summary of Internal Audit Activities in 2014 contained in document CTBT/PTS/INF.1319, and is pleased to note that the document reports an increased rate of implementation of the internal auditor's recommendations. The Group calls for more detailed information on individual audits to be presented in future annual summaries.

Thank you Mr Chairman.