



STATEMENT BY THE GROUP OF 77 AND CHINA DURING THE FORTY-NINTH SESSION OF WORKING GROUP A, 30 MAY - 1 JUNE 2016, DELIVERED BY H.E. AMBASSADOR SIMON MADJUMO MARUTA, PERMANENT REPRESENTATIVE OF NAMIBIA

Mr. Chairman,

1. The Group of 77 and China welcomes you, Ambassador OTHMAN, as the Chair of the Forty-Ninth Session of Working Group A, and would like to offer the assurances of its full support to your leadership in our work.
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 of the Commission, as well as the Annual Report 2015 (CTBT/ES/2015/5).
3. The Group would also like to thank you, Mr. Chairman, for the recent informal briefings convened on topics of relevance falling under the purview of Working Group A, in particular the 2017 Budget Update Proposals. We take this opportunity to support your initiative to convene further briefings on other topics, as needed, in order to ensure the continued fluent communication between the PTS and States Signatories which is conducive to fruitful discussions among States Signatories on the issues of relevance to the work of the Commission and its subsidiary bodies in an open, transparent and inclusive manner.
4. The Group also thanks the PTS for preparing the documents for this session, and would like to reaffirm again the importance for States Signatories to receive all the documents well in advance of the sessions of the Preparatory Commission and its subsidiary bodies, no later than four weeks before the corresponding sessions, as well as in time for the meetings of the Advisory Group. On a related note, the Group regrets the late issuance of the report of internal audit activities undertaken in 2015 issued as CTBT/PTS/INF.1359 and requests that agenda item 11 be included on the agenda of the 50th session of WGA, if necessary to complete discussion on this issue. The Group continues to see merit in the consistent practice of submitting the Internal Audit Report to the Advisory Group prior to its consideration by the WGA and notes the assurances by the Secretariat that this arrangement will continue in future sessions.
5. On agenda item 3 on the review of Advisory Group (AG) recommendations, the Group would like to thank its Chairman, Mr. Michael Weston, for his presentation, and to highlight its support for the added value that the Advisory Group brings –as a Group of Experts open to appointment by all interested State Signatories- in ensuring an expedient and efficient decision-making process by the Preparatory Commission. The Group of 77 and China would like to reiterate its appreciation for the work performed by the Advisory Group at its Forty-Sixth session and takes note of its report. In this regard, the Group would like to make the following comments:
 - 5.1. Regarding the update budget proposal for 2017, the Group thanks the PTS for its presentation and the additional explanations offered at the recent informal briefing, including the explanation of the price adjustment mechanism in place. The Group supports the continuation of reductions in expenses in travel and other general fund budget areas in the 2017 budget, which will result in savings of US\$3 million for the 2016-2017 biennium, and encourages further savings whenever appropriate. The Group is encouraged by the information that the PTS will be able to implement the 2017 Budget Update whether the decision is made in the June or the November meetings of the Preparatory Commission, which allows Delegations to have a full discussion and consideration on this important document.
 - 5.2. Regarding the 2015 Human Resources Management Report, the Group, while recognizing 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 is of utmost importance. In this regard, we note the slight improvement in the share of professionals from countries in our Group in the total of professionals for 2015, as well as a reduction in vacancies and an increase in applications received, which have almost doubled. Notwithstanding this positive trend, the Group believes that a 32.18% share regarding geographic distribution leaves room for improvement, taking into account the Group includes almost 2/3 of the Signatory States, and notes the progress is even less regarding gender balance at all levels. The Group takes note of the restructuring of the Human Resources Section and the creation of a specific Recruitment function, and is encouraged by the renewed impulse given by the Executive Secretary to addressing the Human Resources issues that have been outstanding these past years. The Group expects these changes will translate into a leap forward in terms of vacancy reduction hand in hand with equitable geographical distribution and improvements in gender balance in all the professional levels of the PTS.

5.3. On the Summary of Internal Audit Activities in 2015, the Group notes that as of 31 December 2015, the implementation rate of internal auditor's recommendations was 31%, while noting that the bulk of those recommendations had been pending for less than a year. The Group calls for more detailed information on individual audits to be presented in future annual summaries, as well as further clarity in the classification of recommendations both pending and being implemented. The Group believes that WGA discussions would benefit also from presentations of the Internal Auditor, as it is the practice in other International Organizations.

6. On Agenda item 4, the Group of 77 and China takes note of the External Auditor's report and its recommendations. The Group welcomes with appreciation the unqualified audit opinion of the External Auditor.

7. Finally, Mr. Chairman, the Group would like to take this opportunity to emphasize the importance it attaches to capacity building and training -and to the various activities carried out by the PTS in this field- as a means of improving the ability of States Signatories to fully participate in the Treaty's verification regime, and would like to note, in particular, recent activities hosted by members of the Group, including China, Sri Lanka and South Africa. The Group reiterates its position that capacity-building activities should be funded in a sufficient manner through the Regular Budget.

Thank you, Mr. Chairman.