



STATEMENT BY THE GROUP OF 77 AND CHINA AT THE FIFTY-FIRST SESSION OF THE PREPARATORY COMMISSION, DELIVERED BY MS. VERONICA GOMEZ, CHARGÉ D'AFFAIRES A.I., PERMANENT MISSION OF ECUADOR, 5-7 NOVEMBER 2018

Vienna, 5 November 2018

Madam Chairperson,

1. I have the honor to speak on behalf of the Group of 77 and China. Allow me to express our heartfelt condolences to the Government of Austria and the colleagues of the Permanent Mission for the loss of Ambassador Stix-Hackl. Her dedication will be fondly remembered.
2. The Group takes this opportunity to convey its appreciation to you, Ambassador Maria Assunta Accili Sabbatini, and its recognition of your able leadership throughout the deliberations of this body in 2018. The Group continues to assure you of its full cooperation and support in reaching a productive session.
3. The Group thanks the Executive Secretary, Dr Lassina Zerbo, for his opening remarks and takes note of his reports on the verification and non-verification related activities. The Group appreciates the Provisional Technical Secretariat's (PTS) efforts in preparing documents and making them available for this session in a timely manner.

Madam Chairperson,

4. The Group welcomes the recent ratification of the CTBT by the Kingdom of Thailand, which brings the total number of ratifications to 167. The Group also welcomes the recent signature of the Treaty by Tuvalu, which brings the total number of signatures to 184. The Group believes that these developments represent a significant step towards the universalization of the Treaty. The Group stresses the need of an early Entry into Force of the CTBT, with the ultimate goal of eliminating nuclear weapons and to general and complete disarmament under strict and effective international control.
5. The Group welcomes the annual commemoration, on 29 August, of the International Day Against Nuclear Tests, as unanimously declared by the UNGA in December 2009. The Group also welcomes the United Nations Secretary General message on this occasion on the importance of the CTBT within the nuclear disarmament and non-proliferation regime and for international peace and security by constraining the development of nuclear weapons, and that every effort should be made to bring this essential treaty into force.
6. The Group takes note of the report of Working Group A (WGA) at its Fifty-Forth Session and its recommendations. The Group's statement at the recent October session of Working Group A has clearly underlined its position on various substantive issues contained in the said report.
7. The Group takes note of the report of Working Group B (WGB) at its Fifty-First Session, and its recommendations. The Group notes with appreciation progress made by the PTS in implementing 2018-2019 verification related programme. The Group strongly emphasizes 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, in particular developing countries, to fully participate in the Treaty's verification regime. To this end, the Group commends the involvement of developing countries in hosting capacity building activities or events, namely, the African Infrasound Technology Workshop held in February 2018 in Tunisia, the Regional Introductory Course held in Argentina in April 2018, the 2nd African Seismological Commission held in April 2018 in Morocco, the NDC workshop held in May 2018 in

Algeria, the East Asia Regional NDC Development Workshop held in September 2018 in Mongolia and the OSI advanced course held in October 2018 in South Africa. In this context, the Group reiterates its position that capacity-building activities should be funded in a sufficient manner through the Regular Budget.

8. The Group expresses its support for the pilot project which facilitates the participation of experts from developing countries in the WGB sessions. The Group is convinced that such participation will contribute to capacity-building in our countries.

9. The Group would like to take this opportunity to highlight the importance of the work carried out by the Working Groups of the Commission, and the value of their deliberations and their outcomes to the work of the Commission. In this regard, the Group notes the Commission's practice of adopting the reports that were discussed and agreed by consensus during the sessions of the Working Groups.

Madam Chairperson,

10. The Group takes note of the report of the Advisory Group at its Fifty-First Session and its recommendations. The Group reiterates its appreciation to the efforts and expertise of the Advisory Group in providing observations, conclusions and recommendations to Working Group A and the PTS on issues related to the associated administrative, budgetary and financial matters.

11. In this context, recalling that the "Members of the Advisory Group shall be nominated by Member States and appointed by the Commission" (CTBT/PC/III/AG/I/1/Add.1), the Group believes that any potential discussion on the functioning of the Advisory Group should not be politicized and its outcome should not compromise the nature and the work of the Preparatory Commission and its subsidiary bodies, nor hamper the participation of States signatories, particularly developing countries, in the relevant bodies, with full respect to the sovereign right of States signatories to nominating their own candidates to the Advisory Group.

12. The Group takes note of the final 2019 Budget update proposals, as contained in document CTBT/PTS/INF.1441/Rev.1. and Corrigendum 1. The Group also takes note of the Draft Decisions on Budgetary and Financial Issues to be considered at this current session.

13. On Human Resources Management, the Group reaffirms its principles of equitable geographical distribution and gender balance among the staff of the Organization, particularly, at the Professional and higher levels, as important considerations in the recruitment process. The Group takes note of the efforts made to improve the representation of the staff, including the achievement of gender balance at the director level of the PTS, and requests the PTS to make further efforts to achieve equitable geographical distribution and gender balance among the staff of the organization at all levels of responsibility.

14. The Group would like to express its support to the extension of the term of Mr Patrick Grenard as Director of the Administration Division, and that of Ms Margarete Barbosa Sobral as Director of Human Resources Services. The Group also supports the acceptance and the extension of term of the candidates presented to the Advisory Group.

15. Under the Agenda item 11 "Developing guidelines for holding extraordinary session of the Preparatory Commission", the Group is looking forward to further discussing these guidelines bearing in mind that according to the Rules of Procedure, it is upon the Commission to decide on the convening of sessions of the Commission and that the Vienna spirit and the principle of consensus should prevail in any decision-making process.

16. Finally, the Group looks forward to a constructive deliberation and timely conclusion of the work of this Session. Thank you, Madam Chairperson.

