



STATEMENT BY THE GROUP OF 77 AND CHINA DURING THE FIFTY-THIRD SESSION OF WORKING GROUP A, 11-13 JUNE 2018, DELIVERED BY H.E. AMBASSADOR CARLOS JÁTIVA, PERMANENT REPRESENTATIVE OF ECUADOR

Madam Chair,

1. The Group of 77 and China would like to thank you, Ambassador Maria Assunta Accili Sabbatini, for chairing this meeting, in the absence of a Chair of WGA and also assure you of its full cooperation and support. The Group is looking forward to the election of the new Chairperson and the two Vice Chairpersons of the WGA during the 50th session of the Preparatory Commission.

2. We would also like to thank Dr. Lassina Zerbo, the Executive Secretary for his opening remarks. The Group further expresses its appreciation to the Secretariat for the advance distribution of three reports of the Executive Secretary and would like to take note of these reports as follow:

2.1 Report of the Executive Secretary on the verification related activities for the period from July to December 2017;

2.2 Annual Report 2017;

2.3 Report of the Executive Secretary on non-verification related activities for the period January to March 2018.

Madam Chair,

3. On the review of the Advisory Group's recommendations as contained in document CTBT/AG-50/1, the Group appreciates the Advisory Group's efforts and expertise in providing necessary observations, conclusions and recommendations on issues related to the administrative, budgetary and financial matters. The Group takes note of the report of the Advisory Group at its 50th session.

4. On the financial statements of the Preparatory Commission, the Group 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. As this was the last audit by the Cour des Comptes de France, the Group would like to express its appreciation for the work done by the External Auditor during its tenure and to wish all the best for its successor, the State Audit Office of the Kingdom of Thailand.

5. The G-77 takes note of the Programme and Budget Performance Report for 2016-2017 (CTBT/PTS/INF.1450), as well as the high implementation rate for the General Fund, which has reached 96.9%.

6. The Group takes note of the initial draft 2019 Budget Update Proposals, as contained in document CTBT/PTS/INF.1441, and welcomes your continuous efforts in convening informal consultations. Following these discussions, the Group would like to make the following comments:

6.1 The Group notes that the proposed 2019 budget of USD 134.03 million which was slightly less than zero real growth, and requests the PTS to provide detailed clarification about the 2019 price adjustment and factors used in the calculation of its overall average of 1.7 percent. The Group further notes that 80.3 % of the budget was for verification related activities;

6.2 The Group appreciates the Additional savings and reprioritization of 4.1 million USD for 2019 by the PTS, but would like to reiterate the importance in ensuring any savings do not jeopardize the efforts by the PTS towards the effective strengthening of capacity-building and training activities, which aim 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. The Group requests the PTS to continue providing information, documents and organizing briefings on this subject during inter-sessional periods;

6.3 The Group strongly underlines the importance of promoting a balanced approach and appropriate allocation of resources among the three dimensions of the verification regime, namely the International Monitoring System, the International Data Centre and On-Site Inspection.

6.4 The Group appreciates receiving further information on the benefits gained by the PTS from the implementation of Multiyear Funds.

7. We take note of the 2017 Human Resources management Report and of the document entitled Equal Employment Opportunities –Women in The Provisional Technical Secretariat. In this regard, 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 encourages the PTS, under the leadership of the Director of Human Resources, to continue its effort to improve the representation of staff in accordance with the above principles in the Provisional Technical Secretariat (PTS).

8. On the Summary of Internal Audit activities in 2017, the Group takes note of the 46 new recommendations issued in 2017 and requests the PTS to fully implement those recommendations in a timely manner.

9. On the accession of the Preparatory Commission for the CTBTO to the United Nations Joint Staff Pension Fund, we take note of the recommendations of the Advisory Group on this issue.

10. Finally, the Group looks forward to a constructive deliberation and timely conclusion of the tasks of this Working Group.

Thank you Madam Chair.