



STATEMENT BY THE GROUP OF 77 AND CHINA DURING THE FIFTY-FOURTH SESSION OF WORKING GROUP A, 15-17 OCTOBER 2018, DELIVERED BY MS. VERONICA GOMEZ, CHARGE D'AFFAIRES A.I., PERMANENT MISSION OF ECUADOR

Mr. Chairman,

1. The Group of 77 and China would like to express its condolences to the people and government of Indonesia for the recent earthquake and tsunami, we also commend Indonesians for their strength and resilience.
2. At the outset, the Group avails itself of this opportunity to congratulate you, Ambassador Lotfi Bouchaara, on your election as Chairperson of the Working Group A and to assure you of its full cooperation and support.
3. The Group would also like to thank Dr. Lassina Zerbo for his opening remarks. The Group takes note of the Executive Secretary's report on non-verification related activities of the Provisional Technical Secretariat (PTS) from April to August 2018. The Group would also like to extend its appreciation to the PTS for the timely issuance of the documents.

Mr. Chairman,

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 and stresses the need of an early Entry into Force of the CTBT.
5. On the review of Advisory Group's recommendations as contained in document CTBT/AG-51/1, the G77 appreciates the Advisory Group's efforts and expertise in providing necessary observations and conclusions on issues related to the administrative, budgetary and financial matters. The Group takes note of the report at its 51st session and the recommendations contained therein.
6. The Group takes note of the final draft 2019 Budget Update Proposals, as contained in document CTBT/PTS/INF.1441/Rev.1. The Group would like to reiterate some of its earlier position and make the following comments:
 - 6.1 The Group notes that the proposed 2019 budget of USD 134.03 million was slightly less than zero real growth, taking into account a Price adjustment of 1.7%. The Group further notes that 80.3 % of the budget was allocated 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 of ensuring that 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 fully 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;
 - 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.

7. The Group takes note of the draft decision, contained in document CTBT/PTS/INF.1469/Rev.1, on the carry forward of the Capital Investment Fund (CIF) and Multiyear Funds unspent balances as of 31 December 2018. The Group takes also note of the 2018 General Fund Budget transfers within Major Programmes, within the limit of 15 per cent that had been approved by the Executive Secretary in June 2018.

8. On the accession of the Preparatory Commission for the CTBTO to the United Nations Joint Staff Pension Fund (UNJSPF), the Group takes note of the major implementation steps of the transition process and their respective target dates, presented by the PTS. The Group welcomes the favourable recommendation issued by the UNJSPF Board and looks forward to the decision to be taken, in December 2018, by the United Nations General Assembly at its seventy-third session. The Group further requests the PTS to continue implementing a well-defined strategy for a smooth transition to the UNJSPF, to take every possible measure to mitigate potential risks for the staff and the Commission. The Group requests the PTS to report regularly to States signatories on the process of accession of the PrepCom to the Pension Fund and its implications.

9. 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.

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

Thank you, Mr. Chairman.