



VIENNA CHAPTER

STATEMENT OF THE GROUP OF 77 AND CHINA DURING THE 10TH JOINT MEETING OF WORKING GROUPS A AND B OF THE PREPARATORY COMMISSION OF THE COMPREHENSIVE NUCLEAR-TEST-BAN TREATY ORGANIZATION 23rd FEBRUARY 2009, DELIVERED BY H.E. AMBASSADOR EUGENIO MARIA CURIA, PERMANENT REPRESENTATIVE OF ARGENTINA

Mr. Chairman,

At the outset, on behalf of the States Signatories members of the Group of 77 and China, I wish to thank you and Mr. Hein Haak, chairperson of Working Group B, for convening this joint meeting. The Group also thanks the Executive Secretary, Amb. Tibor Tóth, for the information presented in his oral remarks at this Joint Session.

As regards the first substantive agenda item of the present Joint Meeting, namely the update to the Medium Term Plan, as contained in document CTBT/PTS/INF.992, the Group of 77 and China has examined it carefully and has a number of general comments and specific remarks.

At first, the Group recalls, in particular, that the MTP and its update are informal documents prepared under exclusive responsibility of the Secretariat, and that as such they shall neither serve as formal basis for the preparation of the draft programme and budget for 2010 and following years, nor pre-empt any decisions by the Commission and its Policy-Making Organs in this regard.

In terms of substance, while the Group welcomes some of the assessments and proposals contained in the MTP Update, we underscore that some cautionary points are necessary. Overall, the Group believes that the MTP Update should avoid excessively optimistic assumptions, and that it could have focused more on distinguishing priority areas from those that could be delayed to later stages of the process towards entry into force of the Treaty.

The Group notes the emerging political support for the ratification of the Treaty by one State Signatory. However, at this stage, the Group believes that any unjustified attempts to accelerate the pace of build-up of the verification regime, and in particular of the IMS, would be premature.

In this regard, before addressing specific proposals advanced by the MTP update, the Group wishes to recall that the mandate of the PrepCom is to operate provisionally as necessary the IDC and the IMS networks provided for in the Treaty, pending their formal commissioning after entry into force.

In more specific terms, as regards the priorities proposed in the MTP Update for the IMS, the Group takes note of the idea of focusing on increasing the levels of data availability of the IMS network, and underscores the importance of observing the provisional mandate of the PrepCom in its operation. As to the second priority, namely that of establishing and completing new monitoring facilities, the Group takes note with interest of the idea of targeting such efforts at stations that would contribute the most to enhancing the detecting capabilities and coverage of the IMS. The Group recalls, however, its proposal to temporarily freeze the negotiation of new installation contracts, with a view, in particular, to free up resources that need to be applied in other areas of the verification regime, namely the IDC and OSI, so as to correct the imbalances in the capabilities of the three pillars of the verification regime.

As regards the priorities proposed for the IDC, the Group fully supports the objective of enhancing availability, timeliness and quality of data products. On the other hand, given the need to pursue full functionality of the IDC proper, as well as the mandate for provisional operation prior to entry into force, the idea of establishing a "warm standby" back-up IDC seems to be premature at this stage.

Turning now to the priorities for the OSI Division, more specifically to the needs identified by the MTP update in terms of the establishment of infrastructure, the Group believes that the results of the IFE08 evaluation should help the Secretariat in listing its needs in that field in order of priority, which should be addressed by the PrepCom in due course, in view of current budgetary realities and of the prospects for entry into force of the Treaty. As to the proposal to establish a permanent facility for storage and maintenance and operations support centre, while recognizing its potential relevance for future OSI activities, the Group would appreciate further information on possible alternatives being considered to that end, in particular as regards financial implications.

The Group is also expecting a proposal by the PTS on the next exercise cycle, which, according to the last OSI Strategic Plan approved by WGB and the PrepCom in 2006, is to begin after the completion of the evaluation process of the IFE08. While reiterating that a mock inspection should be held only after entry into force of the Treaty, the Group believes that the next cycle should be based on the objective of organizing a reasonably-scaled field exercise at the end of a period of three to four years. Bearing in mind the aforementioned need for investments towards strengthening the institutional capabilities of the OSI Division, the magnitude of such exercise should be defined in such a way as to minimize financial and budgetary implications.

Mr. Chairman,

On an associated issue, the Group also takes this opportunity to express its doubts on the request for a possible "road map" of activities needed for entry into force of the Treaty. The Group notes, in particular, that the mandate of the PrepCom and the requirements for entry into force are already well defined in the Treaty, in its Protocol and in the Resolution that established the PrepCom.

Mr. Chairman,

Turning now to the second substantive agenda item, namely the Guidance to the PTS for the preparation of the initial draft 2010 Programme and Budget, the Group of 77 and China recalls and reiterates the positions expressed on this issue in its statement to the 32nd Session of Working Group B last week.

The Group believes that the preparation of the draft Programme and budget for 2010 should be once again based on a target of zero real growth as a ceiling for the overall expenditures. The Group also recalls that, as requested in the previous Session of the PrepCom, utmost priority should be given by the Secretariat to the elimination of unnecessary increases in levels of expenditure and to the identification of possible further savings in the next budget cycle, and requests that the results of such efforts are duly reported to Working Group A and to the PrepCom. This becomes all the more crucial in the context of the current widespread economic hardship, which affects, in varying degrees, the entire membership of the Treaty.

In addition, as previously elaborated by the Group, the preparation of the verification related work programme for 2010 and future years should take into account the need to ensure balance in all areas of the verification regime.

The Group also underscores that, as recommended by the Advisory Group and Working Group A, any possible increases in budgetary lines should be thoroughly and exhaustively justified.

Mr. Chairman,

The Group seizes this opportunity to take note with appreciation of the fact that, according to the latest report on the personnel situation of the Secretariat, the number of staff members coming from developing States Signatories has increased throughout 2008, thus contributing to reduce the current imbalance in the geographic distribution of posts. However, the Group underscores that, even though the 120 developing

States Signatories members of the Group of 77 account for exactly two thirds of the entire membership of the Treaty, their nationals still constitute only about 28% of the total PTS Staff. By the same token, the Group notes that, despite a slight percentage increase in the presence of women in the Secretariat, the composition of its workforce remains unbalanced in terms of gender distribution.

The Group therefore requests the Secretariat to continue to give due attention to the criteria of equitable geographical distribution and gender balance in the recruitment process of new staff members.

Before concluding, Mr. Chairman, the Group notes with utmost concern that, despite the absence of any mandate for activities in the field of climate change research, the PTS has participated in the United Nations Climate Change Conference in Poznan, Poland, and a brochure advertising the possible use of IMS data for climate change research has been published in the CTBTO-PrepCom website last December. The Group is particularly concerned with the references contained in the brochure to the possibility of granting access to the 26 Gigabytes of data generated daily by the IMS to the climate change research community, without any regard to Treaty provisions on confidentiality.

At this point, our concerns are primarily related to the need to observe due process. While the Group is fully aware of the challenges posed by climate change, we stress that this Organization has a very specific mandate in a different domain. The Group reiterates the need to focus on the objectives of the Treaty and of its verification regime, and strongly urges the PTS not to engage again in any promotional activities without prior notification and consent from the Policy-Making Organs of the Preparatory Commission. The Group is looking forward to receiving further details regarding the budgetary implications of the preparation and publication of the abovementioned brochure. Thank you, Mr. Chairman.