

Remarks delivered by

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Comprehensive Nuclear-Test-Ban Treaty Organization

Handover Ceremony of the Chairmanship of the G-77 Vienna Chapter

12 February 2020

Mr Chairman,
Excellencies,
Ladies and gentlemen,

I would like to thank Ambassador Omar Youssef, Permanent Representative of Egypt, for his kind invitation to take part in this year's G-77 handover ceremony.

At the same time, I offer my sincere congratulations to Ambassadors Dato' Ganeson Sivagurunathan of Malaysia and Maria Natividad of the Philippines on their new responsibilities as Chairs of the G-77 Vienna Chapter for the two forthcoming semesters, respectively.

The Group of 77 is the embodiment of multilateral diplomacy. Policies are discussed internally among its several Chapters and positions are coordinated to better serve the interests of the Group's 135 Member States.

The CTBTO, too, has multilateral diplomacy at its core. Dialogue has been our strength, and the Treaty remains a source of consensus for those seeking common ground in an increasingly divided world.

One hundred and eighty-four States have placed their trust in the Comprehensive Nuclear-Test-Ban Treaty, making it one of the most adhered-to international instrument in its field.

Last year, the Republic of Zimbabwe – a member of the G-77 – became the latest ratifying State. By doing so, it gave further impetus to efforts towards universalization of the Treaty and reaffirmed the commitment of the Group of 77 towards a nuclear-test-free world. This commitment was also highlighted by the announced decision of the Republic of Cuba to sign the CTBT.

As I have stated before, countries in the Group of 77 represent around two thirds of CTBT States Signatories and the same proportion of ratifying States. We very much appreciate, in this context, the Group's repeated calls regarding the need for an early entry into force of the CTBT.

Nevertheless, despite such widespread support, finding common ground at this time of tension has not been an easy task.

In fact, the deficit in trust that we are witnessing has brought many in the international community to seek alternative avenues of cooperation to help balance strained relationships and maintain open channels of communication – and, ultimately, build much-needed trust.

One such avenue is science.

Science brings nations together to address cross-border challenges that cannot be resolved by any single country. It helps address concrete situations and yields benefits that contribute to the advancement and well-being of society as a whole.

In the realm of diplomacy and policymaking, science builds confidence.

As a science-based organization, the CTBTO has an important role in this regard, and we have been working hard to use every opportunity to its fullest potential. And I am pleased to note that G-77 countries have been steady partners in this regard.

Firstly, we have further strengthened the very underpinning of the Treaty: its verification system. The milestone of 300 certified facilities was achieved in 2019 with certifications in Argentina and South Africa, in addition to the certification of a station in Niger.

With regard to on-site inspection capabilities, the project to build the TeST Centre was officially opened in June 2019. The renovated CTBTO/PTS Operations Centre also started functioning at the end of May 2019. Both facilities were completed with the generous support of Member States and will offer further opportunities for training and capacity-building, benefiting G-77 and other countries.

In this context, in order to ensure that all States Signatories are able to take part in the Treaty's verification activities, the Secretariat has continued to facilitate participation in the organization's integrated capacity building and training programme, in particular by representatives from developing countries.

Secondly, we have continued to foster partnerships and discussions among the scientific community towards the continuous improvement of the verification regime. The *2019 CTBT: Science and Technology* conference brought together over 1.000 scientists and technologists – women and men of all ages, from the four corners of the world. Participants included a large number of representatives from G-77 countries, several of whom were funded by the Secretariat.

Building on the previous six editions, the conference allowed to broaden and strengthen the engagement of experts working in test ban monitoring, including young scientists, while enhancing geographic and gender representations.

Thirdly, we have increasingly highlighted the importance of science as an instrument of dialogue and confidence-building, by bringing together scientists and policymakers, and by exploring the nexus between their respective fields of work.

A number of regional workshops, such as those held in Cuba, the Dominican Republic and Ecuador, have paved the way for our forthcoming Science Diplomacy Symposium – the third in its series – to be held in Vienna from 30 March to 3 April 2020. It will focus on increasing access to scientific advice, encouraging capacity development for science, and fostering collaboration between scientists and policymakers. It is open to all who are interested and we look forward to a strong participation by representatives from the G-77, including through its youth.

I would like to highlight that, following the well-received practice established in previous editions of the Symposium and other CTBTO events, we are planning sessions in languages other than English – most probably Arabic, French and Spanish.

With regard to the work of the CTBTO itself, we are grateful for the active participation of the Group and its Member States, as witnessed through the election of Ambassador Faouzia Mebarki of Algeria as Chairperson of the Preparatory Commission for the current year; and, in 2019, through the leadership of Ambassador Ganeson Sivagurunathan of Malaysia as Chairperson of the Commission for part of 2019 and Ambassador Nada Kruger of Namibia as Chairperson of Working Group A for the same year.

Excellencies,
Ladies and Gentlemen,

I commend Ambassador Omar Youssef for Egypt's leadership of the Group throughout 2019, and I look forward to working with Ambassadors Dato' Ganeson Sivagurunathan and Maria Natividad to continue developing the excellent relations that have mutually benefitted the Group of 77 and the CTBTO over the years.

The CTBTO stands ready to support your able leadership throughout 2020 to further strengthen and deepen our partnership, and help achieve one of the most pressing objectives of the international community: a world free from nuclear testing.

Thank you.