



**G-77 and China statement during the 55th session of Working Group B,
24 August – 4 September 2020, delivered by
H. E. Ambassador Maria Cleofe Natividad, Permanent Representative of the Philippines**

Mr. Chairman,

1. The Group of 77 and China would like to thank you for conducting our work at this 55th Session of Working Group B, together with the Vice-Chairs and Task Leaders, and would like to assure you of its full cooperation and support.
2. We would also like to thank Dr. Lassina Zerbo, the Executive Secretary, for his opening remarks, and take note of his report on verification-related activities for the period from January to June 2020. The Group also takes note of the documents prepared for this session by the Provisional Technical Secretariat (PTS).

Mr. Chairman,

3. The Group would like to underline the need for all possible efforts to achieve the universalization of the Treaty. The Group also stresses the need for an early entry into force of the CTBT, with the ultimate goal of eliminating nuclear weapons and achieving general and complete disarmament under strict and effective international control.
4. The Group reiterates its principled position on the importance of sustaining a balanced approach, including in allocating resources and time, among the three Major Programmes of the verification regime, namely the International Monitoring System (IMS), the International Data Centre (IDC) and On-Site Inspection (OSI).
5. To this end, it calls once more on the PTS to seek the necessary efficiencies in the process, to ensure that the verification regime of the Treaty, upon entry into force, is balanced, coherent, and robust while remaining efficient.

Mr. Chairman,

6. On specific verification related activities conducted by the PTS, as contained in the Executive Secretary's report, the Group would like to make the following remarks:
 - a. The Group takes note of the continuous progress, within the provisional operational nature of the IMS, as reported by the PTS, on the joint efforts of the States hosting IMS facilities, local operators and the PTS. The Group also notes that the data availability of certified IMS stations remained high and the timeliness requirements for Reviewed products were met more than 99% of the time.
 - b. Regarding the IMS, the Group takes note of the activities undertaken by the PTS during the reporting period, in particular the progress achieved regarding the installations and certification of remaining stations in developing countries, which illustrates the strong political commitment and material contributions of developing countries to the work of this Organization.

- c. On the management of life-cycle costs, including post-certification activity (PCA) contracts for certified IMS stations, the Group takes note of the continuous efforts by the PTS to standardize the services provided under PCA contracts and reiterates its call on all States Signatories to cooperate with the PTS in a joint effort to lower life cycle costs, including those related to PCA.
- d. The Group would like to affirm that any activities related to the funding, maintenance, and provisional operation of the IMS stations by the PTS, and any related action or decision by the Prepcom, must respect the sovereignty and territorial integrity of states.
- e. The Group looks forward to finalizing direct and clear guidance for noble gas background characterization, as a matter of priority at the next session of the PrepCom. In this regard, the Group stresses that the postponement of the deadline for this decision is directly linked to the temporary changes in the format and modality of meetings of the PrepCom in light of the COVID-19 crisis.
- f. Regarding the International Data Center Progressive Commissioning, the Group takes note of the evaluation report on Experiment 4, and would like to emphasize the importance of continued involvement of experts in conducting the experiments, including the participation of experts from developing countries. The Group also requested the PTS to focus more on the implementation of recommendations and issues for improvements obtained from evaluation reports of the first cycle of experiments, and to allocate appropriate time to this purpose. The Group also believes that WGB should have enough time to consider the relevant reports and recommendations of the first cycle in order to effectively evaluate the technical needs and specification of the second cycle test. The Group looks forward to further briefings on the progressive commissioning of the IMS and the IDC, the validation and acceptance test plan and the experiments conducted and planned by the PTS, noting that the milestones for progressive commission are not time bound and are requirement-based.
- g. The Group takes note of the progress made under the OSI action plan for 2016-2019, that completed all 43 projects by the end of 2019 and the OSI strategic policy and the 2020-2021 Programme and Budget. The Group is of the view that postponement of the exercise initial phase (BUE-IN) and BUE continuation phase should be rescheduled as soon as the situation permits.
- h. On the Radionuclide Monitoring System, the Group takes note of the continued work on the completion of ongoing installation and certification projects and the implementation of a major upgrade and revalidation which is carried out with Signatory States, including the installation of a noble gas system in Mauritania.

Mr. Chairman,

- 7. The Group would like to highlight the importance of capacity building activities, especially through technical trainings, workshops and capacity building courses, and expresses its appreciation for the PTS's efforts in this regard. We reaffirm the continuing need for cooperation and support, including the provision of technical assistance to, inter alia, ensure that all States Signatories, in particular developing countries, have the capacity to effectively participate in the verification regime of the Treaty, and implement obtained knowledge and

capacities at the national, regional and international levels. In this regard, the Group welcomes the organization of the first NDC training for Arab speaking NDCs, which was held in Marsalam, Egypt in January 2020.

8. The Group expresses its support for projects, such as the pilot project that facilitate the participation of experts from developing countries in the WGB sessions. The Group is convinced that such participation will greatly contribute to capacity building in our countries.
9. Cognizant of the exceptional circumstances caused by the COVID-19 pandemic, and because of the technical and substantive nature of the issues under the agenda of the work of this technical Working Group of the 55th session of WGB, and due to the lack of ability of virtual meetings to induce enough interactions between delegations, the Group suggests that the Agenda of this session of the WGB be streamlined to cover the most salient and must-do items, and discussions on substantive issues and documents that need to take some sort of decisions, be deferred to the next session of the WGB, when in person participation of the technical experts of delegation would be possible. The Group reiterates that WGB report must be procedural and duly considered by technical experts from States Signatories.
10. As part of its integrated capacity building activities, the Commission has to continue offering States Signatories, in particular developing States, a wide range of training courses and workshops aimed at strengthening capacities in areas relevant to the Treaty. Capacity building activities should also include the provision of hardware and software to NDCs, especially those in developing countries, enabling them to access and analyze IMS data and International Data Centre (IDC) products.
11. The Group reaffirms its principles of equitable geographical distribution and gender balance and reiterates that these principles should be reflected in the PrepCom and its subsidiary bodies. In this regard, we encourage Working Group B to contribute to improving such representation among its officers in accordance with the abovementioned principles.
12. The Group wishes to thank Dr. Joachim Schulze for all his efforts and wishes its best for all his future endeavors. The Group looks forward to the selection of WGB's new Chairperson in the next PrepCom, while respecting the principle of geographical rotation.
13. Finally, the Group looks forward to continue working constructively with you, the Vice-Chairs and the Task Leaders in order to achieve a fruitful outcome of this session.

Thank you, Mr. Chairman.