



**Statement of the Group of 77 and China during the 55th session of the
Preparatory Commission, 14-18 December 2020, delivered by
Ms. Deena Joy D. Amatong, Deputy Chief of Mission, Minister, Consul General,
Permanent Mission of the Philippines**

Madam Chairperson,

1. The Group of 77 and China condemns the violent attack that took place in Vienna on 2 November 2020. The Group would like to express its deep condolences to the families of the victims and wishes those injured a speedy recovery. The Group reaffirms its solidarity with the people and the Government of Austria.

2. The Group would like to thank Ambassador Fauzia Mebarki for chairing the 55th Session of the Preparatory Commission. The Group takes this opportunity to renew to you, Ambassador, the assurances of its full support and cooperation.

3. The Group thanks the Executive Secretary for his opening remarks and takes note of his reports on the verification and non-verification-related activities of the Provisional Technical Secretariat of the Commission.

4. The Group wishes to reiterate its full support for the Comprehensive Nuclear-Test-Ban Treaty (CTBT) and stresses the need for an early entry into force of the CTBT, with the ultimate goal of eliminating nuclear weapons, and general and complete disarmament under strict and effective international control.

5. The Group of 77 and China is deeply saddened by the loss of so many lives globally due to the ongoing COVID-19 pandemic and expresses its solidarity with all countries as they battle with the effects of the pandemic. Cooperation to contain, mitigate and defeat the pandemic, including through a multilateral approach, should be strengthened and intensified. The international community must unite in its efforts to ensure access to scientific guidance, training, equipment, essential medical supplies, and concrete life-saving services to countries in greatest need and in regions where the full impact is yet to be felt.

6. The Group supports efforts to ensure business continuity in the CTBTO Prepcom and also expresses gratitude to the PTS of all its efforts amidst the ongoing COVID19 pandemic. The Group would like to take this opportunity to emphasize that the exceptional nature of the current session of the Commission must not set a precedent for future sessions, nor be considered as an amendment to existing rules, norms or practices. The Group also highlights that the postponement of substantive discussions on a number of issues that were scheduled for this session is a one-time measure necessitated by unprecedented circumstances, and that postponed discussions and decisions, that were scheduled to take place at the 54th session, must now take place at the upcoming session of the Prepcom, as a matter of priority.

7. The Group expresses its deep concern on recent reports of the possible planning and preparation for nuclear test explosions by State Signatories. Any nuclear tests explosion, if carried out, would not only break the global moratorium on nuclear

weapon test explosions, but severely undermine the Nuclear disarmament and nonproliferation regime and international peace and security. The Group calls upon all of the States to observe nuclear test moratoria and to pursue negotiations in good faith on effective measures relating to general and complete and irreversible nuclear disarmament under strict and effective international control.

8. The Group would like to recognize as well that there has not been further development since ratification by the Republic of Zimbabwe in February 2019, which brought the total number of ratifying countries to 168. The Group stresses the need for all possible efforts to achieve the universality of the Treaty.

Madam Chairperson,

9. The Group takes note of the report of Working Group A (WGA) at its Fifty-Eight Session and the recommendations contained therein, and thanks its Chairperson, Ambassador Nada Kruger, for her leadership and transparency in conducting its deliberations, including through holding timely informal consultations. We would also like to express our appreciation to Ambassador Ganeson Sivagurunathan of Malaysia for taking the Chairmanship role in the absence of Ambassador Nada Kruger during the last WGA session.

10. The Group takes note of the recommendations made by WGA. The Group would like to stress that while calling for a balanced approach to develop and allocate resources among all elements of the verification regime of the Treaty, the Group reiterates its position that capacity-building activities should be funded in a sufficient manner through the Regular Budget and that any savings should not compromise the efforts towards effectively strengthening capacity building and training activities for developing countries.

Madam Chairperson,

11. The Group wishes to thank Dr. Schulze for all his efforts during his leadership as Chairperson of Working Group B and with the end of his term the Group expresses its best wishes for all his future endeavors. The Group looks forward to the selection of the new Chairperson for WGB in the current PrepCom, while respecting the principle of geographical rotation.

12. The Group takes note of the consideration of the report of WGB and notes with appreciation progress made by the PTS in implementing the 2019 - 2020 verification related programme. The Group would like to take this opportunity to emphasize the importance it attaches to capacity building and training - and to the various activities carried out by the PTS in this field - as a means of improving the ability of States Signatories, in particular developing countries, to fully participate in the Treaty's verification regime.

13. The Group would like to reiterate that capacity-building activities postponed due to COVID-19 should be rescheduled as soon as circumstances allow. Additionally, we would like to emphasize the importance of geographical and gender representation in training and capacity building activities as well as workshops and expert meetings.

14. The Group takes note of the report of the Advisory Group at its Fifty-Fifth Session and its recommendations. The Group reiterates its appreciation of the efforts

and expertise of the Advisory Group in providing observations, conclusions and recommendations on issues related to the associated administrative, budgetary, and financial matters.

Madam Chairperson,

15. The Group would like to reiterate that taking into account the ends of term of the Executive Secretary, Chairperson and Vice-Chairpersons of the PrepCom, the Chairperson of the Working Group B and members of the Advisory Group, the G-77 and China would like to assure the Chair of its readiness to support efforts in the Preparatory Commission to reach conclusion of these matters.

16. On the Agenda of the Appointment of the Executive Secretary, the Group would like to thank you and appreciates your efforts, Madam Chairperson, and the informal consultations that have been held under your guidance. The Group further appreciates the session held on 9 November 2020, which afforded the respective candidates an opportunity to share their vision for the Commission with States Signatories.

17. The Group would like to reiterate that the Vienna spirit and the principle of consensus should prevail in any decision-making process.

18. On the appointment and reappointments of the directors of the PTS, 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. The Group takes this opportunity to continue encouraging the Executive Secretary to significantly improve the equitable geographical distribution and the gender balance within the organization at all levels of responsibility, bearing in mind the persistent underrepresentation of developing countries in the staff composition of the PTS, and the need to take appropriate measures to address the issue. Furthermore, the Group encourages youth participation in all activities of the CTBTO.

19. On the Agenda item of developing guidelines for holding non-scheduled sessions of the Commission, the Group is looking forward to further discussing these guidelines as soon as possible in person sessions bearing in mind that according to the Rules of Procedure, it is upon the Commission to decide on the convening of sessions of the Commission. The Group takes note of the proposal on guidelines for non-scheduled sessions of the Commission presented by Chile on behalf of the Group of Latin America and the Caribbean Countries and its revised version.

20. The Group looks forward to finalizing guidelines for holding extraordinary sessions of the Commission, as well as finalizing direct and clear guidance for noble gas background characterization, at the soonest in-person session of the Commission, as a matter of priority. In this regard, the Group stresses that the postponement of the deadlines for those decisions is directly linked to the temporary changes in the format and modality of meetings of the Prepcom in light of the COVID-19 pandemic.

21. Finally, the Group looks forward to a constructive deliberation and timely conclusion of the work of this Session of the Preparatory Commission.

Thank you, Madam Chairperson.