



**G-77 and China statement during the fifty-ninth session of Working Group A,
31 May-1 June 2021, delivered by H.E. Ambassador Alejandro Solano Ortiz, Permanent
Representative of Costa Rica**

Madam Chairperson,

1. The Group of 77 and China would like to thank you, Ambassador Nada Kruger, for chairing this meeting and assure you of its full support and cooperation.
2. The Group welcomes the conclusion of the process of electing the Executive Secretary. In this regard, the Group congratulates Dr. Robert Floyd on his appointment as the next Executive Secretary and looks forward to working with him at the beginning of his tenure. The Group expresses its appreciation for the good work that Dr. Lassina Zerbo has done and continues to do for the CTBTO in his capacity as the incumbent Executive Secretary.
3. The Group 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 Group welcomes the Organization's business continuity, flow of data and data products despite restrictions caused by COVID-19 and express its gratitude for the efforts of the PTS in this regard.
4. The Group is of the view that, this is a time for the international community, to demonstrate its capability to work together in solidarity to mitigate the impacts of COVID-19. 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.
5. The Group considers that at this juncture cooperation and solidarity should prevail among nations, and calls upon countries to ensure that their measures will not have a negative impact on the capacity of States to respond efficiently to COVID-19.
6. The Group would also like to thank the Executive Secretary Dr. Lassina Zerbo for his opening remarks. The Group takes note of the Executive Secretary's report on verification related activities for the period from July to December 2020, the Annual report 2020 and the report on non-verification related activities of the Provisional Technical Secretariat (PTS) from January to March 2021.
7. The Group would like also to extend its appreciation to the PTS for the timely issuance of the documents.

Madam Chairperson,

8. The Group welcomes the recent signature and ratification of the CTBT by Cuba and ratification by the Union of the Comoros, which brings the total number of signatures to 185 States and ratifications to 170, including 36 of the 44 Annex 2 States whose ratification is required for entry into force of the Treaty.
9. The Group believes that these developments represent significant steps towards the universalization of the Treaty. The Group stresses the need of an early entry into force of the CTBT, with the ultimate goal to eliminate nuclear weapons and general and complete

disarmament under strict and effective international control. The Group looks forward to the Article XIV Conference 2021.

Madam Chairperson,

10. Regarding agenda item 3, the Group takes note of the report of the Advisory Group at its 56th session and the recommendations contained therein (CTBT/AG-56/1). The Group appreciates the Advisory Group's efforts and expertise in providing necessary observations, conclusions and recommendations on issues related to the administrative, budgetary and financial matters.

11. On the financial statements of the Preparatory Commission for 2020, the Group takes note of the External Auditor's report and its recommendations aimed at strengthening the implementation of Major Programmes in the Preparatory Commission and welcomes the report of the External Auditor and its conclusions. The Group takes note of the new recommendations issued in 2020 and requests the PTS to fully implement those recommendations in a timely manner.

Madam Chairperson,

12. The Group takes note of the draft 2022-2023 Programme and Budget Proposal, as contained in document CTBT/PTS/INF.1580. The Group thanks you Madam Chairperson and the PTS, for convening on 15 April 2021 the Informal consultations on the draft proposal, and would like to make the following preliminary comments:

(a) The Group notes that the budgetary proposals for 2022 reflect a slightly less than zero real growth budget of \$125.92 million at 2022 prices with an overall price adjustment of 1.75%. The Group notes as well that most of the 2022 Budget is allocated to verification activities (81.2%). The Group requests the PTS to provide detailed clarification about the 2022 price adjustment and factors used in the calculation of its overall average of 1.75 percent as well as providing further clarification on Budget Drivers;

(b) The Group notes the total biennial savings and reprioritization of \$6.01million. While appreciating the efforts made by the PTS, which are aimed at identifying and implementing measures to increase efficiency and savings to the extent possible, the Group reiterates the importance of ensuring that any savings do not jeopardize the effective strengthening of capacity building and training activities, nor affects the quality of these capacity building activities which aim at increasing the capabilities of States Signatories to 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. The Group requests the PTS to continue providing information, documents and organizing briefings on this subject during inter-sessional periods;

(c) 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. In this regard, the Group takes note that the share allocated to the OSI programme within the draft Programme and Budget 2022 has decreased from 8.8 percent to 8.6 percent compared to the previous year, while the share allocated to the IMS programme has increased;

(d) The Group takes note of the decision on the carry forward of the Capital Investment Fund (CIF) and Multiyear Funds unspent balances of 31 December 2021 to the financial period 2022, as soon as they are audited and approved;

(e) The Group is of the view that since the plan of exercises for the years 2019-2021 was not carried out as foreseen in the "On-Site Inspection Exercise Plan for 2016-2020" due to the challenges brought about by the COVID-19 pandemic, it remains the responsibility of the PTS

to revise the abovementioned plan and present it to the next Working Group B (WGB) session for consideration. In view of this, to prepare for the next IFE, the Group requests the Secretariat to convene necessary Expert Meetings during 2021 to define the projects and elaborate the exercise plan based on challenging scenarios to be held in the future;

(f) The Group requests the PTS to further develop the OSI e-Library, based on the lessons learned from exercises, in addition to providing access to the OSI e-library to the authorized experts from States Signatories;

(g) The Group notes the progress with regards to making a large proportion of the training modules available in all United Nations official languages. The Group reiterates the importance of the allocation of resources for a project-based action plan that includes regional and multilingual dimensions, as well as assessment mechanisms, as was previously requested by the Working Group (B) of the Preparatory Commission at its 52nd Session (CTBT/PC-52/WGB/1).

13. The Group takes note that some technical meetings, workshops, training courses and exercises towards capacity building activities, were postponed due to COVID-19. The Group further notes that despite these challenges, the participation rate was at record high. In this regard, the Group is looking forward to the report of the quality assessment of training provided as well as measures that will be undertaken to support the participation of developing countries in virtual training programmes. The Group requests the Secretariat to submit to the WGA and WGB a detailed report on planned and previously approved activities that were not carried out in the period 2020-2021, including any major changes, upgrades or the overlap of the two Programme and Budgets of 2020-2021 and 2022-2023 in the new draft program and budget document. The Group would also like to highlight that those activities, that are already budgeted should be rescheduled as soon as circumstances allow.

Madam Chairperson,

14. On the 2020 Human Resources Management Report, after preliminary analysis the Group would like to reaffirm 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 appreciates the information provided regarding the professional fixed-term staff members of the Group of 77 and China, while expressing its concern with the low level of representation of the Group.

15. The Group also 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.

16. The Group looks forward to a constructive deliberation and timely conclusion of the work of this Working Group.

Thank you, Madam Chairperson.