



G-77 AND CHINA STATEMENT DURING THE 57TH SESSION OF WORKING GROUP B, 23 AUGUST – 3 SEPTEMBER 2021, DELIVERED BY MS. ALINA CAÑAS VARGAS, CHARGÉ D’AFFAIRES A.I. OF THE PERMANENT MISSION OF COSTA RICA ON BEHALF OF H. E. AMBASSADOR ALEJANDRO SOLANO ORTIZ, PERMANENT REPRESENTATIVE OF COSTA RICA

Mr. Chairman,

1. The Group of 77 and China congratulates you, Dr Erlan Batyrbekov, on your appointment as Chair of Working Group B and is pleased to see you conducting our work in this 57th Session of Working Group B together with the Vice-Chairs and Task Leaders. The Group would like to assure you of its full cooperation.

2. We would also like to congratulate Dr Robert Floyd for his appointment as the Executive Secretary and assure him of our full support. Furthermore, the Group thanks the Executive Secretary for his opening remarks and takes note of his report on verification related activities for the period from January to June 2021. The Group also takes note of the documents prepared for this session by the Provisional Technical Secretariat’s (PTS) and appreciates the PTS efforts in making them available.

Mr. Chairman,

3. The Group stresses the need of an early Entry Into Force of the CTBT and underlines the need for all possible efforts to be made to achieve the universalization of the Treaty, with the ultimate goal to eliminate nuclear weapons and general and complete disarmament under strict and effective international control. The upcoming 25th Anniversary of the opening of the Treaty for signature should be the rallying point towards this end. The Group looks forward to the 2021 Article XIV Conference, which will take place in September in New York and expresses its full support to South Africa and Italy as Co-Presidents of this Conference.

4. The Group takes note with satisfaction of the success of the Science and Technology Conference 2021 that took a hybrid format as a result of the COVID-19 pandemic, as it provided an opportunity to discuss and potentially assist States Signatories in identifying new and improved technologies which may benefit the Treaty's verification regime. The Group notes that the Conference was an effective platform for an exchange of knowledge and ideas between the Preparatory Commission of the CTBTO and the broader scientific community.

5. 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). 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 furthering its efficiency.

Mr. Chairman,

6. On specific verification related activities conducted by the PTS, as contained in the Executive Secretary's report, the Group stresses the importance of the PTS conforming with its mandate and would like to make the following remarks:

a) The Group notes 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 operator and the PTS. The Group also notes that the data availability of certified IMS stations remained high and automated products of the IDC met the timeliness requirements 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 towards 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. The Group further takes note that during the reporting period, the total number of installed stations and certified stations remained unchanged at 297 (92.5%) and 288 (89.7%) respectively.

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, should respect the decisions of the United Nations and its subsidiary bodies, as well as the 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 in person session of the PrepCom, in this regard. In this connection, the Group appreciates the work carried out by the Co-facilitators Ambassador Molekane and Ambassador Laggner, as per the mandate outlined by 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 virtual technical meeting that took place from 23 to 24 June 2021 to continue the process of completing the IDC validation and acceptance test plan (VATP). The Group 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 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 commissioning are not time bound and are requirement-based. The Group further believes that the evaluation report should include how past identified performance shortfalls were addressed in the assessment report on the four experiments, the plan for the 2021 experiment and update of the VATP for future experiments. The Group also requests that the PTS considers introducing provisions in the VATP to measure the quality of

IDC in fulfilling the verification objectives and test the provisions in the next set of experiments.

g) The Group takes note of the follow-up to the OSI action plan for 2016-2019. The Group takes note of the postponement of several preparatory activities such as a communications field test, host country training, site preparations and the conduct of both field BUEs, originally planned for June and September 2020 and postponed to July 2021 as a consequence of the COVID-19 pandemic and movement restrictions. The Group looks forward to the programme of work for the period 2022-23 in order to validate the outcomes of the OSI action plan 2016-2019, the third training cycle for inspectors, and the development of OSI techniques. 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 major upgrade and revalidation projects, as well as the maintenance of stations, which is carried out with Signatory States. The also takes note of the conduct of the inaugural 2021 Proficiency Test Exercise for noble gas samples, held in February 2021.

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 to continue providing and expanding capacity-building activities despite COVID-19 pandemic and movement restrictions, through organizing online workshops and trainings. 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.

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 in 2021. 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 57th session of WGB, and due to the lack of ability of hybrid 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.

10. In this regard, the Group emphasizes that the task leader discussions proposed under draft agenda item 6, addition to other informal technical consultations and expert group discussions should be strictly procedural when reflected in the WGB report of this session. The Group also reiterates that WGB report for its 57th session must be procedural, focusing on business continuity, and duly considered by technical experts from States Signatories.

11. 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, workshops as well as hardware and software for NDCs aimed at strengthening capacities in

areas relevant to the Treaty. Capacity building activities should continue to include all these elements that enable developing countries to access and analyze IMS data and International Data Centre (IDC) products.

12. The Group reaffirms its principles of equitable geographical distribution and gender balance and reiterates that these principles should be reflected in the PrepCom, its subsidiary bodies, particularly when it comes to capacity-building activities. In this regard, we encourage Working Group B to contribute to improving such representation among its officers in accordance with the abovementioned principles.

Mr Chairman,

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.