



**G-77 and China statement during the sixtieth session of Working Group A,
18 – 20 October 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 assures you of its full support and cooperation. The Group wishes to thank you Ambassador Kruger for all your efforts and exemplary leadership of Working Group A from August 2019 until December 2021.

2. 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. The Group is of the view that global cooperation is important acknowledging that no one is safe until everyone is safe.

3. 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. 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 expresses its gratitude for the efforts of the PTS in this regard.

4. The Group would also like to thank the Executive Secretary Dr. Robert Floyd for his opening remarks. The Group takes note of the Executive Secretary's report on non-verification related activities of the Provisional Technical Secretariat (PTS) March for the period from April to August 2021.

5. The Group would like also to extend its appreciation to the PTS for the timely issuance of documents for this session.

Madam Chairperson,

6. The Group notes that since the 59th Session of Working Group A no new State has signed or ratified the Treaty, thus the total number of signatories remains at 185 States and ratifications at 170, which includes 36 of the 44 Annex 2 States whose ratification is required for entry into force of the Treaty. The Group stresses the need of an early Entry Into Force (EIF) of the CTBT, with the ultimate goal to eliminate nuclear weapons and general and complete disarmament under strict and effective international control. In this regard, the Group welcomes the convening of the 12th Conference on facilitating the EIF of the Treaty, which took place in New York on 23 September 2021 and takes note of the adoption of the final Declaration of the Conference. The Group appreciates the efforts undertaken by South Africa and Italy as Co-Presidents and thanks the PTS for organizing this event.

Madam Chairperson,

7. Regarding agenda item 3, the Group takes note of the report of the Advisory Group at its 57th session and the recommendations contained therein (CTBT/AG-57/1). 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.

8. The Group takes note of the revised 2022-2023 Programme and Budget Proposal, as contained in document CTBT/PTS/INF.1580/Rev.2). The Group thanks the PTS, for incorporating the comments made by State Signatories in its revision of the Budget Proposals and further makes the following 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 thanks the PTS for providing detailed clarification on the 2022 price adjustment and factors used in the calculation of its overall average of 1.75 percent;

(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).

9. 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 however, expresses its deep concern that the implementation rate of the Capacity Building Fund was only 0.7%. In this regard, the Group calls on the PTS to implement necessary measures to rectify this anomaly and bring capacity building activities to required levels. Furthermore, 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 reiterates its request for 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.

10. The Group commends the PTS for hosting a successful a 2021 Science and Technology Conference in a hybrid format on 28 June to 2 July 2021. The Conference which was anchored on the 25th Anniversary of the opening of the Treaty for signature, set new records with a participation rate of 1600 participants from 150 countries. It also provided an opportunity for scientists, including those from developing countries, to share experiences and knowledge. We look forward to the report on the Conference at an early date and the identification of lessons learned that could be applied in other functions of the CTBTO.

Madam Chairperson,

11. 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 the Staff of the Organization, especially, at the Professional and higher levels, as important considerations in the recruitment process. The Group remains concerned with the low level of representation of developing countries in the PTS and requests the PTS to make all necessary efforts to bring geographical representation to equitable levels.

12. 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 however remains concerned that gender representation at Professional and Higher levels remains low at 35.2%. The Group requests the PTS to make further efforts to achieve and gender balance among the staff of the organization at all levels of responsibility. In this regard, we would like to propose the PTS to use new and existing tools to encourage the participation of young female professionals in the PTS.

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

Thank you, Madam Chairperson.