



Statement of the Group of 77 and China during the 57th session of the Preparatory Commission, 10 – 12 November 2021, delivered by H.E. Ambassador Alejandro Solano Ortiz, Permanent Representative of Costa Rica

Mr. Chairman,

1. I have the honour to speak on behalf of the Group of 77 and China.
2. The Group is pleased to see you, Ambassador Ivo Sramek, chairing the 57th Session of the Preparatory Commission (PrepCom). The Group takes this opportunity to renew to you, Ambassador, the assurances of its full support and cooperation. Furthermore, the Group expresses its full support to the PrepCom in executing its tasks in the most efficient and effective manner. As this is your last PrepCom as Chairperson, the Group wishes to thank you for all your efforts and exemplary leadership of the PrepCom during the year 2021.
3. The Group would also like to thank Dr. Robert Floyd 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. Furthermore, the Group expresses its appreciation to the Provisional Technical Secretariat for preparing documents and making them available for this session in a timely manner.

Mr. Chairman,

4. 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 supports all measures taken to ensure business continuity in the CTBTO PrepCom and its subsidiary bodies. The Group also expresses gratitude to the PTS of all its efforts amidst the ongoing COVID-19 pandemic.

Mr. Chairman,

5. 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 (EIF) of the CTBT and its universalization, with the ultimate goal of eliminating nuclear weapons, and general and complete disarmament under strict and effective international control. The 25th Anniversary of the opening of the Treaty for signature should be a rallying point towards this end. 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 also appreciates the efforts exerted by States, in this regard and commends the efforts undertaken by South Africa and Italy as Co-Presidents and thanks the PTS for organizing this event.
6. The Group continues to express its concern on any possible planning and preparation for nuclear test explosions. Any nuclear test explosion would not only break the global moratorium, but severely undermine the Nuclear disarmament and non-proliferation regime and international peace and security. The Group calls upon all States to observe nuclear test moratoria and to pursue negotiations in good faith on effective measures relating to general, complete and irreversible nuclear disarmament under strict and effective international control.

Mr. Chairman,

7. On Agenda item 3, the Group takes note of the report of Working Group A at its 60th session and its recommendations. We would like to thank the Chairperson of WGA, Ambassador Nada Kruger of Namibia, for all her efforts in conducting informal consultations on the appointment of the External Auditor as well as on the proposal for the establishment of the position of Chief of Cabinet in the office of the Executive Secretary. We look forward to the attainment of consensual decisions on these matters.

8. As this is the last PrepCom session for Ambassador Kruger as Chair of WGA, the Group wishes to thank her for all her efforts and exemplary leadership of Working Group A from August 2019 until December 2021.

9. The Group takes note of the draft 2022-2023 Programme and Budget proposal. The Group has already expressed its comments during the last WGA session and thanks the PTS for incorporating comments made by State Signatories in the final proposal.

10. The Group would like to reiterate some points expressed during the last Working Group A session. In this regard, 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. Furthermore, the Group reiterates its position 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 mandate of the resolution establishing the PrepCom and the decisions of the United Nations and its subsidiary bodies, as well as the territorial integrity of States.

Mr Chairman,

11. On agenda item 4, the Group also takes note of the report of the Working Group B at its Fifty-Seventh Session and thanks Mr. Erlan Batyrbekov for presenting the report.

12. The Group strongly emphasizes 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. In this regard, while being aware of the practical difficulties caused by the ongoing COVID-19 pandemic, the Group is deeply concerned that the implementation rate of the Capacity Building Fund in the reporting period was low. Hence, the Group calls on the PTS to implement necessary measures to rectify this anomaly and bring capacity building activities to required levels.

13. The Group reiterates its support for the pilot project, which facilitates the participation of experts from developing countries in the WGB sessions and it presents an opportunity to advance the participation of professional women in the Organization. The Group is convinced that such participation greatly contributes to capacity-building in our countries. 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).

14. The Group takes note of the recent report of the Advisory Group at its 57th session and appreciates the recommendations contained therein. The Group also reiterates its appreciation for the efforts and expertise of the Advisory Group in providing necessary observation,

conclusion, and recommendations on issues related to the associated administrative, budgetary and financial matters.

15. The Group appreciates the efforts by Mr. Pedro Penha Brasil from Brazil Acting Chairperson and Vice-Chairperson of the Advisory Group in ensuring a continued functioning of the Group. Furthermore, the Group looks forward to a consensual decision on the next Chairperson of the Advisory Group, as well as the decision on procedures for the appointment of the Chairperson and the Vice-Chairpersons of the Advisory Group.

Mr Chairman,

16. 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 as well as in the PTS. In this regard, the Group is concerned that geographical, gender representation and women participation at the Professional and Higher levels remains low. The Group takes this opportunity to continue requesting the Executive Secretary to significantly improve geographical, gender representation, and women participation within the Organization and at all levels of responsibility, through the use of new and existing tools 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 this issue.

17. The Group commends the PTS for hosting a successful a 2021 Science and Technology Conference on 28 June to 2 July 2021. The Conference 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.

18. The Group expresses its appreciation to the Co-facilitators, Ambassador Molekane from South Africa and Ambassador Laggner from Switzerland, for holding informal consultations on the issue of noble gas background measurement, and their report on these consultations. Members of the Group also stand ready to contribute in consultations on the issue of non-scheduled sessions of the PrepCom. The Group looks forward to finalizing direct and clear guidance for further activities of the PTS on the issue of noble gas background characterization, as well as finalizing guidelines for holding non-scheduled sessions of the Commission, as matters of priority at the soonest in-person session of the Commission, and expects the PTS to act in accordance with its mandate, in these regards. 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 crisis.

19. Finally, the Group of 77 and China looks forward to a constructive deliberation and timely conclusion of the work of this Session of the Preparatory Commission.

Thank you, Mr. Chair.