



**G-77 AND CHINA STATEMENT DURING THE 58TH SESSION OF WORKING
GROUP B, 21 FEBRUARY – 4 MARCH 2022, DELIVERED BY H.E. MR.
AZZEDDINE FARHANE, AMBASSADOR, PERMANENT REPRESENTATIVE OF
MOROCCO**

Mr. Chair, Dear Excellencies and colleagues,

1. I would like to take your permission to express in our statement in Working Group B the Groups' condolences to Kenya for the passing away of Prof. Norbit Opiyo, and to Slovakia for the passing away of H.E. Ambassador Radomir Bohach, Permanent Representative of Slovakia. May God rest their souls.

2. The Group of 77 and China is pleased to see you, Dr Erlan Batyrbekov, conducting our work in this 58th Session of Working Group B together with the Vice-Chair and Task Leaders. The Group would like to assure you of its full cooperation.

3. The Group congratulates H.E. Ambassador Darío Ernesto Chirú Ochoa, Permanent Representative of Panama on his election as Chairperson of the Preparatory Commission for the year 2022 and welcomes the appointment of the Vice Chairpersons of the Commission and of WGB. The Group thanks H.E. Ambassador Ivo Šrámek, Permanent Representative of the Czech Republic for chairing the Preparatory Commission during 2021.

4. We would also like to thank Dr. Robert Floyd, the Executive Secretary, for his opening remarks and take note of his report on verification related activities for the period from July to December 2021. The Group also takes note of the documents prepared for this session by the Provisional Technical Secretariat (PTS), appreciates the PTS efforts in making them available and requests the PTS to ensure their timely circulation in preparation for future sessions. The Group also considers that States Signatory would benefit from technical briefings on the reports submitted to policy-making organs.

Mr. Chair,

5. The Group stresses the need for an early Entry Into Force of the CTBT and underlines the importance of 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 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 2021 Article XIV 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 by States Signatories in this regard and thanks the PTS for organizing this event. The Group also commends the efforts undertaken by South Africa and Italy as Co-Presidents.

6. 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.

7. 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. Chair,

8. 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. The Group further notes the efforts of the PTS in identifying challenges that led to a slight decline in some unauthenticated data and looks forward to implementation of measures to remedy these challenges.

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 are 298 (92.8%) and 289 (90.0%) 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 reaffirm 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. The Group highlights the importance to engage in construction maintenance and/or relocation of IMS facilities with full respect of the purposes and principles of the Charter of the United Nations and international law.

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 connection, the Group appreciates the work carried out by the previous 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 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 the assessment report on the four experiments and update of the IDC validation and acceptance test plan (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 notes 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, postponed to July 2021 and later cancelled 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. In order to increase the integrity of the activities of the OSI section, the development of a unified/single plan for OSI called the "OSI Development Plan" is necessary. It could include an operational and an exercise plan that will address the validation and verification process of each method, technology, and equipment.

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.

Mr. Chair,

9. 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.

10. 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. In this regard, the Group is concerned about the fact that only 6 out of 22 candidates to be invited in the WGB meetings during 2022 are women and encourage the nomination of female technical experts to participate in the meetings of WGB.

11. As part of its integrated capacity building activities, the Group calls on the Commission 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 analyse IMS data and International Data Centre (IDC) products.

12. 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 58th 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, including the Task Leader discussions, other informal technical consultations and expert group meetings be streamlined to cover the most salient and must-do items.

13. The Group stresses that discussions on substantive issues requiring a decision, be deferred to the next session of the WGB, when the in-person participation of the technical experts of delegation would be possible. The Group also reiterates that WGB report for its 58th session must be procedural, focusing on business continuity, and duly considered by technical experts from States Signatories.

14. 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, 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. Chair,

15. 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.