



**G-77 AND CHINA STATEMENT DURING THE SIXTY FIRST SESSION OF
WORKING GROUP A,
2 – 3 JUNE 2022, DELIVERED BY H.E. AZZEDDINE FARHANE, AMBASSADOR,
PERMANENT REPRESENTATIVE OF MOROCCO**

Mr. Chair,

1. The Group of 77 and China congratulates you, Ambassador Nguyen Trung Kien on your appointment as Chair of Working Group A and would like to thank you for chairing this meeting and assures you of its full support and cooperation.

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 welcomes the election of Ambassador Ramiro Recinos Trejo Deputy Permanent Representative of El Salvador as one of its Vice-Chairpersons of the PREPCOM for 2022 and the designation of Ambassador Carlos Sérgio Sobral Duarte, Permanent Representative of Brazil, as facilitator for developing guidelines for holding non-scheduled sessions of the Commission.

5. 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 verification related activities for the period July to December 2021, the Annual Report 2021 and the report on non-verification related activities for the period from January to March 2022.

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

Mr. Chair,

7. The Group is pleased to note that since our last meeting, two countries, Tuvalu and The Gambia, have ratified the CTBT, and one country, namely Dominica has signed the CTBT, bringing the number of State Signatories to 186 and of Ratifiers to 172. 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.

Mr. Chair,

8. Regarding agenda item 3, the Group takes note of the report of the Advisory Group at its 58th session and the recommendations contained therein (CTBT/AG-58/1). 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.

9. The Group takes note of the Financial Statements of the Preparatory Commission for the Comprehensive Nuclear-Test-Ban Treaty Organization for 2021 (CTBT/PTS/INF.1617) and the 2020-2021 Programme and Budget Performance Report, as contained in document (CTBT/PTS/INF.1619 Volume 1 and Volume 2) Moreover, the Group thanks the PTS and would like to present the following comments regarding proposals, financial and budgetary decision:

(a) The Group takes note of the document 2023 Budget Update Proposals: Initial Draft (CTBT/PTS/INF.1616) in which it is indicated that the total 2023 Budget at estimated 2023 prices is \$ 129 463 700 in notional US\$ equivalent value, with an overall weighted average price adjustment of 2.14%. The Group notes as well that most of the 2023 Budget is allocated to verification activities (81.4%);

(b) 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 in the document 2023 Budget Update Proposals: Initial Draft would have decreased from 8.6% to 8.5 percent compared to the 2022 Regular Budget, while the share allocated to the IMS programme would have increased from 31,8% to 32,2%;

(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 2022 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).

10. 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 concern that the implementation rate of the Capacity Building Fund remains low. 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.

11. The Group commends the PTS for hosting a successful 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. The Group takes note of the document Preliminary Report for the Fifty-Eighth Session of Working Group B on the CTBT: Science and Technology 2021 Conference (ECS/WGB-58/PTS/13).

Mr. Chair,

12. The Group takes note of the documents Equal Employment Opportunities – Women in the Provisional Technical Secretariat as of 31 December 2021 (CTBT/PTS/INF.1622) and Human Resources Management Report (CTBT/PTS/INF.1626). In this regard, 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 seriously 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.

13. 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 level remains low at 37%. The Group requests the PTS to make further efforts to achieve 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.

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

Thank you, Mr. Chair.