



**STATEMENT OF THE G-77 AND CHINA
DURING THE 60TH SESSION OF WORKING GROUP B,
13 TO 24 MARCH 2023
delivered by H.E. Laura Virginia Faxas,
Ambassador and Permanent Representative of the Dominican Republic**

Mr. Chair, dear Excellencies and colleagues,

1. I would like to begin by expressing on behalf of the Group our deepest condolences to the peoples of Syria and Türkiye over the loss of life and large-scale destruction caused by the latest earthquake.

2. The Group of 77 and China is pleased to see you, Dr Erlan Batyrbekov, conducting our work in this 60th 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 Benno Laggner, Permanent Representative of Switzerland on his election as Chairperson of the Preparatory Commission for the year 2023 and welcomes the appointment of the Vice Chairpersons of the Commission and of WG-B. The Group thanks H.E. Ambassador Dario Ernesto Chiru Ochoa, Permanent Representative of Panama for chairing the Preparatory Commission during 2022.

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 2022. 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 in a timely manner. 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 commends all efforts that have been made towards the universalization of the Treaty 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 latest ratification of the Treaty by the Solomon Islands, a G-77 Member. The Group notes with appreciation the efforts undertaken within the Art. XIV Conference on facilitating the Entry into Force of the Treaty, including the efforts by South Africa and Italy as Co-Presidents of the 2021 Conference and looks forward to the convening of the upcoming Conference.

6. The Group looks forward to contributing to all discussions and work in preparation of the upcoming Science and Technology Conference 2023 (SnT2023), that will take place between 19 to 23 of June 2023, at the Hofburg Palace in Vienna. This Conference paves the way to continue our discussions and potentially assist States Signatories in identifying new and improved technologies, which may benefit the Treaty's verification regime. The Group notes with satisfaction of the success of the previous Conference held in 2021 and reiterates 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. The Group also appreciates the successful hosting of the 3rd Science and Diplomacy Symposium, held in 2022, which provided an opportunity for sharing of expertise and youth participation.

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 300 (93.4%) and 304 (90.2%) respectively.

c) 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.

d) 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.

e) 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, which included five test plan experiments scheduled by the PTS in 2023, noting that the milestones for progressive commission 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 consider 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.

f) The Group reaffirms the importance of the programme of work for the period 2022-23 that would 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. The Group looks forward to participating in the preparations for the next Integrated Field Exercise (IFE) for 2025, which will benefit several States Signatories, including through several regional introductory courses (RICs).

g) 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 including the NDCs4All initiative, 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 2023. The Group is convinced that such participation will greatly contribute to capacity building in our countries.

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 analyze 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 60th 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 the importance of working on strengthening and reinforcing capacity building activities in parallel with the preparation of the verification regime. It is important to minimize the knowledge gap that may face developing states with regards to the technologies of the verification regime. In this regard, the Group highlights the need to dedicate more resources to enable States Signatories to host capacity-building activities including regional workshops, which also reinforces the principle of multilingualism and that could lead to cost saving for the CTBTO.

14. The Group reaffirms its principles of equitable geographical distribution, gender balance and multilingualism and would like to emphasize the contribution of youth in promoting peace and security. The Group expresses its support for the mentoring programme for early career women in STEM coming from geographical regions which are under-represented in CTBTO staff. The Group 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 above-mentioned principles.

15. The Group also recalls the guidelines contained within document CTBT/PTS-INF.1635 and encourages the PTS to coordinate with the other Secretariats of the Vienna based International Organizations (VBOs), to ensure that major meetings do not coincide, as well as to avoid an overlap, to the extent possible, with major sessions of the VBOs and any major public holiday.

Mr. Chair,

16. 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.