



**Statement of the G-77 and China
during the Sixty-Third Session of Working Group A,
delivered by H.E. Mr. Dario Ernesto Chiru Ochoa, Permanent Representative of Panama
24– 25 May 2023**

Mr. Chair,

1. The Group of 77 and China congratulates you, Ambassador Nguyen Trung Kien as Chair of Working Group A and would like to thank you for convening this meeting and assures you of its full support and cooperation.
2. 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 2022, the Annual Report 2022 and the report on non-verification related activities for the period from April-August 2022.
3. The Group would like also to extend its appreciation to the PTS for the timely issuance of documents for this session.

Mr. Chair,

4. The Group is pleased to note that since our last meeting, Solomon Islands, has ratified the CTBT, bringing the number of State Signatories to 186 and of ratifications to 177. 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.

Mr. Chair,

5. Regarding agenda item 3, the Group takes note of the report of the Advisory Group at its 60th session and the recommendations contained therein (CTBT/AG-60/1). 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.

6. The Group takes note of the Financial Statements of the Preparatory Commission for the Comprehensive Nuclear-Test-Ban Treaty Organization for 2022 (CTBT/PTS/INF.1657) and the 2024-2025 Programme and Budget Proposals: Initial Draft, as contained in document CTBT/PTS/INF.1647. 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 2024-2025 Programme and Budget Proposals: Initial Draft (CTBT/PTS/INF.1647) in which it is indicated that the total 2024 Budget at estimated

2024 prices is \$134.19 in notional US\$ equivalent value, with an overall weighted average price adjustment of 4.3%. The Group notes as well that most of the 2024 Budget is allocated to verification activities (80.3%);

(b) While appreciating the efforts made by the PTS while proposing the 2024 – 2025 Programme and Budget Proposal, as contained in the initial draft, the Group believes that there is a need for the PTS to identify further savings and efficiencies when elaborating the new revised draft budget. The difficult global macroeconomic circumstances have had a substantial impact on developing states, adding to the pertinent financial burdens and posing new challenges in this regard. Accordingly, we look forward to attainable additional efforts by the PTS to revise the proposed price adjustment (4.3%) and identifying means to ensure that financial resources are put to best use.

(c) 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;

(d) 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;

(e) 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 2022 to the financial period 2023, as soon as they are audited and approved;

(f) 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, the Group is of the view that the Secretariat should continue convening necessary Expert Meetings during 2023 to define the projects and elaborate the exercise plan based on challenging scenarios to be held in the future, in preparation for the integrated field exercise (IFE) 2025;

(g) 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;

(h) 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).

7. The Group 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 would also like to highlight that those activities, that are already approved and budgeted but were not carried out should be rescheduled as soon as possible.

8. The Group looks forward to the Science and Technology Conference which will be held in a hybrid format between 19 and 23 June 2023, which provides an opportunity for scientists, including those from developing countries, to share experiences and knowledge. The Group also looks forward to the convening of the Article XIV conference which is to be held in New York on the 22nd of September 2023.

Mr. Chair,

9. The Group takes note of the documents Equal Employment Opportunities – Women in the Provisional Technical Secretariat (CTBT/PTS/INF.1658) and Human Resources Management Report (CTBT/PTS/INF.1654). In this regard, 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 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.

10. The Group recognizes the efforts made to improve the representation of the staff, including the achievement of gender balance at the director level of the PTS and encourages to continue improving gender representation at Professional level which remains at 40%. 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.

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

Thank you, Mr. Chair.