



Statement of the Group of 77 and China during the 60th Session of the Preparatory Commission by H.E. Mohamed Elmolla, Ambassador, Permanent Representative of Egypt, 12 – 14 June 2023

Mr. Chair,

1. The Group is pleased to see you, Ambassador Benno Laggner, chairing the 60th Session of the Preparatory Commission (PrepCom). The Group takes this opportunity to express its full support and cooperation to your chairmanship.

2. The Group would also like to thank the Executive Secretary for his opening remarks, and takes note of his reports and expresses its appreciation to the Provisional Technical Secretariat for preparing documents and making them available for this session in a timely manner.

Mr. Chair,

3. 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 Ratifiers to 177. In this regard, 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.

4. In this regard, the Group expresses its appreciation to the Co-Presidents of the 11th session of Art. XIV Conference, South Africa and Italy, and looks forward to the convening of the 12th session to be held in New York on the 22nd of September 2023 under the Co-Presidency of Panama and Norway, to whom the Group expresses its full support.

5. In light of the upcoming 1st Session of the Preparatory Committee of the NPT Review Conference to be held in Vienna in 2023, the Group would like to reiterate that the CTBT and the NPT are mutually reinforcing legal instruments of the international disarmament and nuclear non-proliferation regime. We reaffirm the central role of the NPT, as the Cornerstone of the Nuclear disarmament and Non-Proliferation regime, and the envisaged role of the CTBT, in furthering nuclear disarmament and non-proliferation both vertical and horizontal.

6. The Group continues to express its concern on any possible planning and preparation for nuclear test explosions. Any nuclear tests 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. Chair,

7. On Agenda item 3, the Group takes note of the report of Working Group A at the 63rd session thanks the Ambassador Nguyen Trung Kien of Viet Nam for presenting the report.

8. The Group would like to reiterate some points expressed during the last Working Group A session. In this regard:

(a) While appreciating the efforts made by the PTS in 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.

(b) In that regard, 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. The Group further requests the PTS to provide a detailed report on projected savings and efficiencies in preparation for the 2024-2025 biennium by the 64th WGA session.

(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.

(d) The Group encourages the PTS to utilize the remainder of the cash surplus from the budget of 2020 - 2021, in a balanced manner among the three pillars of the verification regime to the extent possible, in line with previous similar decisions, as well as the inclusion of an opt-out provision in line with previous decisions.

(e) 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.

Mr Chair,

9. On agenda item 4, the Group also takes note of the report of the Working Group B at its 60th Session and thanks Dr. Erlan Batyrbekov for presenting the report. In this regard:

(a) 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, as well as dedicating adequate financial resources for these activities.

(b) The Group expresses its support for initiatives, such as the Technical Experts Support Program (TESP) , that facilitate the participation of experts from developing countries in the WGB sessions, as well as the National Data Centers for All (NDCs4All) Initiative. The Group is convinced that such participation will greatly contribute to capacity-building in our countries and to achieving wider participation of all States Signatories in the decision-making process and ownership of the Commission.

(c) Reaffirming the provisions of the Establishing Resolution and the independent nature of the PrepCom, the Group would like to reaffirm that any activities related to the funding, maintenance, and provisional operation of the IMS stations must respect the mandate of the PTS, and any related action or decision by the PrepCom, should fully respect the purposes and principles of the United Nations, including those on the territorial integrity of the States. In view of this, the Group highlights the importance to engage in construction, maintenance and/or relocation of IMS facilities fully in line with the purposes and principles of the Charter of the United Nations and international law.

10. On agenda item 5, the Group takes note of the report of the Advisory Group at its 60th session and the recommendations contained therein and thanks Ms. Rashmi RAJYAGURU for presenting the report. 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.

Mr Chair,

11. 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.

12. 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. In this regard, 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.

13. The Group emphasizes the importance of promoting multilingualism in the PrepCom and its subsidiary bodies as well as in the PTS. The Group looks forward to receiving an update on this subject in this session and a written progress report in future sessions.

14. Recognizing the important and positive contribution of youth in efforts for the maintenance and promotion of peace and security, the Group affirms the paramount importance of youth participation in the PrepCom and its subsidiary bodies, as well as in the PTS activities.

15. 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, civil society, academia and other stakeholders, including those from developing countries, to share experiences and knowledge.

16. 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.

17. 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. The Group is confident that the PTS will continue to act in accordance with its mandate until this issue is finalized.

18. 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.