



**G-77 And China Statement During The 61st Session Of Working Group B,
21 August – 1 September 2023,
Delivered By H.E. Mr. Bharat Kumar Regmi, Permanent Representative Of Nepal**

Mr. Chair,

1. The Group of 77 and China is pleased to see you, Dr. Erlan Batyrbekov, conducting our work in this 61st Session of Working Group B together with the Vice-Chairs and Task Leaders. Additionally, the Group would like to congratulate Ms. Tebogo Pule of South Africa on her appointment as Vice-Chair of Working Group B and assure you of its full cooperation.

2. 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 January to June 2023. The Group also takes note of the documents prepared for this session by the Provisional Technical Secretariat (PTS) and appreciates the PTS efforts in making them available. The Group also considers that States Signatory would benefit from technical briefings on the reports submitted to policy-making organs.

Mr. Chair,

3. The Group reiterates its full support for the CTBT and stresses the need for an early Entry into Force of the Treaty and its universalization, with the ultimate goal of eliminating nuclear weapons, and general and complete disarmament under strict and effective international control.

4. The Group takes note of the statement of the Executive Secretary at the 1st session of the Preparatory Committee of the 11th NPT Review Conference in Vienna. The Group also takes note of the preliminary report of the Science and Technology Conference Snt2023 and looks forward for the designed version. The Group notes that the Conference is an effective platform for an exchange of knowledge and ideas between the Preparatory Commission of the CTBTO and the broader scientific community.

5. 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,

6. 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 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 unauthenticated data of auxiliary seismic stations and looks forward to implementation of measures to remedy this challenge.

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 remain at 300 (93.5%) and 305 (90.5%) 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) 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.

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 looks forward to the resumption of the consultations to finalize direct and clear guidance for noble gas background characterization and recognize that the PTS has reaffirmed that it continues to observe the decision of the Commission that no campaign will be initiated in the future without guidance.

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 commission are not time bound and are requirement-based.

g) The Group looks forward to the implementation of the OSI programme of work 2022-2023, the development of the next OSI training plan, and the OSI exercise plan 2022-2025.

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,

7. 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, 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.

8. The Group expresses its support for projects, such as the Technical Experts Support Programme (TESP) that facilitate the participation of experts from developing countries in the WGB sessions. The Group is convinced that such participation will greatly contribute to capacity building in our countries.

9. 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.

10. The Group also reiterates that WGB report for its 61st session must be procedural, focusing on business continuity, and duly considered by technical experts from States Signatories.

11. 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,

12. 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.