



**Statement of the G-77 and China
during the Sixty-Fourth Session of Working Group A
delivered by H.E. Mr. Mohamed Hamdy ELMOLLA, Permanent Representative of Egypt
16– 18 October 2023**

Mr. Chair,

1. The Group of 77 and China would like to thank you, Ambassador Nguyen Trung Kien, for chairing this meeting and assures you of its full support and cooperation. The Group wishes to thank the Chair for all his efforts and exemplary leadership of Working Group A from August 2022 until December 2023.
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 non-verification related activities for the period from April-August 2023.
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, Sri Lanka, has ratified and Somalia has signed the Treaty, bringing the number of State Signatories to 187 and of ratifications to 178. 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. In this regard, the Group welcomes the convening of the thirteenth Art XIV Conference on facilitating the entry into force of the Treaty which took place in New York on 22 September 2023 and takes note of the adoption of the final Declaration of the Conference. The Group also appreciates the efforts exerted by States in this regard, and commends the efforts undertaken by Norway and Panama as Co-Presidents and thanks the PTS for organizing this event.

Mr. Chair,

5. The Group takes note of the Financial Statements of the Preparatory Commission for the Comprehensive Nuclear-Test-Ban Treaty Organization for 2023 and the 2024-2025 Programme and Budget Proposals: Final Draft, as contained in document CTBT/PTS/INF.1647/Rev.1. We look forward to continuing the efforts by the PTS to maintain a minimal as possible price adjustment and identifying means to ensure that financial resources are put to best use, taking into account a zero percent real growth policy in the budget and would like to present the following comments:

- (a) The Group takes note of the document 2024-2025 Programme and Budget Proposals: Final Draft (CTBT/PTS/INF.1647/Rev.1) in which it is indicated that the total 2024 Budget at estimated 2024 prices is \$133.72 in notional US\$ equivalent value, with an overall weighted average price adjustment of 4.2%. The Group notes that most of the 2024 Budget is allocated to verification activities (80.3%);
- (b) While appreciating the efforts made by the PTS in the 2024 – 2025 Programme and Budget Proposal, as contained in the final draft, the Group believes that there is a need for the PTS to identify further savings and efficiencies when elaborating future budgets. The difficult global macroeconomic circumstances have had a substantial negative impact on States Signatories, adding to the pertinent financial burdens and posing new challenges particularly for developing countries;
- (c) Notwithstanding the abovementioned, the Group reiterates the importance of ensuring that any savings neither jeopardize the effective strengthening of capacity building and training activities, which are aimed at increasing the capabilities of States Signatories to participate in the verification regime nor affects its quality. Therefore, the Group reiterates its position that capacity building activities should be funded in a sufficient, predictable and sustainable manner through the Regular Budget. The Group requests the PTS to continue providing information, documents and organizing briefings on this subject inter-sessionally;
- (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 draft decision on the carry forward of the Capital Investment Fund (CIF) and Multiyear Funds unspent balances backed by cash as of 31 December 2023 to the financial period 2024, as soon as the corresponding amounts are final and audited;
- (f) The Group is of the view that the Secretariat should continue convening necessary Expert Meetings 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).
- (i) The Group notes the efforts of the PTS providing records of the sessions of the Commission and its subsidiary bodies, in all languages, on the ECS.

6. The Group takes note of the information paper outlining the proposal for the use of the 2020-2021 cash surplus contained in document (CTBT/PTS/INF.1675), including in addressing the unfunded requirements of the 2024-2025 programme and budget. The Group urges the PTS to ensure adequate allotment of the cash surplus to capacity building related activities notably the Capacity Building Fund.

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.

Mr. Chair,

8. 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.

9. 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 41%. 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.

10. The Group looks forward to a constructive deliberation, timely and consensual conclusion of the work of this Working Group and all other subsidiary bodies of the PrepCom.

Thank you, Mr. Chair.