G-77 and China Statement during the 63rd Session of Working Group B,
27 August – 6 September 2024
delivered by H.E. Ms. Laura Gil,
Ambassador, Permanent Representative of Colombia

Mr. Chair,

1. The Group is pleased to see you Dr. Erlan Batyrbekov, as Chairperson of Working Group B and, conducting our work in this 63rd Session together with the Vice-Chairs and Task Leaders. The Group assures you of its full cooperation.

2. The Group thanks Dr. Robert Floyd, the Executive Secretary, for his opening remarks and takes note of his report on verification related activities for the period from January to June 2024. We also take note of the documents prepared for this session by the Provisional Technical Secretariat (PTS).

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 2nd session of the Preparatory Committee of the 11th NPT Review Conference in Geneva.

5. The Science and Technology Conference is an effective platform for an exchange of knowledge and ideas with the broader scientific community. The Group takes note of the report of the 2023 Conference.

6. 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,

7. 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.

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 and certified stations remain at 301 and 292 respectively (of 321 total stations) and the number of certified facilities is at 306 (of 337 total).

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. The Group looks forward to the resumption of these consultations at the next session of the PrepCom with a view to finalize it at the earliest. We 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 welcomes the completion of RIC 26 that was held in Egypt and takes note of the BUE 24 that took place in Hungary.

h) The Group notes document CTBT/PTS.INF.1685 titled “International Monitoring System Sustainment Strategy: Technical Approach” and will continue to support the PTS’s efforts to ensure the operationalization of the verification regime. The Group further notes the document CTBT/PTS/INF.1712 titled “International Monitoring System Sustainment Strategy: A

Comprehensive Forecast of Long Term Requirement". The Group requests the PTS to provide regular updates to States Signatories on the long term IMS sustainment strategy and its funding needs.

i) In light of the global economic climate in which developing countries are facing severe challenges, the Group requests the PTS to take into account the importance of a zero percent real growth in the regular budget and the need to continue to maintain such, and to find further savings and efficiencies as well as seek other modalities in funding the IMS sustainment gap and, considering the preparatory nature of the Commission, the Group emphasizes the need to adhere to the nature and purpose of the provisional operation and maintenance guidelines, and relevant decisions thereafter. The Group also emphasizes that IMS sustainment should work in tandem with relevant progress in building the capacity of State Signatories, especially developing countries, to benefit from and use the verification regime upon entry into force, including through the NDC4all initiative.

Mr. Chair,

8. The Group emphasizes the importance of capacity building, and expresses its appreciation to the PTS for its efforts in providing and expanding its capacity-building activities of introductory and advanced courses, technical training, and workshops using in-person, online and hybrid formats. The continuous need for cooperation and support and the provision of technical assistance, in particular to developing countries, ensures that all State Signatories 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.

9. 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 continues to witness that such participation contributes at the technical level towards the wider and equal participation of all State Signatories to the policy-making organs of the Organization.

10. 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 IDC products.

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. 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.

12. The Group requests the PTS to include in its next relevant report concrete actions for the realization of the principle of equitable geographical distribution, in order to improve the current representation of developing countries in the PTS.

13. The Group welcomes the efforts of the PTS for improving and strengthening gender balance, including through increased support for the mentoring programme for early career women in STEM coming from geographical regions which are under-represented in CTBTO staff, the application and inclusion of gender consideration in the selection of TESP candidates, capacity building, training activities and conferences with the aim to actively boost women involvement in CTBT activities.

14. The Group welcomes the efforts of the PTS for improving and strengthening of multilingualism, including, developing technical documents and organizing regional meetings in CTBTO languages other than English and looks forward to continuing the work on this matter. The Group welcomes the PTS' plan to expand its NDC training events to all languages of the Commission including the addition of a NDC training workshop in Arabic to the 2024 calendar and in French and Spanish in 2025.

15. 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.