

Statement by Representatives of Non-Governmental Organizations on the Comprehensive Nuclear Test Ban Treaty (CTBT) to the Preparatory Meeting for the 2010 Review Conference for the Treaty on the Nonproliferation of Nuclear Weapons

Distinguished delegates,

The history of the nuclear age makes clear that opportunities to reduce the risks posed by nuclear weapons are often fleeting. When the right political conditions are in place, government leaders must seize the chance to make progress.

Now is such a time.

Entry into force of the Comprehensive Nuclear Test Ban Treaty (CTBT) is within sight. Since the idea of a ban on nuclear testing was first proposed in the 1950s, it has stood among the highest priorities on the international nonproliferation and disarmament agenda. The CTBT is more important now than ever.

By banning all nuclear weapon test explosions, including very low-yield hydronuclear explosions, the CTBT limits the ability of established nuclear-weapon states to field more sophisticated warheads and makes it far more difficult for newer members of the club to perfect smaller, more easily deliverable warheads. For this reason, CTBT ratification has long been considered essential to the fulfillment of Article VI of the NPT and the goal of "effective measures relating to cessation of the nuclear arms race at an early date and to nuclear disarmament."

The CTBT also serves to reinforce the nonproliferation system by acting as a downstream confidence-building measure about a state's nuclear intentions and, in this regard, it can help head-off and de-escalate regional tensions. With no shortage of conflict and hostility in the Middle East, ratification by Israel, Egypt and Iran would reduce nuclear-weapons-related security concerns in the region. It would also help create the conditions necessary for the realization of a zone free of nuclear weapons and other weapons of mass destruction in the Middle East, as called for in the Middle East Resolution adopted by the 1995 NPT Review Conference.

India and Pakistan could substantially ease regional tensions and demonstrate nuclear restraint by converting their unilateral test moratoria into a legally-binding commitment to end nuclear testing through the CTBT.

With the CTBT in force, global and national capabilities to detect and deter possible clandestine nuclear testing by other states will be significantly greater. Entry-into-force is essential to making short-notice, on-site inspections possible and maintaining long-term political and financial support from other nations for the

operation of the International Monitoring System and International Data Center.

The CTBT has near-universal support: 180 nations have signed and 148 have ratified the Treaty. Last fall, the UN General Assembly voted 175-1 in favor of The CTBT-and we expect that the one "no" vote by the United States to become a "yes" vote this year. We applaud those states that support of the Treaty and make their full financial contribution to the build-up and operation of the international monitoring and verification system.

Unfortunately, broad support is not enough. Article XIV of the Treaty provides that in order to enter into force, ratification is needed from a number of key players. Nine necessary states have failed to ratify the CTBT and are therefore delaying its entry into force.

Ratification by the United States and China is particularly important. Given their existing nuclear test moratoria and 1996 signature of the CTBT, Washington and Beijing already bear most CTBT-related responsibilities, yet their failure to ratify has denied them and others the full security benefits of CTBT entry into force.

The United States is poised to be a leader on the CTBT once again as President Barack Obama has pledged to achieve ratification "as soon as practical." We applaud his April 5 statement in Prague in which he said:

"To achieve a global ban on nuclear testing, my administration will immediately and aggressively pursue U.S. ratification of the Comprehensive Test Ban Treaty. After more than five decades of talks, it is time for the testing of nuclear weapons to finally be banned."

To do so, President Obama must convince two-thirds of the Senate that the treaty enhances U.S. security, is effectively verifiable, and would not compromise future efforts to maintain the reliability, safety, or security of the United States' remaining stockpile of nuclear warheads. Technical advances in each of these areas over the past decade should make the case for the CTBT even stronger than it was in 1999 when the Senate failed to provide its advice and consent for ratification.

The Obama administration's effort will require sustained, top-level leadership. His efforts will have the full support of a wide array of NGOs in the United States and around the globe.

For years, Chinese government representatives have reported that the CTBT is before the National People's Congress for consideration but has apparently taken no action to win legislative approval needed for ratification.

Washington's renewed pursuit of CTBT ratification opens up opportunities for China and other Annex II states, such as Indonesia, to lead the way toward entry into force by ratifying before the United States does. Action by Beijing would increase its credibility as a nonproliferation leader and improve the chances that other states in Asia, as well as the United States, would follow suit. Ratification by

Indonesia would enhance its reputation as a world leader and agent for international security.

If Israel were to ratify the CTBT, it would bring that nation closer to the nuclear nonproliferation mainstream and help encourage other states in the region to do so.

Iranian ratification would help reduce concerns that its nuclear program could be used to develop and deploy deliverable nuclear warheads. Continued failure by Iran to ratify the CTBT raises further questions about the nature of its sensitive nuclear fuel cycle activities.

The recent decision of the government of the Democratic Peoples Republic of North Korea to suspend its participation in the Six-Party Denuclearization process is deeply disappointing. We sincerely urge the Pyongyang to refrain from further nuclear testing and we urge the effective and rapid implementation of the commitments made pursuant to the Six-Party agreements by all involved as a step toward mutual security, as well as CTBT entry into force.

If India and Pakistan wish to be regarded as responsible states with advanced nuclear technology, they need to engage more widely and deeply with the international community in support of meaningful and legally-binding nuclear nonproliferation and disarmament measures, particularly the CTBT, as well those outlined in UN Security Council Resolution 1172 of June 1998. The decision last year by the Nuclear Suppliers Group to adopt a proposal by the United States and other key supplier states to grant India-a non-signatory to the NPT and the CTBT-a once-off exemption from NSG nuclear trading restrictions was deeply disappointing to many and contrary to the 1995 NPT Review Conference commitment to engage in nuclear trade only with those states that accept full-scope safeguards.

In the wake of that episode, leading states have a responsibility to work much harder to encourage India to meet the same nonproliferation and disarmament standards expected of other states, including ratification of the CTBT. Responsible nuclear supplier states should also make it clear to Indian officials, as the United States has already done, that as a matter of national policy they will terminate nuclear trade with any state that conducts a nuclear test explosion regardless of the circumstances.

To help put the CTBT over the finish line, we also strongly urge that like-minded pro-CTBT states work together to develop a common diplomatic strategy to persuade the remaining states to sign and/or ratify the treaty. Pro-CTBT states should announce their intention to execute that strategy at the September 23-25 Conference on Facilitating the Entry into Force of the CTBT at the United Nations here New York. To reinforce their commitment to the purpose and objectives of the CTBT, we also call upon all nuclear-armed nations to adopt clear policies not to develop or produce new design warheads or to modify existing warhead types in a manner that creates new military capabilities. The Obama administration has taken

an important step in this direction by stating that it will "stop the development of new nuclear weapons."

To increase confidence in their commitment to the CTBT, we urge nuclear-armed states to seriously consider joining France in closing their test sites to all nuclear weapons-related research activities and experiments, particularly those involving fissile material, and, in the meantime, to adopt additional transparency measures at their test sites.

CTBT entry into force is within reach. The next one to two years may represent the best opportunity to secure the future of this long-awaited and much-needed treaty. We urge you to act now and to act with boldness.

Thank you.

This statement was coordinated by the Arms Control Association and has been endorsed by the following individuals and organizations:

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