



European Union
Statement on the occasion of the 53rd Session of
CTBTO Working Group B
26 August - 6 September 2019

Final

Mr. Chair,

1. I have the honour to speak on behalf of the European Union. The following countries align themselves with this statement: Turkey[§], the Republic of North Macedonia*, Montenegro*, Iceland*, Serbia*, Albania*, Bosnia and Herzegovina*, Norway*, Ukraine, the Republic of Moldova, Georgia.

2. We thank you, Mr Chairman, and also the Provisional Technical Secretariat (PTS) for the thorough preparation of this meeting. We also congratulate the appointment of Namibia as Working Group A Chair.

3. The efforts to promote and facilitate signature and ratification of the CTBT remain a priority. The EU looks forward to the Article XIV Conference to be held on 25 September in New York and encourages all parties to continue to work constructively towards a consensus on the draft ministerial declaration. This event provides a platform to engage with the remaining Annex 2 States: Egypt, China, Iran, Israel, and the US that still have to ratify the Treaty and the DPRK, India and Pakistan that still have to sign and ratify it in order to bring it into force. The EU strongly encourages the remaining Annex 2 States to attend the Article XIV Conference. EU Member States have done their part by ratifying the Treaty years ago and will continue to call upon the outstanding countries to do the same without any preconditions or further delay. The EU will also continue to call on all States to maintain moratoria on nuclear weapon test explosions or any other nuclear explosion, and to refrain from any action that would defeat the object and purpose of the Treaty.

4. In addition to highlighting the CTBT's obvious contribution to international peace and security, the Article XIV Conference will also be an opportunity to showcase the CTBTO's sophisticated and near complete multilateral verification system, which is an asset to the international community. To make best use of our collective investment, the EU also advocates fully exploiting potential benefits of civil and scientific applications of IMS data and financially supports capacity building for developing countries in this regard. These services using verification technologies were presented at the CTBT's Science and Technology Conference in June. We would like to congratulate the PTS for the organization of this successful event and stress the importance of ongoing cooperation of the CTBTO with scientists worldwide.

5. As part of the CTBTO's Integrated Capacity Building, technical workshops assist States in using IMS data and IDC products to support civil and scientific applications and

[§] Candidate Country

* Candidate Countries Republic of North Macedonia, Montenegro, Serbia and Albania as well as potential Candidate Country Bosnia and Herzegovina continue to be part of the Stabilisation and Association Process.

* Iceland, Norway and Liechtenstein are members of the EFTA and of the European Economic Area.

research associated with Treaty-related verification technologies, including tsunami and volcanic ash cloud warning. We encourage the PTS to continue co-operating with other international organisations to support its activities, such as atmospheric transport modelling with the World Meteorological Organisation.

6. These activities also strengthen the CTBTO's verification regime which is important for the EU. We continue to provide voluntary contributions to support the verification regime as well as capacity building and outreach. Our continued political and financial commitment to the Organization is also in-line with UNSC Resolution 2310.

Mr. Chair,

7. We welcome that construction works have commenced at future IMS stations in Argentina and Russia and that further station installations and constructions are expected soon.

8. At the same time we are concerned by the fact that several radionuclide stations have stopped functioning since 8 August. We request the operator to provide information on the fallout and make them start functioning as soon as possible.

9. Accurate and timely International Data Centre (IDC) reports and station reliability are essential. It remains vital that States Signatories provide data to the CTBTO from all stations that they host. In this regard we are pleased that two radionuclide stations in China have recently restarted transmitting data. Data provision would increase if certified stations transitioned from testing and evaluation to post-certification activities. Furthermore, we urge all States to ensure the long term sustainability of stations, to develop operation and maintenance plans in accordance with the standard template and to keep an active dialogue with the PTS to guarantee that stations operate according to Treaty standards. With IMS construction ongoing for over 20 years, there is no excuse for further delay in certifying and operating all stations. We encourage all States Signatories to co-operate with the PTS to that effect.

10. Mobile monitoring systems are also essential for the functioning of the IDC in helping to further understand the global background for all four IMS technologies. We agree with the report of the 52nd session of Working Group B that such noble gas related activity should study the characterization of global radionuclide background and focus on the calibration and performance of the verification system as described in the Treaty. These background studies using mobile monitoring systems not part of the IMS have been going on for years to improve the performance of the verification regime and ensure the correct detection of events. Therefore this activity is part of, and helps carrying out the mandate of the PTS. We welcome such new mobile system campaigns using noble gas technology in Japan and infrasound technology in Costa Rica.

11. The EU considers additional IMS certifications a priority and encourages the Executive Secretary to continue reaching out to State Signatories to this end. It is also essential that States Signatories keep cooperating with the PTS to maintain and enhance the efficiency and effectiveness of the verification system established by the Preparatory Commission. To help this process States could apply fast track tax free customs clearance to the import of relevant equipment for IMS stations.

12. Turning to the issue of the DPRK, the EU urges the DPRK to embark on a credible path towards a complete, verifiable and irreversible denuclearisation. The EU encourages the DPRK in particular to further engage in meaningful discussions with all relevant parties, as the international community works towards lasting peace and security on the Korea Peninsula. In this context, the CTBTO and its expertise could make an important contribution. The EU also looks forward to a renewed momentum of the diplomatic

process that has contributed to easing tensions over the past year. An essential element of this is the signature and ratification of the CTBT without delay.

13. Following the DPRK's nuclear tests the CTBTO demonstrated its invaluable role in quickly providing reliable and independent data, something that no single country could do, enabling the international community to respond appropriately and swiftly. The EU reiterates its confidence in the CTBT's verification regime and looks forward to the completion of the IMS. We recognise the deterrence effect against non-compliance with the Treaty and the ability to respond to threats to international peace and security that it provides.

14. Acknowledging the importance for the IMS to have the full capacity to verify and monitor the DPRK's announced suspension on nuclear tests, we note some improvement in data availability from radionuclide stations. However problems at some IMS stations still persist. Given the direct impact on the Organization's ability to detect a potential nuclear test, at the last PrepCom we requested the PTS to work with the States concerned and inform States Signatories before this Working Group B session on plans and timelines to resolve data availability and quality issues. We look forward to further progress in this respect.

15. We are pleased that the PTS continues to perform station calibrations that play an essential role in the proper interpretation of signals recorded by IMS facilities. The work to optimize the performance of monitoring technologies in order to keep abreast of technological advances is increasingly important. In this regard we recognize the efforts of the PTS in achieving major upgrades and revalidations to preserve the investment in the network.

16. The EU congratulates the PTS on the timely completion of the Technology, Support and Training Centre, that was opened in Seibersdorf in June. We also welcome the continued implementation of the OSI action plan for 2016-2019 and note the progress in the third training cycle for surrogate inspectors and the organisation of the Build-up Exercises to be held in Slovakia. The OSI and IDC Divisions also completed a joint project launching a renovated Operations Centre, ensuring efficient and cost-effective network and support operations. Furthermore, it is important to ensure that this new facility and especially its scientific devices will be well maintained following the annual plans.

17. Regarding the preparation of the verification-related elements of the 2020-2021 Programme and Budget, we consider it important that a high proportion of resources continue to be dedicated to verification-related activities. We appreciate the PTS's efforts to identify and implement cost-saving and efficiency measures, while ensuring that the budget is guided by the needs of the programme. We request the PTS to ensure, through efficiency and cost containment measures that programme activities remain consistent with a realistic budget level, in light of the austerity context and budgetary restrictions. In future budget cycles, any identified savings could potentially be used to offset the price adjustment and we encourage the PTS to consider this as an option.

18. On the payment of assessed contributions, we are extremely concerned by the fact that some 67 States Signatories have persistently failed to honour their financial obligations to the Organization, resulting in a suspension of their voting rights. These unpaid contributions are a serious liability for the completion, maintenance and development of the IMS, IDC and OSI capabilities as well as for the further development of related capacity building. Therefore, we appreciate that some States have settled outstanding contributions and negotiated a payment plan and encourage other States to follow this positive example.

Thank you, Mr. Chair.