

Statement of the Head of the Delegation of Austria

on the occasion of the visit of Dr. Lassina Zerbo, Executive Secretary of the Comprehensive Nuclear-Test-Ban-Treaty Organisation (CTBTO)

Conference on Disarmament

Geneva, 25 May 2021

Mr. President,

Allow me to congratulate you upon your assumption of the presidency of the CD, Austria fully supports your efforts. Austria is aligned with the EU statement and would like to offer the following remarks in a national capacity.

Let me start by thanking you for continuing the thematic debates, as by prerogative of the Presidency, after the failure to adopt a Programme of work or a decision on the establishment of subsidiary bodies at the beginning of the year.

It is indeed concerning to see a persistent lack of political will to put the Conference on Disarmament back on substantive track. Today's topic - the CTBT the last treaty negotiated by this forum - is of utmost importance for us and I would like to (join others) in welcoming Executive Secretary Dr Zerbo.

Dr. Zerbo,

I commend you and the staff in the Provisional Technical Secretariat for your tireless work in the past eight years as Executive Secretary and, before this as Director of the International Data Centre, in promoting the entry into force and universal adherence to the CTBT and in building and strengthening the Treaty's verification system.

At a time where the nuclear disarmament architecture is under severe strain, the CTBTO demonstrates time and again the benefits of multilateral cooperation. Even though the CTBT is yet to enter into force, the CTBTO has made outstanding contributions to regional and international security. Its global, high-tech network of monitoring stations has collected reliable and high quality data, which is essential in verifying nuclear disarmament as well as in deterring non-compliance with the treaty. We welcome that new momentum on CTBT ratifications is emerging and welcome Comoros and Cuba as the most recent ratifying states. The CTBTO has demonstrated without a doubt that the organization is ready for the entry into force and for the verification mandate it is to carry out. Political will, or lack thereof, is the problem that has so far prevented this key treaty from coming into legal force. We welcome moratoria of nuclear testing but they are no substitute for ratifications and the CTBT in legal force.

We therefore urge all States that have not yet done so, in particular those listed in Annex II of the Treaty, to sign and ratify the CTBT without any preconditions or further delay.

Nuclear testing is a security and a humanitarian challenge. Just in recent months new studies on the longlasting humanitarian consequences of nuclear testing again further clarified the impact nuclear testing had and continues to have on the affected populations. The CTBT negotiated more than 25 ago encompasses the strong will of the international community to once and for all end nuclear testing. In recent years, only one country decided tested nuclear weapons, and the position of my country regularly on DPRK nuclear tests remains firm.

Beyond this, we welcome the many contributions by the CTBTO to the development of synergies, using its data in non-nuclear applications like climate modelling and tsunami early warning systems. The cooperation and close interaction with the scientific community has been enriching.

Let me also use this opportunity to congratulate Dr. Robert Floyd on his election as the new CTBTO Executive Secretary. Austria is looking forward to working with you side by side to strengthen the CTBTO and to, finally, bring this vital treaty into force.

In closing let me reiterate that Austria, as a proud host to the Organization will continue to use every opportunity to advocate for the ratification and universalization of the CTBT.

Thank you, Mr. President