**STATEMENT**

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**MINISTER OF FOREIGN AFFAIRS OF THE REPUBLIC OF SLOVENIA**

**Eleventh Conference of Facilitating the Entry into Force of the Comprehensive Nuclear-Test-Ban Treaty**

**(New York, 25 September 2019)**

Co-presidents, Mr. Secretary-General, Mr. Executive Secretary, fellow Ministers, Excellences, Ladies and Gentlemen,

There is no doubt that nuclear tests are today regarded as anomalies and aberrations, which represent a threat to international peace and security. They undermine the global non-proliferation regime.

But let me start on a slightly different note. Recently, the TV miniseries "Chernobyl" eerily captured the gruesome effects of radiation. In real fact, the radioactive particles from the explosion in 1986 still present a serious health risk to the lives of many people. Medical estimates suggest up to 4,000 people will die prematurely due to radiation exposure and thousands more still suffer the effects of radiation on their health.

My country is making an effort to do its part in alleviating the consequences of the disaster. Since 2015, Slovenia has been supporting a project, implemented by ITF Enhancing Human Security. It provides medical rehabilitation for Belarusian children that have suffered consequences of radiation as a legacy of the nuclear accident.

We rarely consider the consequences of nuclear tests in a similar fashion as nuclear disasters. According to a Report of the United Nations Scientific Committee, the main man-made contribution to the exposure of the world's population to radiation has come from the testing of nuclear weapons. Each test released into the environment substantial quantities of radioactive materials, which were widely dispersed and deposited everywhere on the Earth’s surface.

Of course it is difficult to assess the number of casualties that might be attributed to radiation exposure from nuclear testing. But some studies estimate that this number can go as high as hundreds of thousands.

With this in mind, we should all be grateful for the powerful norm against nuclear testing, established by the Comprehensive Nuclear-Test-Ban Treaty (CTBT).

Co-presidents,

I am confident that a rules-based international order, with multilateralism as its key principle, is at the heart of our common interests. My country is fully committed to preserve and advance effective, treaty-based international arms control, disarmament and non-proliferation. These are the key pillars of global peace and security.

The CTBT presents a prominent case for the importance of multilateralism. The Comprehensive Nuclear-Test-Ban Treaty Organization (CTBTO) has provided the international community with something no single country could accomplish all by itself. It has established a truly global, state-of-the-art monitoring system for nuclear explosions.

As a part of the CTBT's verification regime, the International Monitoring System (IMS) not only deters non-compliance with the Treaty, but provides data that can be used for a variety of civil and scientific applications.

Slovenia will continue to advocate the full utilization of the potential benefits of these applications, since they can contribute to sustainable development, knowledge expansion and human welfare. In terms of maintenance and continued development of the CTBT's verification regime, I would like to commend the Preparatory Commission for the CTBTO, as well as the Provisional Technical Secretariat for their hard work and commitment.

Co-presidents,

Just recently, 20 years have passed since Slovenia's ratification of the Treaty. For Slovenia, the CTBT is one of the key elements of the international disarmament and non-proliferation architecture and this is why it is more than ever vital for the international community to ensure its prompt entry into force. In this connection, I would like to welcome the recent ratification by Zimbabwe.

Despite all the efforts, the threat of testing and misuse of the nuclear weapons is still very much present.

The dangerous developments in the recent years on the Korean Peninsula provide a grim example. Slovenia is nevertheless encouraged by recent steps in the right direction and in this context calls on DPRK to engage constructively in meaningful dialogue with all relevant parties aimed at achieving a complete, verifiable and irreversible denuclearization. We also urge DPRK to sign and ratify the CTBT without delay and comply with its provisions.

Co-presidents,

Before concluding, I would like to highlight that Slovenia appreciates the efforts of the Executive Secretary of the CTBTO to increase the role of women and youth in the work of the CTBTO. We believe that women and girls, as agents of and for change, can be an important driving force behind CTBT. Therefore it is important that we maintain our focus on creating an environment, which will offer more opportunities for them to pursue careers in science, technology and non-proliferation. I would like to ensure the Executive Secretary that Slovenia will continue to be a reliable partner in achieving this goal.

Slovenia will continue to contribute its assessed contributions to the CTBTO regular budget in full and on time. I would like to encourage other states to do the same.

There cannot be a world without nuclear weapons, if we are not able to ban nuclear weapons testing first. If we ever hope to rid the world of nuclear weapons, the entry into force of the CTBT is surely the first step to take. Let me thus call, before concluding, upon all States, which have not yet done so, to sign and ratify the CTBT, in particular those whose ratification is needed for the Treaty to take effect.

Thank you