

Remarks by H.E. S.A. Blok Minister of Foreign Affairs of the Kingdom of the Netherlands

At the occasion of

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

(New York, 25 September 2019)

Check against delivery

Co-presidents,

It is a pleasure to speak at the 11th conference on facilitating the Entry into Force of the Comprehensive Nuclear-Test-Ban Treaty. It has been 23 years since the presentation of the CTBT (Comprehensive Test-Ban Treaty), and we are still moving towards its full entry into force. Like a marathon runner, on a sometimes slow, but steady course, step-by-step we are making progress.

Despite the fact that the Treaty is still not in force, the Preparatory Commission of the CTBTO has already laid the groundwork for the future work of the organization. I would like to start by commending the organization for this.

NL considers the CTBT to be a key part of the international non-proliferation and disarmament regime. With clear definitions, and an operational international system of verification the CTBT is a crucial part of the course towards a nuclear weapon free world. Comprehensively prohibiting the testing of nuclear devices will make it much more difficult for states to obtain and further develop nuclear weapons.

With the notable and regrettable exception of North Korea there have been no nuclear weapons tests in the 21st century. The CTBT effectively codifies the international moratorium on testing nuclear weapons.

The CTBTO's International Monitoring System (IMS) swiftly detected those tests that were conducted. The advanced system of verification ensures that no nuclear test can evade the eyes and ears of the international community.

The value of the IMS is not limited to detecting nuclear tests. With over 300 measuring systems worldwide, the system provides for valuable data that the scientific community can

use. It has proven its value as a warning system for detecting tsunamis, volcanic eruptions and earthquakes. NL remains a proud contributor to the development of the IMS.

Since the presentation of the draft CTBT - by our ambassador Ramaker - NL has also been actively involved in trying to convince those states that have not done so to sign and ratify the CTBT. This remains particularly relevant for the Annex 2 states; the states whose support is necessary for the entry into force of the agreement. We urge all states who have not done so to sign and ratify the treaty.

As I mentioned, moving international disarmament agreements forward sometimes feels like running a marathon. It takes preparation, time and effort. However if we continue to stay on track, hold a steady pace and encourage others to run with us in the right direction we can make it to the finish line. We can get the CTBT implemented. I hope that you will join us in moving toward this common goal.