

STATEMENT BY THE UNITED KINGDOM OF GREAT BRITAIN AND
NORTHERN IRELAND

TO THE CONFERENCE ON FACILITATING THE ENTRY INTO FORCE OF
THE CTBT

Delivered by Baroness Symons of Vernham Dean,
Minister of State
1530, 3 September 2003, Vienna

Mr President,

I would like to begin by congratulating Finland, a fellow EU member, on assuming the Presidency for this third conference on Facilitating the Entry into Force of the Comprehensive Nuclear Test Ban Treaty.

I would like to thank you as President, the Government of Austria and the Provisional Technical Secretariat for all of your hard work in preparing for this conference.

I would also like to associate the United Kingdom with the earlier statement made by my Italian colleague on behalf of the EU and assure you all of the UK's continued strong support of the CTBT and its entry into force.

Since the second Entry Into Force Conference in 2001, the UK has emphasised the two main security threats for the twenty-first century – terrorism, and the proliferation of weapons of mass destruction and their means of delivery.

We all know there is no panacea to counter the threat posed by the proliferation of WMD. Nor is there a 'one-size-fits-all' policy we can apply. All proliferators, whether from countries of concern or from non-state actors, pose a challenge to the entire international community. We must work together to ensure that our response to these proliferators is tailored to each specific circumstance.

In pursuing our goal of the elimination of WMD, we have to use the means that we judge will be most effective in each particular case. There are a number of tools at the disposal of the international community. All are necessary: none is sufficient in itself.

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For over three decades, the spread of nuclear, chemical and biological weapons has been successfully limited by international arms control and disarmament agreements.

These multilateral treaties and the regimes they establish help to deter, to complicate, and to raise the political cost of pursuing WMD.

But these treaties are not yet universal and recent experience has demonstrated all too clearly that, on their own, they cannot prevent determined proliferators from simply not complying with their international obligations.

Nonetheless, they continue to have a crucially important role to play. The prohibition of all nuclear weapon test explosions or any other nuclear explosions and entry into force of a CTBT will constitute an essential step towards achieving nuclear non-proliferation and towards nuclear disarmament.

A fully functioning International Monitoring System, as required by the Treaty, will allow the detection of any nuclear explosions undertaken by any would-be possessor of nuclear weapons. That really is a breathtaking capability and will further raise the political cost of travelling down the road in the first place. It is a valuable tool in the international quest to deter and prevent nuclear proliferation.

Over half the United Nations members have now signed and ratified the CTBT. This includes 32 of the 44 states whose ratifications are required for entry into force. In this context the UK particularly welcomes the recent ratification by Algeria.

Like many of our colleagues who have spoken today, we urge all states that have not yet done so to sign and ratify the CTBT as soon as possible. In the meantime we welcome the fact that several countries that have not yet felt able to sign or ratify the Treaty are nonetheless maintaining moratoria on nuclear explosions. We, the UK, have not carried out any nuclear explosions since November 1991.

The United Kingdom continues to show its commitment to the CTBT in several ways.

We continue to give strong support to the verification mechanisms required under the Treaty. These help to sustain and to promote support for the CTBT and therefore move us closer to entry into force.

We follow with interest the progress made on the establishment and the running of the various stations comprising the International Monitoring System - though of course, we would have preferred it if the original target dates for completion could have been met. We note with regret, however, that the Provisional Technical Secretariat does not always receive the full and speedy

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co-operation of countries hosting monitoring stations, nor does it always receive the real time data that it requires or needs.

The potential effect of these shortcomings is to downgrade the value of this vital monitoring system and risk weakening support for the International Monitoring System and the Treaty as a whole, as well as to jeopardise our investment to-date. We therefore call on all countries hosting monitoring stations to facilitate the work of the Provisional Technical Secretariat.

We hope too that work on the on-site inspection manual can be accelerated and agreed in the near future.

I would also like to say a few words of support for the work being carried out on the civil and scientific applications of the verification systems. This was begun by the Provisional Technical Secretariat, in conjunction with the UK, in London in May 2002 and has subsequently been followed up by a number of countries. The main purpose of the verification systems remains quite clearly the verification of compliance with the Treaty. But this additional exploitation of the highly important scientific knowledge involved, for example, for disaster management or environmental research, could provide further benefits for States, and therefore help encourage them to sign and ratify the Treaty.

All this important work carried out by the Preparatory Commission, the Provisional Technical Secretariat and its Executive Secretary, to bring the Treaty into force, obviously requires funding. There is a high collection rate of assessed contributions. Nonetheless, we would ask that those in arrears make the necessary payments as quickly as possible.

Mr President,

May I say again and emphasize the UK's continued support of the CTBT and its entry into force. We continue to call on those who have still to sign or ratify do so soon as soon as possible.

Thank you Mr President.