

**REMARKS BY THE EXECUTIVE SECRETARY ELECT,
MR LASSINA ZERBO, TO THE FORTIETH SESSION OF THE
PREPARATORY COMMISSION**

INTRODUCTION

1. In light of our busy schedule today, I will be brief in my remarks. At the next session of the Preparatory Commission in October, I will discuss further my ideas and programmes for advancing the cause of the Treaty and the work of the Commission.
2. I would like to start by joining Ambassador Tibor Tóth in extending a very warm welcome to His Excellency Blaise Compaoré, the President of Burkina Faso, and members of his esteemed delegation.
3. As a citizen of Burkina Faso, Your Excellency, I take pride in your participation at the Commission and in your unwavering support for the Treaty and our organization. Thank you very much, Mr President.
4. Your presence here today and your inspiring speech will certainly help raise the Treaty's profile. I sincerely hope that other statesmen will follow suit and that we will witness more high level participation in the future.
5. I should also take this opportunity to say how honoured I am to have been elected as the next Executive Secretary of the Preparatory Commission. I am grateful to States Signatories for their support and the trust they have bestowed on me.
6. I am aware of the profound responsibility that comes with this trust. And I will do whatever is in my power to discharge my duties in the most professional manner. I am also conscious both of potential challenges that lie before us and of opportunities that should be seized.

NEW APPROACHES

7. We have a very audacious mandate and it is important to have a clear vision of how to accomplish it effectively.
8. We should uphold and further strengthen the established international norm against nuclear testing. We have to possess a very reliable and high quality verification capability that keeps pace with scientific and technological evolution. We need to constantly maintain our verification system and increase our operational capabilities. And we are obliged to provide States Signatories with quality data and products round the clock.
9. The main question, though, is to achieve all these without imposing heavy financial burdens on States Signatories. This clearly demands close cooperation between all stakeholders. We should collectively seek new and innovative ideas on how to discharge our mandate in a more efficient manner.
10. In considering a strategic orientation for the future activities of the Commission, I have taken careful note of several salient factors. The first is the priorities that you have identified. I have also weighed up other key factors, such as improved focus on essential activities, as well as further advances in efficiency, streamlining and cost saving. There is one more important element that has to be taken into consideration. That element is the opportunity cost. As is the case with business and financial decisions, our activities should have a solid business justification to ensure that we achieve the highest value for any given undertaking by the Commission.
11. Realizing the financial austerity experienced by States Signatories, we will focus on fewer strategic goals.
12. At the top of the list is balanced development of all parts of the Treaty's verification regime. To that end, further development of on-site inspection (OSI) will receive a high priority. Network coverage and data availability are vital to the activities of the Commission. This requires continuous sustainment of the International Monitoring System (IMS) network and its recapitalization. It also demands a dynamic International Data Centre (IDC), benefiting from technological innovations and emerging technological updates. For the latter, we will continue the work on IDC software re-engineering, technology foresight and interactions with science and technology.
13. Promotion of the Treaty and its universality is a very important undertaking. You have already heard about my idea of setting up a Group of Eminent Persons. The initiative has received strong support. Preparations are under way and it will be launched very soon.
14. In addition, our activities in this area require some shifting of focus. While pushing for ratification of the Treaty by the remaining Annex 2 States, we must encourage non-Annex-2 States that have already signed the Treaty to move towards ratification.

15. Most of you have underscored the significance of the capacity building activities of the organization. I definitely subscribe to that. Strengthening the national capacities of States Signatories, in particular developing countries, is a rewarding investment. It helps States Signatories better fulfil their Treaty obligations. It also allows better utilization of the data and products of our verification system.
16. I believe this is not a one way street. In certain cases, the National Data Centres and other national institutions that are empowered through our capacity building programme can assist us in our analysis of the data and provision of quality data products. One recent example is the collaboration of several national institutions in analysis of noble gas detections from station RN38 at Takasaki in Japan.
17. Thus we will intensify our capacity building activities on the basis of our core competencies. To make more out of the existing resources, we will look into recalibration of our capacity building and Capacity Development Initiative activities. Through this, we will also attempt to tune our activities to the needs of States Signatories.
18. Our fixed costs, in particular costs related to post-certification activities, are increasing. At the same time, there are some important unfunded tasks for which we should mobilize resources. I am sure you will agree that adhering to a zero real growth budget is becoming tougher.
19. In search of solutions, it is necessary to think 'out of the box'. And I intend to entertain the idea of setting up a donor support group that could help in exploring alternative financing mechanisms. This is an initial idea and needs further examination. I will keep you informed on this issue as things evolve further.
20. Improved management and coordination are key factors in realization of our strategic goals and priorities. Therefore some administrative changes will be introduced to ensure better support for successful operation and sustainment of the verification system and development of OSI operational capability.
21. In responding to your demand, I intend to reduce the number of consultants. We have already started our homework. A study is under way to identify where and how much we might be able to cut. We are also trying to establish a modality for the long term services that are presently provided by consultants. One proposal is to design specific projects for such services and recruit the necessary project staff.

CONCLUSION

22. In conclusion, I must pay tribute to Ambassador Tibor Tóth, who spared no time or effort in advancing the Treaty and ensuring the incremental development of the Commission. As Director of the IDC Division, I witnessed first-hand his passion and relentless efforts in extensively expanding every aspect of the work of the Commission. He managed to build a small yet very efficient organization. He succeeded in pushing universality of the Treaty and developing further its verification regime. And throughout his work, he did everything to empower and encourage the staff.

23. Ambassador Tóth, I am proud to be here today as someone who has worked with and learned from you. You have displayed exemplary leadership and wisdom. And I am certain that your memorable legacy will remain in the history of this organization.
24. I am also very grateful to you for your full cooperation during the transitional period.
25. You referred to your parting as being sweet sorrow. I should say: for us it is only sorrow. But we take solace in having your continual engagement and support. On behalf of the staff and myself, I wish you every success in your next steps.
26. I should not fail to acknowledge the contribution of Ambassador Wolfgang Hoffmann, who also had a crucial role in the formation and expansion of the organization.
27. Ambassador Tóth eloquently mentioned the qualifications of the staff of the Commission. I absolutely concur with him. They are an important foundation for all that we do and I am greatly privileged to continue working with such a uniquely energetic and devoted team.
28. Finally, I suggest that we give a standing ovation to Ambassador Tóth.