

Redouble Efforts for the CTBT

CIVIL SOCIETY STATEMENT TO THE 9TH CTBT ARTICLE XIV CONFERENCE
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Nearly all of the world's nations recognize that nuclear explosive testing is no longer acceptable, yet the Comprehensive Nuclear Test Ban Treaty (CTBT) will not have entered into force by Sept. 24, 2016—20 years after the opening for signature of the Treaty—due to inaction of eight Annex II states.

The CTBT is an effective, verifiable, non-discriminatory, additional barrier to restrain the vertical proliferation of nuclear weapons, and to stop the further spread of nuclear weapons, and it contributes to the establishment of the legal basis for a world free of nuclear weapons.

Bringing the CTBT into full legal force will require more energetic, more creative, more pragmatic and more focused efforts on the part of “Friends of the CTBT” states, eminent persons, responsible lawmakers, the scientific and technical community, and other members of civil society supportive of the CTBT.

We welcome the statements of support for the CTBT from two important hold-out states, China and the United States, but it is very disappointing that neither state has taken sufficient action to ratify the treaty.

The time available for President Barack Obama to pursue the “immediate and aggressive” action to win Senate advice and consent for ratification that he promised in 2009 is shrinking rapidly. More energetic White House leadership, however, would still improve the chances of success after his term expires. We urge bipartisan support for the U.S. ratification of the CTBT, which is clearly and demonstrably in the U.S. national security interest.

China's leaders maintain that their ratification does not depend on the actions of other states and that they have no intention of resuming testing. We call on President Xi Jinping to show international leadership and pursue China's ratification without further delay.

We welcome the support of the CTBT from the Russian Federation, which has already ratified the Treaty, and call upon President Vladimir Putin to actively encourage key Annex II states to move forward on the treaty and engage with his U.S. and Chinese counterparts on promoting the early entry-into-force of the CTBT.

Other states must do their part too. Ratification by Egypt, Iran, and Israel—three other key CTBT holdouts—would also reduce nuclear weapons-related security concerns in the

Middle East and help create the conditions necessary for the realization of a zone free of weapons of mass destruction—or at the very least, a nuclear weapons test free zone.

We welcome the support for the CTBT expressed by senior Israeli leaders, including Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu. Israel has signed but has not yet ratified the CTBT. Israel's ratification would bring that country closer to the nuclear non-proliferation mainstream and encourage other states in the region to follow suit.

We welcome the support for the CTBT expressed by senior Iranian leaders, including Foreign Minister Javad Zarif. At the first Article XIV conference in 1999, Mr. Zarif, then Iran's Deputy Foreign Minister, spoke in support of the treaty and endorsed the final conference report. The conference report urged its members to sustain the momentum for entry into force of the CTBT at the highest level and to hold informal consultations and promote cooperation aimed at bringing the Treaty into effect.

Neither India nor Pakistan say they want to resume testing, yet their governments have failed to take a serious look at joining the CTBT, which is a non-discriminatory measure that would help reduce global and regional nuclear tensions. In 1998, the leadership of both states said that they would not stand in the way of CTBT entry into force—nearly two decades later, now is the time for Prime Ministers Narendra Modi and Nawaz Sharif to reconsider that position, reinforce their support for their non-testing policies, and become leaders, not followers on the test ban.

North Korea continues its nuclear pursuits in violation of its earlier denuclearization pledges and the NPT and may conduct yet another nuclear weapon test explosion, which would allow it to proof-test more advanced nuclear weapons capabilities. We call on North Korea to cease further nuclear testing and for the resumption of the Six Party Talks that should include support for the CTBT.

Given these realities, states at this conference have a responsibility to take practical steps to support the CTBT, to reinforce the global nuclear testing moratorium and prohibition, and to encourage nuclear-armed states to refrain from nuclear weapons modernization activities that lead to new types of warheads and new military capabilities.

In the interest of global security and out of respect for the victims and survivors of nuclear testing, we call on all states in the coming year to redouble diplomatic efforts to bring the CTBT into force.

To do so, states parties should consider and undertake one or more of the following initiatives:

1. Use this Article XIV Conference as a launching point for a powerful, high-level, ongoing multilateral diplomatic campaign, led by states such as Japan and Kazakhstan—two states that have experienced first hand the devastating effects of nuclear weapon explosions—to increase diplomatic efforts to create the conditions for ratification by one or more key Annex II states in the next year.

2. Utilize the time leading up to the 20th anniversary of the opening for signature of the CTBT in September 2016 to launch a public campaign to raise governmental and public awareness about the dangers of nuclear testing, the possible resumption of nuclear testing, and the value of the CTBT as a critical element in a comprehensive global strategy to halt the vertical proliferation of nuclear weapons, halt the further spread of nuclear weapons, and contribute to the realization of a world without nuclear weapons.
3. CTBT States parties, the seven states observing nuclear testing moratoria, and the UN Security Council should explore new approaches to reinforce the global taboo against nuclear testing and clarify that nuclear test explosions by any nation are a threat to international peace and security.

For example, Britain, China, France, India, Pakistan, Russia, and the United States could jointly issue a formal joint statement committing not to be the first of the seven to conduct a nuclear test explosion.

In addition, pending the permanent closure of nuclear test sites, voluntary transparency measures would further strengthen confidence in the CTBT monitoring and verification regime.

None of these options is easy or simple, but without fresh thinking and renewed action, the door to further nuclear testing remains open and the full potential of the CTBT, including the option for on-site inspections to investigate possible noncompliance, will remain unrealized.

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