



**CTBTO**  
PREPARATORY COMMISSION

COMPREHENSIVE  
NUCLEAR-TEST-BAN  
TREATY ORGANIZATION

## **High-Level Meeting of the General Assembly to Commemorate and Promote the International Day against Nuclear Tests**

**Dr Robert Floyd, Executive Secretary**

**29 August 2023**

Excellencies,  
Distinguished colleagues,  
Mr President,

Thank you, Mr President, for inviting me to address the General Assembly on the critical issue of banning nuclear tests. My thanks also to High Representative Izumi Nakamitsu for delivering the opening remarks on behalf of Secretary-General, António Guterres.

Just 23 days ago I had a humbling experience. I was in Hiroshima, for the annual ceremony. To remember what happened on the 6<sup>th</sup> of August 1945. A nuclear bomb explodes 600 meters above that city. Certainly the largest almost instantaneous obliteration of humans, by humans.

Visiting the Hiroshima Peace Memorial Museum you see artefacts found afterwards. You see things you can not forget. A child's tiny, charred tricycle, found a kilometre away from the centre of the blast. On that beautiful, calm, summer morning of the 6<sup>th</sup> of August 1945, a little boy, just three years old, had been happily riding on that very tricycle. And then, ... no more.

We here today can't imagine what that horrendous bomb explosion was like for the people in and around Hiroshima. Or those in Nagasaki, only a few days later. But weapons built, and tested, in the years after Hiroshima and Nagasaki had far, far more explosive power. And the bigger the test, the bigger the impact on human health and the environment. And eventually the nations of the world came together and they said: enough is enough.

It was clear that ending explosive nuclear tests would be a vital brake on the development of nuclear weapons. A vital brake on weapons proliferation. And that in turn would make possible nuclear disarmament. The case for stopping these tests became unanswerable. But unanswerable did not mean quick!

In 1963 the Partial Test Ban Treaty was signed, banning nuclear tests in the atmosphere, in outer space, and under water. The preamble of the Non-Proliferation Treaty of 1968, aims to achieve the discontinuance of ALL test explosions of nuclear weapons for ALL time. The NPT. But then it took almost thirty more years, and many more nuclear test explosions, before the Comprehensive Nuclear-Test-Ban Treaty was agreed in 1996.

Why did it take so long?

Amidst all the politics was a key practical issue. How to verify that promises not to test nuclear weapons were actually being kept? A year after the 1995's historic NPT Review and Extension Conference, at last the CTBT was agreed. The diplomats now had the science to make a test-ban verifiable.

What a difference the CTBT has made!

Before 1996, there were more than two thousand nuclear tests, including over 450 in Semipalatinsk, in Kazakhstan. Almost all far bigger than the bombs that were devastating to Hiroshima and Nagasaki. From 24 September 1996 through to today, the 29<sup>th</sup> of August 2023? Less than one dozen test events.

In this, the 21st century, only ONE state has tested a weapon. The science of 1996 was good enough to guarantee that all nuclear explosions could be detected, once the global network of monitoring stations had been built.

Now we have that network. And we have far better technology. Seismic data. Hydroacoustic data. Infrasound data. Radionuclide data. Streaming in from over 300 stations. All around the planet, all the time. States know that the CTBTO's remarkable International Monitoring System with the International Data Centre will detect any test, anywhere, anytime. We spot anything unexpected or strange - really fast. And we can tell you where and when it happened.

CTBTO's verification system is a key global security asset, unlike any other. It's credible and respected because it works, and every State has access to all the data and is trained in analyzing it, so that they can detect a nuclear explosion. Every state. Verification works. Transparency works. When lack of trust is an issue, it's vital that we have an independent source of facts.

Because the CTBT verification system works and almost all States support the treaty, we've created a powerful global norm against testing. The CTBT has 186 signatories. 178 ratifications. And there will be another one next week. Eight more ratifications in the last 18 months. Sri Lanka is the latest to ratify, just last month, it followed the Solomon Islands earlier this year. Momentum towards universality is increasing: Recently, both Somalia and South Sudan made public commitments to sign and ratify the Treaty.

But the Treaty still hasn't come into force. I'm not the first, and I won't be the last, to say, globally we are facing challenging, worrying times. So today, I make the case for urgency and responsibility.

Possessor states! Please recommit to your moratoria against testing. Clearly and publicly. Those states that haven't signed the CTBT? Please do so! And Annex 2 and any other states who haven't yet ratified the CTBT. Please, do so!

A concluding thought.

It was on the 29<sup>th</sup> of August 1991, that the Semipalatinsk nuclear test site – formerly in the Soviet Union and now in the Republic of Kazakhstan – was finally closed.

In 2009 the UN General Assembly proclaimed the 29<sup>th</sup> of August as the International Day against Nuclear Tests.

This year is IDANT's 14th birthday. When I was 14 years old, there'd been over 1000 nuclear weapons test explosions. Now, thanks to the CTBT, any girl or boy who's 14 this year has lived through just 5 tests, all by one country. Our world is a far safer and far cleaner place without nuclear weapons tests.

But until we have a legally binding ban on nuclear testing, this progress is at risk of unravelling.

Responsibility. And, yes, Urgency.

Thank you.