**CZECH REPUBLIC**

**Permanent Mission of the Czech Republic to the United Nations**

76th Session of the General Assembly

**Statement by**

**H. E. Jakub Kulhánek**

**Minister of Foreign Affairs**

**at the**

**Twelfth Article XIV Conference**

**in support of the Entry-into-Force**

**of the Comprehensive Nuclear-Test-Ban Treaty**

**(CTBT)**

New York, September 23, 2021

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Distinguished Co-Presidents, Minister Di Maio, Minister Pandor,

Excellencies, Ladies and Gentlemen,

Let me first congratulate to Italy and South Africa for assuming the Presidency of the Article XIV Conference and express appreciation to Germany and Algeria as previous Coordinators.

Warmest congratulations to Dr Robert Floyd on his appointment as the new Executive Secretary of the Comprehensive Nuclear-Test-Ban Treaty Organization and I wish him and his colleagues every success.

Let me express gratitude to Dr Lassina Zerbo who successfully led the CTBTO in the past eight years. His dedication and service were highly appreciated.

Marking the 25th anniversary of the Treaty this year brings an opportunity to look back at what has been achieved.

Over 2 000 nuclear tests were carried out between 1945 and 1996 when the CTBT opened for signature. Only three countries have broken the de facto moratorium to test nuclear weapons since 1996.

The ban on nuclear testing is vital to international peace and security and it prevents the huge damage caused by nuclear explosions to humans and environment. The Treaty established a unique and comprehensive verification regime to detect any nuclear explosion everywhere on the Earth's surface, in the atmosphere, underwater and underground.

On the other hand, the ultimate goal of bringing the Treaty into force has not been achieved yet. The legally binding CTBT is essential for nuclear non-proliferation and nuclear disarmament. It provides a clear and visible barrier between prohibited and permitted nuclear activities. Therefore, the Czech Republic calls on all States, which have not yet done so, to sign and ratify the Treaty, without any preconditions or delay.

The Czech Republic was among the first countries to sign and ratify the CTBT. Promoting the entry into force and universalization of the CTBT remains our top priority. We actively support the CTBTO since its establishment and I am proud that our Ambassador to the UN in Vienna, H. E. Ivo Šrámek serves this year as the Chairperson of the Preparatory Commission of the CTBTO.

The CTBTO is a unique organization relying heavily on scientists and experts. We salute their indispensable work and express the wish of all of us that their efforts continue to be guided only by the science and expertise.

I thank you.