

## International Day Against Nuclear Tests – 29 August

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Message by the Executive Secretary  
of the Comprehensive Nuclear-Test-Ban Treaty Organization

Lassina Zerbo

### Banning nuclear weapons testing – an unfinished business

In Japan earlier this month, I had the privilege to meet Makoto Takahara, who was 17 when the nuclear bomb detonated over his home city Hiroshima. Hearing his first-hand account of the horrors he witnessed then once again put into sharp focus for me the threat posed by nuclear weapons. I am proud to support the Hibakusha, as the survivors are known, in calling on the world: *No more Hiroshima; no more Nagasaki*.

The more than 2,000 nuclear tests conducted during the Cold War paved the way for the development of weapons that dwarf the Hiroshima and Nagasaki bombs in explosive power. Populations downwind from the test sites paid with their health and often their lives.

One of the most affected areas was Semipalatinsk in Kazakhstan. August 29 marks the day of the first nuclear test at Semipalatinsk, as well as the site's closure in 1991 by the newly independent Kazakhstan. At the country's initiative, the date has been commemorated since 2010 as the International Day against Nuclear Tests.

August 29 serves as reminder that banning nuclear testing remains unfinished business. The Comprehensive Nuclear-Test Ban Treaty (CTBT), in spite of enjoying near-universal support, has yet to become legally binding due to its exceptionally demanding entry into force clause, which prescribes that all 44 countries listed in the Treaty as nuclear technology holders must ratify. Of these, eight still remain: China, Egypt, India, Iran, Israel, North Korea, Pakistan, and the United States.

The Treaty has nonetheless gone a long way in limiting and stigmatizing nuclear testing, largely due to a robust verification regime which is nearly fully operational. Only a handful of nuclear tests have been conducted since the Treaty was adopted in 1996 and only one country, North Korea, has tested in this century.

Entry into force of the Treaty will require political leadership and determination at all levels, but once the ban on all nuclear testing is a legal reality, the world will have taken the first concrete step towards answering the call of Hibakusha to banish nuclear weapons from the face of the earth, and to guarantee *No more Hiroshima; no more Nagasaki*.