



European Union
EU Statement on
Sixtieth Session of Working Group A

Preparatory Commission
Comprehensive Nuclear-Test-Ban Treaty Organization

Vienna, 18 - 20 October 2021

Madam Chair,

I have the honour to speak on behalf of the European Union. The following countries align themselves with this statement: Turkey[§], the Republic of North Macedonia*, Montenegro*, Serbia*, Albania*, Bosnia and Herzegovina*, Iceland*, Norway*, Ukraine, the Republic of Moldova, Georgia, Andorra and San Marino.

The EU wishes to thank the Executive Secretary, Dr Robert Floyd, for his opening statement and for his report on Non-Verification-Related Activities. We also wish to express our warm appreciation to you Madam Chair for all your efforts and productive work in ably steering this Group. We thank the Provisional Technical Secretariat (PTS) for the thorough preparation of this meeting.

While we acknowledge that the COVID-19 pandemic will continue to affect our work, we consider it important to ensure that scheduled sessions of the Commission and its subsidiary bodies in 2022-2023, as well as substantive discussions within Working Group A (WGA) can take place in the most appropriate way, using all technical solutions at our disposal. In this regard we consider it important to engage as soon as possible in discussions on the agenda and organisational matters of Working Group B, including the best way to convene expert group meetings, and support the Chair's efforts to find a solution. We would like to thank the Netherlands for submitting the candidature of Prof. Dr. Láslo G. Evers for the position of Vice-Chairperson of Working Group B, and express our full support.

[§] Candidate Country

* Candidate Countries the Republic of North Macedonia, Montenegro, Serbia and Albania as well as potential Candidate Country Bosnia and Herzegovina continue to be part of the Stabilisation and Association Process.

* Iceland and Norway are members of the EFTA and of the European Economic Area.

The entry into force of the Comprehensive Nuclear-Test-Ban Treaty (CTBT) remains a top priority for the European Union. All EU Member States have ratified the Treaty. We consistently call upon the remaining eight Annex II States: China, Egypt, Iran, Israel, and the USA who still need to ratify the Treaty, and the DPRK, India and Pakistan who still need to sign and ratify, to do so without any preconditions or further delay, in order to bring the Treaty into force. It is crucial that all States fully observe the moratorium on nuclear test explosions in the meantime.

In this regard, we congratulate Italy and South Africa, the Article XIV Co-Chairs, as well as the PTS for the excellent organisation of the Twelfth Article XIV Conference on 23-24 September and for reaching consensus on its Final Declaration. The High Representative of the European Union for Foreign Affairs and Security Policy, Josep Borrell, delivered a video message on behalf of the EU, stressing inter alia the need to redouble our efforts to uphold and strengthen the international non-proliferation and disarmament architecture, by promoting the CTBT's entry into force. The EU has been and will continue to be a strong supporter of the Treaty and its Organisation and will continue to use every opportunity in international fora to advocate the CTBT's entry into force.

Madam Chair,

The EU would like to thank the PTS for providing the revised 2022-2023 Programme and Budget Proposals. We welcome the fact that 81.2% of the proposed budget is allocated to verification-related activities. We also welcome that the decision of the Commission to increase the level of the Working Capital Fund to ensure that it can cover four weeks of expenditures is reflected in the Proposals. We appreciate the identified savings and efficiency gains and encourage the PTS to continue to streamline, prioritise and rationalize its functions. As already noted in the Preparatory Commission in June, the EU and its Member States are supportive of the draft budget.

The EU wishes to express its support to the PTS's proposal to establish the position of Chief of Cabinet in the Office of the Executive Secretary. We believe that the creation of such a post will facilitate the work of the Executive Secretary especially in the area of strategic planning and liaising with the policy making organs. We note that according to the proposal the new post will be effected in a budget neutral manner. We welcome the revised version of the PTS document (CTBT/PTS/INF/1600) that provides further necessary details and look forward to taking an early consensus decision.

The EU takes note of the nominations put forward for the position of the External Auditor for the period 2022-2023, and thanks the PTS for sharing the information

paper as well as the nominees for presenting their candidatures. We stand ready to engage in informal consultations with the aim of identifying the best candidate and reaching a consensual solution.

Madam Chair,

The International Monitoring System (IMS) and the International Data Centre (IDC) have proved their unique ability to provide States Signatories with independent and reliable means to detect nuclear tests, which further reinforce the importance of the CTBTO. However, the CTBTO can only carry out its mandatory functions and the sustainment and provisional operation of the verification system if provided with the necessary funding.

The EU recalls that paying assessed contributions is not optional, and the failure to do so amounts to non-compliance with the Resolution establishing the Preparatory Commission. It is crucial for the operation of the verification regime of the Treaty, and for the wider organization's financial health that all States honour their legal obligation to pay their assessed contributions on time and in full. We are encouraged that by late August 2021, the collection rate was by ten points higher than the previous year, despite the challenges brought by the COVID-19 pandemic. Nonetheless, the outstanding contributions remain at a high level. We urge all States to pay their outstanding contributions without further delay.

Madam Chair,

The EU, materialising its full commitment to the Treaty and its implementation, has so far contributed 29.5 million Euro to support CTBTO monitoring and verification activities. The eighth voluntary contribution with a reference amount of 6.3 million Euro entered into force on 1 December 2020, thus assuring the uninterrupted implementation of the ongoing activities. These funds are being used to improve the auxiliary seismic station network, to strengthen on-site inspection and noble gas monitoring capabilities, and to provide technical assistance to countries in Asia, Africa, Latin America and the Caribbean region, allowing them to participate fully in the CTBTO's verification regime.

Last but not least Madam Chair,

The EU and its Member States take note with appreciation of the recommendations contained in the report of the Advisory Group (AG).

Thank you, Madam Chair.