Comprehensive Nuclear-Test-Ban Treaty Seminar for New York-based Diplomats

Welcoming Remarks by High Representative Izumi Nakamitsu

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Excellencies,
Distinguished delegates,
Ladies and Gentlemen,

Allow me to thank Mr. Lassina Zerbo, Executive Secretary of the Comprehensive Nuclear-Test-Ban Treaty Organization (CTBTO) for inviting me to participate in this Seminar and to congratulate him for his efforts to strengthen the norm against nuclear testing.

I also want to take this opportunity to reiterate the enduring commitment of the United Nations and the Secretary-General, as the CTBT’s depository, to doing all we can to bring this long-overdue treaty into force.

Today’s event is an occasion to reflect on the dangers posed by nuclear tests and on the urgent need to prohibit them everywhere. It will also advance our understanding on the usefulness of the CTBTO’s work in areas such as disaster risk reduction and climate change.

Throughout the history of nuclear testing, we have witnessed how people in Central Asia, North Africa, North America and the South Pacific have suffered and, in some cases never recovered, from the harmful impacts of nuclear-tests. These tests have severely damaged the environment, health and the economic development of these communities.

I welcome the voluntary moratoria on testing imposed by nuclear-armed States, but this restraint is not sufficient and cannot replace a legally-binding instrument.

In this context, it is vital that all remaining States sign and ratify the CTBT without further delay. The eight remaining Annex 2 States have a special responsibility to bring the CTBT into force and should not wait for others’ action to move forward.

The Comprehensive Nuclear-Test-Ban Treaty has an essential role within the nuclear disarmament and non-proliferation regime. By achieving the cessation of all nuclear weapon test explosions and all other nuclear explosions, by constraining the development and qualitative improvement of nuclear
weapons and ending the development of advanced new types of nuclear weapons, the Treaty combats both horizontal and vertical proliferation. Attainment of a world free of nuclear weapons will not be possible without an in force CTBT.

The CTBT’s verification system has repeatedly demonstrated its effectiveness. The International Monitoring System ensures that the international community receives reliable information about the situation in the ground, detecting events that might indicate violations to the Treaty.

There can be no excuses to continue postponing this shared goal. As we have since the Treaty opened for signature, the United Nations, and the Office for Disarmament Affairs, stand ready to provide whatever assistance is needed to help with this process.

In conclusion, I wish to quote some recent remarks by the Secretary-General: “We cannot contemplate further erosion of the global framework for disarmament. Indeed, we must reverse it urgently... we must bring the Comprehensive Nuclear-Test-Ban Treaty into force without delay.”

I wish you very productive discussions that I hope will broaden your knowledge on the important work performed by the CTBTO. Working together we can transform the existing norm against testing into a legally-binding prohibition.

Thank you.