Address by the Executive Secretary
of the Preparatory Commission for the
Comprehensive Nuclear-Test-Ban Treaty Organization

Thematic Debate of the First Committee of the General Assembly

(New York, 11 October 2005)

1. As new Executive Secretary of the Preparatory Commission for the Comprehensive Nuclear-Test-Ban Treaty Organization it is a great honour for me to address the First Committee of the United Nations General Assembly. You will over the next few weeks debate issues essential to the future of the CTBT and the Preparatory Commission and I hope that this brief report will support a positive outcome of your important deliberations.

2. When the CTBT was adopted by the General Assembly of the United Nations on 10 December 1996 we were aware that the success of the Treaty would depend on two crucial factors: its universality and its verifiability. On both accounts we have made substantial progress since then.

3. As of today 176 states have signed the CTBT and 125 have ratified. These impressive numbers demonstrate the growing commitment of the international community to the Treaty. Of the 44 states whose ratification is necessary for Entry into Force of the CTBT 33 have already ratified. The vote of confidence expressed in the large number of signatures and ratifications is a major source of motivation for all of us who are working on the verification system.

4. The Conference on Facilitation Entry into Force of the CTBT, which was held here in New York from 21 to 23 September 2005 reconfirmed the commitment
of the international community for the Treaty and developed an action plan to promote its entry into force. The large number of delegations and the high level of participation was proof of the unimpeachable relevance of a legally binding, universal, verifiable and total ban on nuclear test explosions for the security interests of the overwhelming majority of nations. I would like to thank the Chairman of the Conference, the Foreign Minister of Australia, Mr. Downer for successfully guiding the work of the Conference. I would also like to thank the Special Representative, my old friend Ambassador Jaap Ramaker, whose work is crucial for the Article XIV process. Last but not least the good cooperation between the DDA and the PTS allowed for a smooth conference. Thank you, Ambassador Abe.

5. Since 1997 the Preparatory Commission has been working on ensuring that the verification system of the CTBT is credible, functional and cost-effective. We are now entering a crucial transition phase where close to two-thirds of the system have been built. In the coming years the task of provisionally operating and maintaining the system will become more dominant. Continuous testing and evaluation of the verification system will prove to the rest of the sceptics that the CTBT is equipped with a robust verification system capable of detecting nuclear test explosions and all other nuclear explosions everywhere, as mandated in the Treaty.

6. So far 217 of the 321 monitoring stations provided for in the Treaty have been installed and substantially meet the Commissions specifications. Over the last two years alone 115 new stations were installed. The building programme is continuing at a sustained pace. Data from the established stations are flowing to the IDC via our Global Communication Infrastructure to the International Data Centre in Vienna. In this nerve-centre of the verification system the incoming data are collected, processed, analyzed and transmitted to States for final analysis. Over three million data segments and products have been distributed to authorized users since 2000. Over the last two years alone the data traffic between the monitoring stations, the IDC and the 89 national data centres currently in operation has almost tripled from five to 14 gigabytes per day. This massive increase documents the improving capacity as well as the growing interest of the national data centres to receive and use our data.

7. It is the unique feature of the CTBT verification system that it empowers each Signatory State to make their own judgement about events based on the data and products provided by the organization. In this respect the CTBT enables States, regardless of their size and wealth, to fully participate in the verification work and benefit from the wealth of data provided by the system. This includes civil and scientific applications whose potential only starts to be explored. In the wake of the tsunami catastrophe of 26 December 2004 the Preparatory Commission decided to test the usefulness of IMS data in the context of tsunami warning. The PTS is working closely with international and national tsunami warning centres through UNESCO in order to ascertain the potential contribution of our data for this humanitarian purpose.
8. I would like to use this opportunity to underline that the build-up of the verification regime would be unthinkable without the political and financial commitment of States Signatories, but also without the expertise, talent and dedication of the experts working as delegates or staff members in the Provisional Technical Secretariat and in National Data Centres.

Mr Chairman,

9. These activities are important accessories, but only accessories to the political will of the international community to bring entry into force of the Comprehensive Nuclear Test Ban Treaty about The comprehensive ban of nuclear test explosions has been a dream for many decades. The political and strategic choices of States and the scientific and technological advances have brought us very close to a universal and verifiable regime... I hope that your work will further strengthen this political will and create a new dynamism in pursuing our common objective.

Thank you