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

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Historically, the First Committee has been the forum to build consensus. It has been
the forum to bridge gaps. It has been the forum to support the development international
norms that can lead to effective disarmament and non-proliferation. There can be no greater
responsibility. It is not a coincidence that the very first resolution adopted by the General
Assembly in 1946 called for “the elimination from national armaments of atomic weapons
and of all other major weapons adaptable to mass destruction.” There have been some
remarkable achievements since then. Yet there were also many setbacks. The legacy of the
past few years has cast a dark shadow on the ability of this Committee to fulfil its historical
role and potential. Fortunately, we are witnessing a new era. A new era in which a new world
can, and must, be shaped. More than ever, the changing international climate promises a new
beginning in the field of nuclear disarmament and non-proliferation. It shall be up to you, and
up to all of us, to finally realize the will of the community of nations expressed some 60 years
ago.

2009 has been a remarkable year. The events of this past month alone have created
conditions almost undreamed of a few years ago. There has been a renewed sustained revival
of efforts towards global nuclear disarmament and non-proliferation. Many world leaders,
including the Secretary-General and highly respectable non-governmental actors have made
concrete proposals to this end. Last month’s Security Council summit affirmed the
commitment to work toward a world without nuclear weapons. Only last week, the world’s
most prestigious peace prize was awarded, inter alia, to the vision of, and work for, a world
without nuclear weapons. The political will of the international community is evident. Now
we will have to translate political will into concrete action.

We in the Preparatory Commission of the CTBTO were particularly gratified with the
results of the sixth Conference to promote the entry into force of the Treaty. The Conference
was held on 24 and 25 September here in New York simultaneously with the Security
Council Summit. It was attended by more than 110 countries. 40 countries were represented
at Ministerial level. Co-chaired by the Foreign Ministers from France and Morocco, the
Conference was an unequivocal expression of the international community’s continued faith in the Treaty, and the Commission. In a strongly worded Final Declaration adopted by consensus, hold-out States were called on to sign and ratify the CTBT for it to enter into force. UN Secretary-General Ban Ki-moon, who is the depository of the Treaty, presented the news of the unanimously adopted Final Declaration at the doorstep of the Security Council. In turn, the Security Council called for the entry into force of the Treaty at an early date. It was a transformational experience. Today the question is not “if”, but rather “when” will the Treaty enter into force. For that we need three things: leadership, leadership, and more leadership. We need high level determined action by the international community to go the very last mile. The First Committee has a special responsibility in this regard. The time is right for members of this Committee to engage in results orientated dialogue and concrete action. It is time for the entry into force of the CTBT.

The CTBT is a unifying arrangement around which the international community can rally. The Treaty today boasts a near universal membership. 182 countries have signed it. Ten years ago, there were only 50 ratifications. 150 states have now ratified. Despite the challenges of the last decade this is an additional 100 voices of support. This is indeed an outstanding achievement. Yet there remain 9 among 44 states whose ratification is needed for entry into force. We in the Preparatory Commission are gratified that the prospects of the entry into force of the Treaty appear much more positive than they did for many years.

The Commission has come within sight of the fulfilment of its mandate. Through dedication, commitment and hard work, we are approaching the point of readiness for the entry into force of the Treaty. The Commission has built up a one billion dollar verification system. Almost 80% of the International Monitoring System’s global monitoring stations are already sending operational-standard data to the headquarters in Vienna. The volume of the data transmitted from the stations to the data centre in Vienna has tripled during the last five years. A new global communications infrastructure for relaying that data has been installed. Important advances have been made in processing methods and software in all the verification technologies. The system has been tried and tested. Tried by the two DPRK test explosions in 2006 and 2009. These tests are deplorable, but they proved the reliability of the system. The system has also gained the trust and approval of the scientific community in the context of a 500 scientist strong Scientific Studies Project.

But this is not the whole story. In the Commission, we recognize the true value of the investment with which we were entrusted by member states. We see this investment as a platform for scientific knowledge and capacity building in member states. Member states from developing countries are the prime potential beneficiaries of this investment. The unique verification system which is being shaped offers a host of opportunities for applications of scientific research and everyday life. Whether it is in the area of early tsunami warning, aviation safety, climate change, or marine life research, the monitoring technologies have an obvious advantage.

As an organization operating at the cutting edge scientific and technological knowledge, we are determined to share that knowledge with our member states. The Commission has offered hundreds of training opportunities in technologies associated with the verification system for researchers and scientists from member states. In order to ensure the readiness of member states for the entry into force of the Treaty, the Commission is providing assistance to member states in the legislative and constitutional issues arising from the Treaty. The Commission is also working closely with member states to set up their National Data
Centres. Through the provision of the necessary training, technical infrastructure and equipment, we ensure that member states reap the benefits of this unique organization. These new skills have a spill over effect into other areas of development.

Since its establishment, the Commission has trained 1700 technicians and professionals from 147 member states. Lately, the Commission has been working with donors and international development funds, to ensure the necessary funding. We are currently in the second phase of implementation of what we call the “Pilot Project” to finance the participation of technical experts from developing countries in official technical meetings of the Commission for a whole year. The project is financed by 17 donors from both developed and developing countries and organisations. This is an act of conviction in the noble values of multilateralism. We are grateful to our partners.

We are currently working with the European Union on a multi-year project to assist member states from Africa to establish their National Data Centres. The second phase of the project shall include countries from the Latin America and Caribbean region. These Centres are necessary to access and analyse the invaluable data and other products generated by the International Monitoring System and the International Data Centre. Through a combination of training, e-learning modules, regional workshops and the provision of equipment, we hope to enable the 29 African member states, and 8 countries in Latin America to be fully on par with the rest of the member states.

Entry into force can only really be a priority if the international community believes that the Treaty matters. Entry into force will close the door once and for all on testing, and make the de-facto international norm legally-binding. It will operationalize the verification regime. It will allow us to address compliance issues properly. This is extremely important in its own right. The Treaty is of great significance beyond its own terms of reference. It is a catalyst for nuclear disarmament. It provides a firm legal barrier against nuclear testing, thereby curbing the development of new types and designs of nuclear weapons. It is a strong confidence and security building measure that ensures that the peaceful uses of nuclear energy are indeed peaceful.

As we prepare for the May 2010 NPT Review Conference, I would like to leave you with this thought. Many believe that there has to be significant progress on the CTBT by 2010 if the Review Conference is to be successful. There is little doubt that progress towards entry into force is crucial for the success of the 2010 NPT Review Conference. Entry into force of the Treaty may be the needed catalyst to mark the beginning of a new paradigm to approach the entire non-proliferation system.

Progress on the CTBT would pave the way to progress on other measures necessary to strengthen the non-proliferation regime across the board. The Treaty is one of the measures around which an effective international consensus can be built in advance of 2010. It is achievable. It means progress on each of the three main pillars. In some ways, it bridges the divide between the different emphases placed on each of these pillars by NPT’s different parties. It signals commitment to disarmament, it strengthens non-proliferation; it facilitates peaceful uses of nuclear energy. It is not sufficient by itself. But it is necessary for success.

A new consensus has to be found ahead of 2010. The CTBT is not the answer to all of the challenges facing the non-proliferation regime. But the Treaty’s entry into force may pave the way to solving many of the most critical challenges.