

25 March 2019



Working Group B, Fifty-Second Session  
Vienna, 25 March – 5 April 2019

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**Romania**

**STATEMENT BY THE EUROPEAN UNION  
AT THE FIFTY-SECOND SESSION OF WORKING GROUP B**

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Mr. Chair,

1. I have the honour to speak on behalf of the European Union and its Member States. The following countries align themselves with this statement: Turkey<sup>§</sup>, North Macedonia\*, Montenegro\*, Iceland<sup>†</sup>, Serbia\*, Albania\*, Bosnia and Herzegovina\*, Norway<sup>†</sup>, Ukraine, the Republic of Moldova, Armenia, Georgia, Andorra and San Marino.
2. We thank you, Mr Chairman, and also the Provisional Technical Secretariat (PTS) for the thorough preparations for this meeting. We support and thank the nominations of Kazakhstan and Niger for the Working Group B vice-Chair positions.
3. The EU welcomes the recent ratification of the Treaty by Zimbabwe. We commend the work of Belgium and Iraq as Article XIV co-ordinators and wish success to the incoming Article XIV co-ordinators, Algeria and Germany. The EU continues to call on all Annex II States: on Egypt, China, Iran, Israel, and the US to ratify the Treaty and on the DPRK, India and Pakistan to sign and ratify it in order to bring it into force.

Mr. Chair,

4. The CTBTO's response to the six nuclear tests conducted by the DPRK has demonstrated its invaluable role in quickly providing reliable and independent data, something that no single country alone could do, enabling the international community

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<sup>§</sup> Candidate Country.

\* Candidate Countries 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.

<sup>†</sup> Iceland is a member of the EFTA and the European Economic Area.

<sup>†</sup> Iceland, Norway and Liechtenstein are members of the EFTA and of the European Economic Area.

to react appropriately and swiftly. The EU urges the DPRK to take concrete steps to embark on a credible path towards a complete, verifiable and irreversible denuclearisation and thus contribute to lasting peace and security on the Korean Peninsula. An essential element of this is the signature and ratification of the CTBT without delay. Doing so would give legal effect to the DPRK's announced suspension of nuclear tests and their wish to – and I quote - “join international desire and efforts for the total halt to the nuclear tests”.

5. From the current report on verification-related activities it is clear that the PTS operates what has become the world's largest and most sophisticated multilateral verification system. In this context we welcome the expansion of the network, including the certification of one infrasound station in Australia, one radionuclide station in Thailand, and the installation of a radionuclide station in Niger.
6. The EU considers additional IMS certifications a priority and encourages the Executive Secretary to continue reaching out to State Signatories to this end. It is also essential that States Signatories keep cooperating with the PTS to maintain and enhance the efficiency and effectiveness of the verification system established by the Preparatory Commission.

Mr. Chair,

7. Data availability, including through accurate and timely International Data Centre (IDC) reports, and station reliability is essential. It remains vital that States Signatories provide data to the CTBTO from all stations that they host. Data provision would increase if certified stations transitioned from testing and evaluation to post-certification activities. At the last PrepCom meeting we requested the PTS to work with States concerned to resolve the issue of data availability, especially where it directly impacts the Organisation's ability to detect potential radio-xenon emissions from potential nuclear test sites. We look forward to the PTS informing us on such developments. Furthermore, we urge all States to ensure the long term sustainability of stations, to develop operation and maintenance plans in accordance with the standard template and to keep an active dialogue with the PTS to guarantee that stations operate according to Treaty standards.
8. The work to optimize the performance of monitoring technologies in order to keep abreast of technological advances is increasingly important. In this regard we recognize the efforts of the PTS in achieving major upgrades and revalidations to preserve the investment in the network. In the last 20 years, the PTS has developed advanced scientific studies in line with technologies identified in the Treaty. In that context, EU Member States have been strongly committed to the development of infrasound technologies and calibration, which are still evolving. We encourage the Working Group B and the PTS to keep on working and reporting on this: the EU Member States will be closely engaged.
9. Mobile monitoring systems are essential for the functioning of the IDC in helping to further understand the global background. The PTS in INF paper 1490 provided clear explanations on the benefits of mobile systems for noble gas background. We note the extensive guidance provided by Working Group B in its 30th, 31st, 45th and 49th

sessions and by the PrepCom's acknowledgement of that guidance at its corresponding sessions. We recognise that the PTS has been using mobile monitoring systems in line with this guidance. We do not judge that the PrepCom or Working Group B need to revise this guidance. Background studies using mobile monitoring systems not part of the IMS have been going on for years to improve the performance of the verification regime and ensure the correct detection of events. Therefore this activity is part of, and helps carrying out the mandate of the PTS.

Mr. Chair,

10. The effective and reliable performance of the IMS was amongst others, demonstrated through the detection of a hydro-acoustic signature close to where the Argentinian submarine San Juan was tragically lost at the end of 2017. This highlights the benefits of data from the IMS for civil and scientific applications. We encourage the PTS to formalise its collaboration with relevant Organisations in various fields for disaster warning, disaster mitigation, emergency response and scientific research. In this regard we welcome that the PTS is expanding its co-operation regarding tsunami warning to additional states. The EU also supports the efforts of the PTS to develop co-operation on volcanic ash cloud warning. Similarly, we support the work of the PTS in enhancing Atmospheric Transport Modelling in cooperation with the World Meteorological Organisation. We also welcome exemplary regional co-operation, like the MoU signed by Belgium, The Netherlands and Luxembourg. They recently joined forces to conduct data analysis together, thereby contributing to strengthening the CTBT verification regime.
11. We look forward to achieving progress on completing the Validation and Acceptance Test Plan and endorse the proposal on the road map for phase 5b. To improve IDC procedures, documentation, and testing capabilities the PTS conducted Experiment 3 in September 2018 and we will look carefully at the results and the formal evaluation of the experiment.
12. On the issue of IMS and IDC operational manuals, the Commission still needs to address the nature and status of archiving of filters. We believe that the presentations provided during the 50th Working Group B should allow us to reach consensus to formulate guidance on this issue.

Mr. Chair,

13. We welcome the progress made in the continued implementation of the OSI Action Plan for 2016-19, together with the third OSI training cycle. In anticipation of completion of the current OSI Action Plan, we look forward to examining the follow-on proposals and to further work on OSI, in addition to the Build-up exercises, that are currently envisaged. The OSI Workshop 24 was a success marking a new direction for development in CTBTO capabilities by focusing on events other than underground nuclear explosions. The OSI Build-up exercises should help the PTS to further develop OSI capabilities. We look forward to the exercises to be held in Slovakia.
14. We appreciate that preparations are under way to complete a new OSI Operations Support Centre. We thank the PTS for its update as contained in INF 1492 on the status

of the construction of the new permanent Equipment Storage and Maintenance Facility (ESMF) in Seibersdorf. We hope it will start operating very soon.

15. Regarding the preparation of the verification-related elements of the 2020-2021 Programme and Budget, we consider it important that a high proportion of resources continues to be dedicated to verification-related activities. The EU reiterates that the budget should always be guided by the needs of the programme and continuous identification of savings and efficiency gains, and encourage the PTS to continue to streamline and rationalize its functions. In future budget cycles, any identified savings could potentially be used to offset the price adjustment and we encourage the PTS to consider this as an option.
16. Regarding the payment of assessed contributions, we are extremely concerned by the fact that some 75 States Signatories have persistently failed to honour their financial obligations to the Organization, resulting in a suspension of their voting rights. These unpaid contributions are a serious liability for the completion, maintenance and development of the IMS, IDC and OSI capabilities as well as for the further development of related capacity building. Therefore, we call on all States to fully settle their outstanding assessed contributions and to negotiate a payment plan with the PTS to that end.
17. Strengthening the CTBTO's verification regime is a priority for the EU. We continue to provide voluntary contributions to support the verification regime as well as capacity building and outreach. Our continued political and financial commitment to the Organization is also in-line with UNSC Resolution 2310. The EU provides about 4.6 million euros through its two year program to fund CTBTO activities.
18. We also welcome the Young Professional Network initiative, introduced by Norway last year, which will promote dialogue and collaboration among the next generation of experts in the National Data Centres and the PTS.

Finally Mr. Chair,

19. The CTBT Science and Technology Conference this June will be an important milestone in further building and strengthening the CTBTO's relationship with the scientific and research community. We look forward to broad participation to foster the development of the Treaty's verification regime.

Thank you, Mr. Chair.