Statement on behalf of Non-Governmental Organisations to the Conference on Facilitating the Entry into Force of the Comprehensive Nuclear-Test-Ban Treaty

Delivered on 13 November 2001

1. Thank you Mr President and distinguished colleagues for affording non-governmental organisations (NGOs) the opportunity to communicate our views and recommendations. We wish you success in your efforts at this important gathering to facilitate entry into force of the Comprehensive Test Ban Treaty (CTBT).

2. We congratulate the nations of the world for overwhelmingly endorsing the CTBT five years ago here in New York, for the work of the 1999 conference to facilitate the entry into force of the CTBT, the work of the CTBT Preparatory Commission and CTBTO in Vienna, and we thank those countries that have done their part to accelerate entry into force by ratifying the CTBT themselves and by helping others to ratify. Nevertheless, we remain gravely concerned that the CTBT has not yet entered into force.

3. Since the 1999 Vienna conference on facilitating entry into force of the CTBT, recognized authorities in the fields of science, security, and history, among them Nobel laureates and military leaders, have reaffirmed the importance of the CTBT for international security and peace. Independent bodies have confirmed that the CTBT is a workable and effective treaty with benefits for all state parties.

In November 2000, the Independent Commission on the Verifiability of the Comprehensive Test Ban Treaty, consisting of 14 experts from 11 countries, produced a scientific consensus on the Treaty’s verifiability, concluding that it is verifiable with high probability.

The May 2000 Non Proliferation Treaty Review Conference affirmed the importance and urgency of the signatures and ratifications necessary for entry into force of the CTBT without delay and without conditions.

4. We deplore the appalling September 11 attacks on New York and Washington and believe that the international community must work together to avert future terrorist attacks. We must also work together to avoid an escalation of violence involving chemical, biological or nuclear weapons and all states must renew their commitment to strengthening multilateral efforts to control, reduce and eliminate such dangers. The CTBT is part of such efforts and all states should recognise that action on the CTBT and other disarmament initiatives is even more important. Failure to act may lead to a cascade of proliferation events that will enable a future terrorist to use nuclear weapons with hundreds of times the destructive power of a fuel-laden jetliner. We owe it to those who died and the bereaved and injured to take all possible measures to prevent an even worse tragedy in the future. The states presently resisting the CTBT are undermining their own security as well as the security of the entire world.

5. Since almost the beginning of the nuclear age, civil society has realised the importance of a comprehensive ban on nuclear testing. The efforts of NGOs and millions of ordinary people
around the world prompted international leaders to press for a permanent and comprehensive nuclear test ban. In all these years, the NGO community has not faltered in its advocacy for a test ban treaty, even in periods when negotiations among governments had come to a standstill or were interrupted. People throughout the world understood that ending nuclear testing was essential for two reasons: to halt the spiraling arms race, and to prevent the further devastation of human health and the global environment.

Nuclear weapons and testing reduce the resources to feed the hungry, help the sick, and educate the poor. Renewed nuclear testing will increase long-lived radioactive pollution. Radioactive contamination from atmospheric nuclear bomb blasts in Africa, Australia, Asia, Europe, Japan, North America, and the world’s oceans has already killed untold numbers of innocent people, and it will cause additional cancers in future generations.

Radioactivity from underground tests has vented into the atmosphere in large and small quantities for decades. Enormous amounts of radioactive materials from underground tests remain beneath the surface of the earth and have already polluted groundwater. Further testing would create more radioactive contamination.

6. World-wide pressure from civil society and governments led to the 1963 Partial Test Ban Treaty (PTBT). In the preamble to the PTBT, the states parties also recognised that banning above ground nuclear tests reached far beyond the mere prevention of explosions and limited constraints on weapons development. They proclaimed, "as their principal aim the speediest possible achievement of an agreement on general and complete disarmament under strict international control in accordance with the objectives of the United Nations which would put an end to the armaments race and eliminate the incentive to the production and testing of all kinds of weapons, including nuclear weapons…""

Those who had worked hard for the elimination of above ground tests recognized that the PTBT was only a first step, and renewed their efforts to and all nuclear testing. But continuing technical advances in weapons science and underground testing enabled the nuclear arms race to continue unabated despite the ban on above-ground tests.

Nearly three decades later, entry into force of the CTBT is now within reach. But as a result of the actions of a handful of key states, the long effort to secure a total an on nuclear tests is in jeopardy. We will continue to press forward until the CTBT enters into force. We urge each of the governments gathered here not to relent in your commitment to implementing the CTBT, which is vital to international security into the 21st century.

7. The CTBT is an essential step towards nuclear disarmament. The CTBT helps prevent nations with less sophisticated nuclear weapons capabilities, and nations which may be seeking nuclear arms, from confidently deploying advanced nuclear warheads, including those more easily deliverable by ballistic missiles. The CTBT also helps constrain the confident deployment of new types of nuclear warheads by the advanced nuclear weapons states, all of which have programs to modernise their sophisticated nuclear arsenals. In these ways, this Treaty helps block dangerous nuclear competition and new nuclear threats from emerging. However, technological advances in nuclear weapons research and development mean
that a ban on nuclear test explosions by itself cannot prevent some qualitative improvements of nuclear arsenals.

Continued efforts to improve nuclear arsenals and to make nuclear weapons more useable in warfare will jeopardise the stability of the test ban and non-proliferation regimes. Consistent with the fundamental goals which have been recognised for a half-century by those who have worked to end nuclear testing and for nuclear disarmament, we call upon all states possessing nuclear weapons to halt immediately all qualitative improvements in their nuclear armaments, especially those which provide new or enhanced military capabilities, whether or not these improvements require nuclear explosive tests.

8. The CTBT establishes a far-reaching global monitoring, verification, and confidence building system capable of detecting nuclear explosions and deterring potential treaty violators. The Treaty provides for a global International Monitoring System (IMS) and on-site inspections, which are not available without a multilateral, legally-binding verification regime. Test ban verification is enhanced by the substantial national technical monitoring capabilities and by the thousands of other high-quality civilian seismic stations around the world that provide further detection capabilities. Collectively those verification resources will be capable of meeting the international community’s expectation that relevant events will be detected, located and identified with high probability.

9. The Comprehensive Test Ban Treaty Organisation (CTBTO) Preparatory Commission and the Provisional Technical Secretariat should be commended for their work in preparing for implementation of the CTBT. States should not attempt to hinder the work of the CTBT PrepCom and should avoid creating obstacles to entry into force of the Treaty in any way. We urge each signatory to provide adequate financial, political and technical support for the continued development and operation of the CTBTO so that the International Data Centre and the International Monitoring System will be up and running, and an effective on-site inspection regime will be in place when the CTBT enters into force. The US announcement to limit its contribution to the CTBTO to the International Monitoring System is unacceptable. The treaty verification is an integrated package that cannot be opened at this late stage. States cannot "pick and choose" which part of the CTBT they support. States should productively engage with one another to establish the rules for open access to data, and to the development of procedures for effective and timely on-site inspections. The CTBTO must be an open organisation, ready to provide an effective verification system and able to interact with the wider scientific community as well as relevant humanitarian relief agencies.

All states possessing nuclear weapons should engage in confidence-building processes, including transparency measures at nuclear test sites and nuclear weapon facilities with a view to minimising misperceptions arising from activities related to the maintenance of nuclear weapons. In this regard, we note with interest the Russian proposal for test-site confidence-building measures with the United States.

10. Despite the overwhelming international support for the CTBT, 13 key states have not yet signed and/or ratified, unnecessarily delaying the entry into force of this vital agreement. The Democratic People’s Republic of Korea, India, and Pakistan must still sign and ratify the CTBT.
11. On this, the occasion of the fifth anniversary of the opening for signature of the CTBT, we urge the leaders and the governments of the 13 states whose accession is required for entry into force to re-commit themselves to the ratification of the CTBT, and in the meantime, to maintain their nuclear testing moratoria, to fully support the work of the CTBTO PrepCom, and to announce they will refrain from all types of nuclear weapons research which may result in qualitative improvements of nuclear arsenals, and which consequently are inconsistent with the fundamental goals of the CTBT.

Further delay on the part of these CTBT ‘hold-out’ states will make it more likely that some leaders will try to acquire nuclear weapons or significantly improve their arsenals, increasing the possibility of the resumption of nuclear testing, and making it less likely that a strong coalition of states could be mobilized in response to such activities. Maintaining a nuclear explosion moratorium is therefore also an essential precondition for strengthening the test ban. This conference should send out a strong message to the 13 states preventing entry into force of the CTBT and urge their prompt signature and ratification of the Treaty without conditions or reservations. The world will otherwise hold these countries responsible for undermining international security, as well as the NPT disarmament regime.

12. We recall with particular disappointment and concern that on October 13, 1999, the United States Senate, after a brief and highly-partisan debate, became the first legislature to fail to approve ratification of the CTBT. Although the United States Senate failed in its first vote to approve ratification of the Treaty, we note that a majority of the Senate supports the CTBT and its reconsideration. On October 12, 1999, 62 Senators wrote to the Senate leadership and urged "... putting off final consideration until the next Congress..." on the basis "that throughout history the Senate has had the power, the duty to reconsider prior decisions...." The CTBT remains before the Senate, but it is unlikely to be ratified without the support of President Bush or a future U.S. president.

We also wish to express our deep concern about the policies of President Bush, which have thus far undermined prospects for US ratification and global entry into force. The Bush administration has said there is no intention to seek Senate approval for ratification of the CTBT. In November 2001, the United States alone voted against a procedural decision to keep the CTBT on the agenda of the UN General Assembly. The US has also announced that it will withhold support for, and will not participate in, non-International Monitoring System activities by the CTBTO, especially the preparations for on-site inspections. Such policies undermine the credibility of President Bush’s stated policy of maintaining the U.S. nuclear test moratorium, and they injure international efforts to end nuclear testing, curb nuclear proliferation, and advance nuclear disarmament.

Other governments, including those of China, India and Pakistan, have also failed to demonstrate the leadership and courage necessary to secure a political consensus within their countries for
ratification of this Treaty, which has been a long-standing policy goal of these countries through the years. Failure by another state should not serve as an excuse for any states to withhold signature and ratification of the CTBT.

We are profoundly disappointed with the countries that have failed to attend this conference, especially those states whose signature and ratification are essential for entry into force.

13. The States Parties to the Non Proliferation Treaty, in their 2000 Review Conference Final Document, identified a number of practical steps towards the implementation of the NPT Article VI disarmament obligation. Of particular relevance to the CTBT, in addition to the call for CTBT signature and ratification for "early entry into force", are those steps calling for the application of the "principle of irreversibility" to nuclear disarmament, for "increased transparency by the nuclear-weapon States with regard to the nuclear weapons capabilities", and "a diminishing role for nuclear weapons in security policies". Nuclear weapons research aimed at the improvement of nuclear arsenals is inconsistent with these commitments and with the purposes and understandings of the CTBT.

States possessing nuclear weapons can take such steps to further the broader disarmament goals expressed in the CTBT, whose objective, as stated in its Preamble, is "to contribute effectively to the prevention of the proliferation of nuclear weapons in all its aspects, to the process of nuclear disarmament and therefore to the enhancement of international peace and security." Such other actions, moreover, by reducing international tensions and demonstrating intent to act consistently with the purposes of the Treaty, are likely to enhance the possibility of its early entry into force.

14. This conference should commit itself to condemn any future testing and call upon governments, businesses and people from around the world to respond to any future test by withholding military sales, trade and other business support from the testing countries. We also urge the conference and committed governments to decide to continue to send high-level groups of emissaries to those countries which have not yet signed or ratified the Treaty in order to facilitate and encourage their support for the CTBT. In addition, we urge heads of state and government of countries that have ratified the CTBT to press for signature and ratification with their counterparts in the 13 states whose signature and ratification are still required for entry into force at every opportunity, including discussions on combating terrorism.

As non-governmental representatives, we want to remind the governments attending this conference of your grave responsibility, on behalf of the peoples of the world and future generations, to do what you can to prevent future nuclear explosions and eliminate the risk of nuclear war.

The implementation of a CTBT has been a goal of world leaders, diplomats, scientists, physicians and millions of ordinary people from all walks of life for nearly five decades. We urge you to do all that is within your power to ensure that the Treaty enters into force so that the next international gathering devoted to the CTBT is the first review conference. Seize the chance now to end nuclear testing forever, as an indispensable step towards the elimination of nuclear threats.
* This statement, delivered by Rebecca Johnson of the Acronym Institute for Disarmament Diplomacy, was prepared and supported by NGOs who have worked for a comprehensive test ban treaty for many years, in many countries, in many ways.