

VCDNP-Panel: Strengthening the Comprehensive Nuclear-Test-Ban Treaty and its Verification Regime, 28 January 2021

Ambassador Gerhard Küntzle, Permanent Representative of Germany to the UN Vienna and other International Organization

Dr. Zerbo, Elena, Ambassadors and Ladies and Gentlemen,

Let me first join Elena and Dr. Zerbo in warmly welcoming you to this event, which is part of the Algerian-German Co-Presidency of the CTBT Art. XIV Process. We are delighted at this great turnout, and I would like to thank the team at VCDNP, and especially you, Elena, for making this event possible. I would also like to take this opportunity to thank Ambassador Mebarki and all our Algerian colleagues for the excellent cooperation during our Co-Presidency – for me always a warming ray of light during troubling times of the pandemic and the difficulties we are facing during our diplomatic work.

Ladies and Gentlemen,

At the 2019 Art. XIV Conference, German Foreign Minister Maas hailed the CTBTO's verification regime *„an excellent example of multilateralism in practice.“* It is this unique verification regime which has made huge progress under the guidance of Executive Secretary Dr. Zerbo that makes the CTBT a success story.

Already the first DPRK nuclear test back in 2006 was reliably detected, in spite of its low yield “fizzle” and the fact that only around half of the network was running. With every following “DKPR event” it became clearer for everyone: There is no escape from Dr. Zerbo and the analysts – testers will be caught. I am convinced that this reinforced the respect for the no-test norm enshrined in the CTBT, which is now almost universal.

A crucial factor in this is assuring high levels of data availability, and I applaud the CTBTO and station operators for assuring high data availability even under the movement restrictions imposed by the pandemic.

Ladies and Gentlemen,

Germany is proud to contribute to the International Monitoring System with four stations, which were amongst the very first to be established. And we are grateful for the excellent cooperation we enjoy with South Africa, with whom we operate a station in the Antarctic – by the way the only station to be jointly operated.

Looking ahead, the further refinement and provisional operation are in my view absolutely essential any for progress with the Treaty's entry into force. Only with the confidence that a potential Treaty violation will be detected is there a chance to persuade the remaining Annex 2 States to sign and ratify. In this context, I wish to highlight three points:

Firstly, we need to continue the development and refinement of the verification regime to meet current and future challenges. In doing so, an "ultra-orthodox" reading of the Treaty that discards everything not described in detail in the Treaty as forbidden is not helpful. Nonetheless, the views of all CTBTO States Signatories need to be taken on board. While the restrictions imposed by the pandemic have made consensus-seeking difficult in the last year, I am confident that we can nurture the Vienna Spirit back to health once the public health situation allows.

Secondly, it is important to make the fullest use of monitoring data for civil and scientific uses – this helps create interest and ownership especially in developing world. Anissa Hammadi and Lars Ceranna from the Algerian and German National Data Centers will elaborate on this aspect.

And finally, the excellent outreach efforts need to continue. Dr. Zerbo and his team have taken outreach to new levels through the creative and bold ways they promote the treaty and its verification regime in the public, amongst scientists and especially the younger generation. I am delighted that the CTBTO Youth Group is represented here today through two young ladies, from South Korea and India. By the way, congratulations to the Group for their own outreach efforts which brought their membership to 1.000! Well done, and I wish you lots of success for your work which is so important for the Treaty!

With this, I look forward to a lively and interesting discussion!