

**Statement of H.E. Alexander De Croo, Deputy Prime Minister and
Minister and minister of Finance and Development Cooperation
11th Conference on Facilitating the Entry into Force of the
Comprehensive Nuclear-Test-Ban Treaty
(25 September 2019, New York)**

Ministers, Excellences, distinguished delegates,

First of all, I would like to express my gratitude for the support extended to Belgium in the fulfilment of its mandate, together with Iraq, as Coordinator of the Article 14 process.

I wish to thank in particular Dr. Lassina Zerbo, the Executive Secretary of the CTBTO, and his staff for their valuable support to us and for their tireless efforts in promoting the CTBT, as well as in strengthening the Treaty's verification regime. My thanks also go out to our Iraqi colleagues.

When we received the article 14 mandate two years ago, we were faced with a daunting task. The last accession of an Annex 2 State to the Treaty dated back to 2012. Multiple factors complicated further progress in the position of the remaining eight Annex 2 States whose accession is required to allow for the entry into force of the Treaty. This raised the question on the most effective way forward and on the possible need for a new approach.

After two years of experience, it is my conviction that some of the traditional activities remain as important as ever. Bilateral demarches at a high political level remain an essential tool to underscore the continued political salience of the CTBT. Annex 2 States need to be prioritized since they hold the key to the treaty's long overdue entry into force. We should however not lose sight of the other States. A true global norm against nuclear testing is contingent upon the buy-in by all Member States of the UN. Accession by Annex 1 States demonstrates this shared responsibility of mankind. Moreover, it reduces the circle of countries that have not formally committed to a legally binding and verifiable norm against nuclear tests. In this regard, I warmly welcome the recent ratification of the Treaty by Thailand and Zimbabwe, and its signing by Tuvalu.

However, I have learnt it is important to move beyond traditional political demarches and declarations. First, we need to strengthen the accomplishments already achieved, in particular the verification regime. In this regard, I am pleased that Belgium, the Netherlands and Luxembourg, launched an innovative cooperation framework between their national data centres and scientists. By pooling our expertise, we intend to provide the CTBTO with more in depth analysis of alleged nuclear tests. We hope this model will inspire other regions to set up similar cooperation frameworks.

Only one State conducted nuclear tests during this century and it is therefore crucial to move North Korea closer to CTBT-accession. This goal should be part of the

international negotiations on the denuclearization of the DPRK. A declaratory moratorium on tests is not enough. The country should take steps to sign and ratify the CTBT. Moreover, its nuclear test site should be comprehensively and irreversibly dismantled under international verification. Obviously, the CTBTO could play a constructive role in this endeavor, thanks to its knowledge and expertise.

The CTBT was signed over twenty years ago, but its goal is more important than ever. We should therefore raise awareness with the younger generation, the guardians of our planet's future. We pay tribute to Dr. Zerbo's initiative of "CTBTO youth" and we have tried to work in this spirit throughout our mandate.

Finally, I wish the best of success to our successors, Algeria and Germany. We have full confidence that through their commitment, they will contribute to further progress in promoting entry into force of the CTBT. Let me assure our colleagues of our full support and of our continued commitment to promote the CTBT as an indispensable step towards a world without nuclear weapons.