

International Day for the Total Elimination of Nuclear Weapons

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on behalf of
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Excellencies,

Ladies and Gentlemen,

It is an honour to be here today in commemoration of the International Day for the Total Elimination of Nuclear Weapons observed on the 26th of September. This date marks the UN General Assembly's first-ever Nuclear Disarmament High Level meeting in 2013. It is also the day when a former lieutenant colonel of the Soviet Air Defence Forces, Stanislav Petrov, made a decision which prevented a global nuclear catastrophe in 1983.

Despite the pervasive risk of nuclear weapons today, over half of the world's population lives in countries which either still possess such weapons or are members of nuclear alliances. As of this year, there are still over 17,000 nuclear weapons around the world. This stark reality reminds us why such commemoration is needed. It is needed to promote awareness about the devastating effects posed by nuclear weapons and to reaffirm our commitment to global nuclear disarmament.

Through our work at the Comprehensive Nuclear-Test-Ban Treaty Organization, we are already supporting this multilateral call to action. By prohibiting all nuclear tests anywhere for any purpose, the Treaty plays a vital role in nuclear disarmament. Our International Monitoring System, comprised of 337 facilities worldwide, monitors the globe to ensure that no nuclear test goes undetected. No nuclear tests means a significant barrier to upgrading existing nuclear weapon capabilities as well as a barrier to entry for those who do not possess them. As one of the most widely supported international arms control treaties, the CTBT has 183 States Signatories and 164 ratifying States. Unfortunately, the Treaty's 19th anniversary, which was recently celebrated just a few days ago, is not entirely cause for celebration. The CTBT is yet to come into force, as 8 States listed in Annex 2 to the Treaty – China, the DPRK, Egypt, India, Pakistan, Iran, Israel and the United States – still need to complete their ratification procedures. Overcoming this obstacle requires a stronger multilateral approach and political will from all State Signatories.

This renewed effort should start today, a day which serves as a timely reminder for us all to lock in the benefits of the CTBT once and for all. I hope you will support the Treaty in its important role in leading to a world free from nuclear weapons.