

Statement on behalf of Ireland by Minister of State Joe McHugh, TD, Minister of State for the Diaspora and International Development

13 June 2016

(AS DELIVERED)

I wish to be associated with the earlier remarks and express my sympathy to the American people on their tragic loss yesterday.

Chairman, Executive Secretary, Ministers, Ladies and Gentlemen,

Táim thar a bheith sásta a bheith libh anseo inniu ar son an Rialtas ag an ócáid fiche bliain.

It is an honour for me, on behalf of the Government of Ireland, to attend this High Level Meeting here in Vienna on the occasion of the 20th anniversary of the Comprehensive Test Ban Treaty.

At the outset, I also wish to endorse the earlier statement of the High Representative of the EU.

On this 20th anniversary, it is important that we should recognise the benefits which we have garnered from the Treaty's adoption. Today, we can say that the large number of signatories and the degree of adherence to the CTBT represents a strong international de facto legal norm against nuclear weapons testing. It is also important to highlight the benefits accruing from the International Monitoring System, which is so close to completion, in enhancing our capacity to detect and analyse seismic or tsunami activity. These tangible benefits of the technical expertise on which the Treaty is based, are of incalculable benefit to humanity as a whole.

Last month Ireland was honoured to host an International Workshop of Data Centres. This was held at Ireland's National Data Centre, which is located at the Dublin Institute for Advanced Studies. The workshop was organised in cooperation with the Provisional Technical Secretariat of the CTBTO, was attended by some 80 participants from almost 30 states, and it was a good opportunity to commemorate Irishman Robert Mallet, the famous geophysicist and the 'Father of Seismology'.

The infrastructure established by the Provisional Technical Secretariat will play an important verification role when the Treaty enters into force. Ireland has always strongly supported the Treaty. We see it as an essential element in the global nuclear disarmament and non-proliferation regime, which is built around the Nuclear Non-Proliferation Treaty. As noted by Executive Secretary Zerbo at the 2015 NPT Review Conference, the CTBT and other international instruments "bring the rule of law to what would otherwise be a lawless and dangerous situation."

By prohibiting all nuclear testing, the CTBT inhibits states from developing new nuclear weapons. It is therefore an important step along the path to a world without nuclear weapons, with their devastating consequences for all of humanity. We fully endorse the comments of the UN Secretary General – Ban Ki-moon – that “there are no right hands for the wrong weapons.” Ireland has also been at the forefront of raising awareness of the gendered impact of these weapons and the need for women’s engagement in the nuclear disarmament agenda. As recently appointed Minister for International Development, I attended the World Humanitarian Summit in Istanbul last month. It was here that Ireland were honoured to co-host a side-event on the Humanitarian Impact of Nuclear Weapons, highlighting the unacceptable risks associated with these weapons. The risk that these weapons pose to the achievement of the Sustainable Development Goals should be of the greatest possible concern.

Ireland deeply regrets the failure to reach an outcome document at the 2015 NPT Review Conference. We welcome the constructive engagement of an overwhelming majority of states at the Open-Ended Working Group on Nuclear Disarmament taking place this year in Geneva, in which Ireland is fully engaged.

This 20th anniversary is another opportunity to demonstrate that the international community, including our partners in Civil Society, can work constructively together, in pursuit of the common good, and in this regard we should continue to press for the full universalisation of the CTBT. It is the firm view of Ireland – and the European Union – that the Treaty must enter into force. We believe the Treaty’s entry into force would be an important step along the path to a world without nuclear weapons. Ireland will continue to pursue all diplomatic avenues to encourage those states who remain outside the Treaty to sign and ratify without further delay.

I want to finally acknowledge the organisation for putting together that video. It brought back a lot of memories for me as someone who grew up during the Troubles in my own country. I think it makes a very, very strong statement in terms of how quickly time moves on, and it reminded me of an Irish expression: Tá freagracht orainn uilig i leith an chéad ghlúin eile. We all have a responsibility towards this generation and towards the next.

Thank you.

ENDS