

**Security Council**

Distr.: General  
23 September 2021

Original: English

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**Letter dated 24 September 2021 from the Permanent Representative of Ireland to the United Nations addressed to the President of the Security Council**

I have the pleasure to inform you that Ireland, in its capacity as President of the Security Council for the month of September 2021, will hold a high-level briefing on the Comprehensive Nuclear-Test-Ban Treaty, under the item entitled “Non-proliferation of weapons of mass destruction”. The briefing will take place on Monday, 27 September, at 10 a.m. Eastern Daylight Time.

In order to guide the discussions on this topic, Ireland has prepared a concept note. The concept note is contained in the annex to the present letter.

I would be grateful if the present letter and its annex could be circulated as a document of the Security Council.

(Signed) Geraldine **Byrne Nason**  
Permanent Representative of Ireland to the United Nations



**Annex to the letter dated 24 September 2021 from the Permanent Representative of Ireland to the United Nations addressed to the President of the Security Council**

**Concept note for the Security Council briefing on the theme “Non-proliferation of weapons of mass destruction: twenty-fifth anniversary of the Comprehensive Nuclear-Test-Ban Treaty”, to be held on Monday, 27 September 2021**

**I. Objective**

To provide the Security Council, Member States and the United Nations with the opportunity to underline the importance of the Comprehensive Nuclear-Test-Ban Treaty as part of the nuclear disarmament and non-proliferation architecture, by marking the twenty-fifth anniversary of the opening for signature of the Treaty.

**II. Background**

**What is the Comprehensive Nuclear-Test-Ban Treaty?**

The Comprehensive Nuclear-Test-Ban Treaty is the international instrument to end all nuclear testing. Nuclear test explosions have been used to develop or modernize nuclear warhead designs and to demonstrate nuclear weapons capabilities. These tests have affected the lives and health of generations of people around the globe. Calls for an end to nuclear testing date back decades; in 1954, the Prime Minister of India, Jawaharlal Nehru, called for a “standstill agreement” on nuclear testing.

The adoption of the Comprehensive Nuclear-Test-Ban Treaty in September 1996 was the culmination of decades of work. It expands on the provisions of the 1963 Treaty Banning Nuclear Weapon Tests in the Atmosphere, in Outer Space and under Water (Partial Test Ban Treaty), which prohibited all test detonations of nuclear weapons except for those conducted underground. The Comprehensive Nuclear-Test-Ban Treaty, which opened for signature on 24 September 1996, prohibits “any nuclear weapon test explosion or any other nuclear explosion” anywhere. In this, it is an important element of the global disarmament and non-proliferation architecture and a strong confidence- and security-building measure. As the preamble to the Treaty recognizes, the end of all explosive testing will constrain the development and qualitative improvement of nuclear weapons and end the development of advanced new types of nuclear weapons. The Treaty in this way contributes to both nuclear disarmament and non-proliferation.

Since 1998, with one exception, all States have respected the strong de facto international norm created by the Comprehensive Nuclear-Test-Ban Treaty and upheld moratoriums on nuclear weapons testing. Each of the handful of nuclear tests conducted since the Treaty’s opening for signature has been condemned by the Security Council, which has imposed sanctions in each case.

Currently, 185 States have signed the Treaty and 170 have ratified it. However, the Treaty’s entry into force requirements have not yet been met.

**Comprehensive Nuclear-Test-Ban Treaty global verification regime**

The Comprehensive Nuclear-Test-Ban Treaty establishes a unique, comprehensive global verification regime to monitor compliance. This comprises a global network of monitoring stations, the International Monitoring System,

consisting of 337 seismic, hydroacoustic, infrasound and radionuclide monitoring stations around the world. Information from these facilities is collected and made available to States parties through the International Data Centre. The monitoring system is rounded out with capacity for on-site inspections in case of a suspected nuclear test.

This global regime has delivered important practical benefits, including allowing the Preparatory Commission for the Comprehensive Nuclear-Test-Ban Treaty Organization to provide near real-time information from its seismic and hydroacoustic stations to tsunami warning centres. Information from the International Monitoring System can also assist research in areas such as climate and environment, meteorology and worldwide background radiation.

The Preparatory Commission for the Comprehensive Nuclear-Test-Ban Treaty Organization, created in 1996, and currently headed by the Executive Secretary, Robert Floyd, is mandated to establish the Comprehensive Nuclear-Test-Ban Treaty global verification regime, which must be operational when the Treaty enters into force, to provide a forum for consultation and cooperation for States parties and to promote signatures and ratifications of the Treaty so that it can enter into force.

### **Comprehensive Nuclear-Test-Ban Treaty at the United Nations**

The Security Council most recently addressed the issue of the Comprehensive Nuclear-Test-Ban Treaty on 22 September 2016, marking the twentieth anniversary of the Treaty and adopting resolution [2310 \(2016\)](#). In the resolution, the Council stressed the “vital importance and urgency” of achieving the early entry into force of the Treaty and urged all States to sign and ratify it. The Council called on States not to conduct any nuclear weapon test explosions and to maintain their national moratoriums. It also supported the work of the Preparatory Commission for the Comprehensive Nuclear-Test-Ban Treaty Organization in completing the International Monitoring System, noting its contribution to regional stability as a significant confidence-building measure, while strengthening the nuclear non-proliferation and disarmament regime.

The importance of the Comprehensive Nuclear-Test-Ban Treaty is also recognized in *Securing our Common Future: An Agenda for Disarmament* (2018), General Assembly resolution [64/35](#) on the International Day against Nuclear Tests and the annual resolution on the Treaty approved by the First Committee of the Assembly. The goal of ending nuclear tests is also reflected in the preamble to the Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons, which is the cornerstone of the nuclear non-proliferation and disarmament architecture.

### **What is envisaged?**

In marking the twenty-fifth anniversary of the Comprehensive Nuclear-Test-Ban Treaty, the Security Council will recognize the significance of the Treaty as an important element of the nuclear disarmament and non-proliferation architecture and the need to uphold the international norm against nuclear tests. The meeting will focus on the goals and objectives of the Treaty, the achievements of the Treaty over the past 25 years and the work done on the global verification regime, including the International Monitoring System.

The meeting will complement and follow the Conference on Facilitating the Entry into Force of the Comprehensive Nuclear-Test-Ban Treaty (article XIV conference), held on 23 September, providing Security Council members with an opportunity to lend new impetus towards the early entry into force of this key instrument as soon as possible. The Co-Chairs of the article XIV process, Italy and South Africa, will also be invited to participate.

### **III. Guiding questions**

- How can the entry into force of this key element of the global disarmament and non-proliferation architecture be promoted, including through the review process of the Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons?
- How can the objectives set in Security Council resolution [2310 \(2016\)](#) be advanced and the international norm against nuclear tests strengthened, including through the important interim role that the moratorium on testing plays?
- The Comprehensive Nuclear-Test-Ban Treaty global verification regime is a key element of the Treaty in providing confidence that any nuclear test or explosion will be detected. How can the Preparatory Commission for the Comprehensive Nuclear-Test-Ban Treaty Organization be better supported to complete its work on this and to ensure that it is operational by the time the Treaty enters into force?
- How can the wider community, including civil society, academia and the private sector, help to advance the work of the Comprehensive Nuclear-Test-Ban Treaty?

### **IV. Format**

The high-level briefing will take place in person on Monday, 27 September 2021, at 10 a.m. Eastern Daylight Time.

### **V. Briefers**

- Izumi Nakamitsu, High Representative for Disarmament Affairs
  - Robert Floyd, Executive Secretary of the Preparatory Commission for the Comprehensive Nuclear-Test-Ban Treaty Organization
  - Civil society representative (to be confirmed)
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