Honourable Dr. Lewis, Mr. Toth, Ladies and gentlemen,

Thank you very much indeed for inviting me to this seminar. Of the 37 years I spent as a career diplomat, half of it is devoted exclusively to international arms control and disarmament. Without being boastful, I think I can call myself an old guy in this field. Talking about the Comprehensive Test Ban Treaty, my mind at once flashes back to the events that happened 14 years ago. At that time, in this very same chamber, the Conference on Disarmament took the decision to set up an Ad-Hoc committee to start the CTBT negotiations. After three years of hard work in which we surmounted many formidable hurdles, a draft treaty was finally concluded. Unfortunately, the ceremony marking its adoption was not held in this magnificent and stately hall. But that does not in any way diminish its historic importance for the international community as a multilateral arms-control treaty.

Ladies and gentlemen,

The first thing I want to underscore is that one cannot emphasize enough the significance of the CTBT for international disarmament process and the non-proliferation regime.

It is the sincere wish of the whole mankind to achieve the complete prohibition and thorough destruction of nuclear weapons. That indeed is the ultimate goal for us. The conclusion of the Comprehensive Test Ban Treaty was a major milestone in the journey leading towards that goal. It will no doubt play an immediate and important role in advancing international disarmament efforts and in curtailing the spread of nuclear weapons. This is because, first of all, the Treaty has capped the qualitative development of nuclear weapons, thus preventing their vertical proliferation; secondly, it has set in motion strong political momentum to ban nuclear tests and raised the nuclear threshold for aspiring states, checking therefore the horizontal proliferation of such weapons. In many ways, the CTBT was the masterpiece of that golden age of disarmament in 1990s. Its significance has been and will continue to be felt as we work to strengthen international peace and security.

The conclusion of the CTBT was a victory of multilateralism. It proved that on those major issues involving the common interests to the international community, by working together with a common sense of purpose, we can achieve what unilateralists can never hope to achieve. There is a classic saying in Chinese which runs like this: a just cause enjoys abundant support while an unjust one finds little. I am pleased to see that with 177 signatories and 138 ratifications, the rank of protagonists of the Treaty is gathering strength. This also means that the value of the CTBT is getting broader recognition and support. This will inevitably bring us closer to the day when it enters into force. The immediate task in front of us is to build on the international consensus on this issue and push for the Treaty's early entry into force. But to make that really happen, the international community must stand by the purposes and principles of the Treaty and be more forthcoming in making the needed political commitment and in actively supporting the preparatory work of the CTBTO.

The verification regime designed for the CTBT can rightly serve as a model for other international arms control agreements. In recent years, sceptical voices have arisen time and again questioning the verification mechanism of multilateral treaties, including those for the Comprehensive Test Ban Treaty. Here I would like to mention two facts to counter the sceptics. No. 1, so far not a single signatory country has conducted any nuclear test explosion in defiance of the Treaty since it was concluded. No. 2, although a full-fledged international monitoring system (IMS) has not started running, it has nonetheless detected accurately all the nuclear test explosions which took place after the CTBT was adopted. What this tells us is that multilateral arms control verification systems can perform the role it intends to play in monitoring the treaty implementation. Moreover, such systems have successfully reconciled the need to respect state sovereignty and that to promote compliance with treaties.

Ladies and gentlemen,

I was China's chief negotiator for the CTBT negotiations. But now speaking in my individual capacity, let me set out for you my understanding of China's position on this issue.

Before the start of the negotiations, some friends were deeply worried. They asked me, Of all the nuclear powers, China has had fewest nuclear tests, and not just a few times less but a thousand times less when compared with some others. Would it still be interested in participating in the CTBT
negotiations? My answer was very categorical, we will definitely be on board, for the simple reason that China's nuclear forces were entirely built for defence purpose and have always acted with great restraint in developing nuclear weapons. In fact, from the very first day we had such weapons, we have been calling for their complete prohibition and thorough destruction as a step toward a world free of nuclear weapons. China's policy in this field corresponds exactly with the purposes and objectives of the Treaty and we had no reasons to stay away from its negotiations. Well, as you know, what happened afterwards was that we actively participated in the negotiations and contributed to its final conclusion. What is more, China was among the first countries to sign it.

Things have changed a lot since then in the international security scene. A former leading advocate of the CTBT has now turned against it. Once again, a friend came to me and told me his worries: Since China has not ratified the Treaty, would it also withdraw its support? I can assure you again that China will never waver on this matter. Let the following facts speak for themselves:

Firstly, the Chinese Government has always held the view that an early entry into force of the Treaty will contribute to world peace and stability and will serve the common interests of the international community as well as of China. It has no reason to make a decision contrary to such common interests.

Secondly, the Government has always looked positively at ratifying the CTBT. It has submitted it to the Standing Committee of the National People's Congress and is working actively to facilitate an early completion of the ratification process. As far as I know, that process is going on well.

Thirdly, the Chinese Government has committed itself to a moratorium of nuclear tests which it first made 11 years ago. It has also reaffirmed repeatedly its willingness to abide by that commitment pending the entry into force of the Comprehensive Test Ban Treaty.

Fourthly, China is also actively involved in all aspects of the work underway in the Preparatory Commission of the CTBTO. At the same time, it is working hard to pave the way for the Treaty's implementation in China. A national implementation authority has been set up with an overall coordinating mandate in this field, including the construction, operation and management of monitoring stations. China has volunteered to build 12 such stations, including 6 seismic stations, 3 radionuclide stations, 2 infrasound stations and 1 radionuclide laboratory as well as a national data centre. At present, everything is going according to the schedule.

Fifthly, my country firmly supports international efforts to bring about the entry into force of the Treaty. It has participated in all conferences held for that purpose. Over the years, China has also been an active supporter and co-sponsor of the CTBT-related resolutions at the First Committee of the UN General Assembly.

Honourable Dr. Lewis, Mr. Toth, and dear friends,

I had a full-time job in disarmament for nearly 17 years before becoming the permanent representative of the Chinese Mission in Geneva. Now I have just been appointed as the UN Under-Secretary-General for Economic and Social Affairs. I have been asked of my opinion of the proposed reforms for the DDA, and here is a brief answer in my personal capacity:

Since its first day of existence, the United Nations has made promoting universal disarmament and safeguarding world peace a major pillar of its work. Actually, the very first resolution adopted by the UN General Assembly was about nuclear disarmament. If we look back on the past six decades, we can see that there have been ups and downs and twists and turns in the UN's disarmament process, which largely mirrored the changes that have taken place in international security situation. Perhaps this is not the best time for disarmament but I am confident that that moment will eventually come. Since the days of the founding fathers, the disarmament machinery of the UN has evolved with the time and improved itself. We now have a full-fledged institutional set-up, which is playing a unique and crucial role in international arms control and disarmament efforts. It is unfair to blame the institution for the lack of progress in this area. The real cause lies in the deficit of political will of some quarters. Because of this, we should all work to strengthen, not weaken, UN's disarmament mandate.

On the other hand, however, some adjustments in the DDA are perhaps also necessary to bring it more in tune with the march of history. We welcome the efforts made by the new Secretary-General in this area, which we believe are motivated by a genuine desire for reforms and which we hope will be accepted by all member states.

Thank you.


• Reinforcing Efforts to Prevent Nuclear Proliferation: China's Perspective—Speech by Ambassador SHA Zukang at the Wilton Park Conference (17th December, 2002 ) (2004-04-16)

• "How to Cope with the DPRK's Withdrawal from the NPT?"—Speech by Ambassador SHA Zukang at the NPT Workshop(Annecy, France, March 14, 2003) (2004-04-16)