

Comprehensive Test Ban Treaty

The Comprehensive Test Ban Treaty (CTBT) prohibits countries from conducting nuclear weapon explosions and establishes an extensive verification system through the Comprehensive Test Ban Treaty Organization (CTBTO). U.S. ratification of the CTBT would be a key component in repairing an already damaged non-proliferation regime.

As part of the 1995 agreement to indefinitely extend the Nuclear Nonproliferation Treaty, the U.S. and other countries pledged to complete negotiations on the CTBT by 1996, which was done. In 2000, the U.S. committed to ratify the CTBT as part of the *13 Practical Steps* contained within the *2000 NPT Review Conference Final Document*. One hundred eighty countries have signed the treaty, and 148 have ratified. Forty-one of the 44 “Annex 2” states, whose ratification is required for the CTBT to enter into force, have signed the treaty, and 35 have ratified it. Still remaining are China, North Korea, Egypt, India, Indonesia, Iran, Israel, Pakistan and the United States. Although the U.S. was the first signatory of the CTBT, the Senate has failed to approve its ratification.

In 1999, President Clinton’s political problems combined with uncertainties about treaty verification, monitoring and the ability to maintain existing weapons in the absence of testing led the Senate to reject the treaty in a partisan vote. In 2002, the Bush administration announced that it would not support ratification of the CTBT. Since then, prospects for test ban ratification have become more hopeful. President Barack Obama has expressed full support for the treaty, stating, “As president, I will reach out to the Senate to secure the ratification of the CTBT at the earliest practical date and will then launch a diplomatic effort to bring onboard other states whose ratifications are required for the treaty to enter into force.” There is now a larger Senate majority of CTBT supporters to work with the President.

Verification

Even without the CTBT entering into force, the CTBTO has created an extensive verification and monitoring system. In October 2006, an International Monitoring Station (IMS) - radionuclide detection station - was able to establish the location and magnitude of North Korea’s sub-kiloton underground nuclear test. Since then, IMS has expanded its overall monitoring capacity by 32% and its radionuclide detection capacity by 600%. Currently, the IMS consists of 242 certified stations: 127 seismic monitoring stations, 10 hydroacoustic monitoring stations, 54 radionuclide detectors, 10 radionuclide laboratories and 41 infrasound detectors. Over the coming years, the CTBTO plans to build a total of 337 detection facilities.

Preventing Nuclear Weapons Development and Curbing Proliferation

The CTBT will strengthen the global non-proliferation regime by erecting a high barrier to the spread of nuclear weapons. Countries on the verge of acquiring nuclear weapons will be prohibited from testing. Countries already in possession of nuclear weapons will be less able to improve and modify their nuclear arsenals. In particular, the CTBT will limit the development of nuclear warheads deliverable by missiles and further refinement of nuclear weapons by states already possessing them.

Health and Environmental Impacts

CTBT ratification also carries with it significant health and environmental benefits by barring contamination-producing nuclear tests. An estimated 80,000 people who lived in or who were born in the United States between the years 1951 and 2000 will contract cancer as a result of the fallout from U.S. above-ground nuclear tests. In addition, radioactivity from underground tests threatens the surrounding environment and groundwater.

Recommendations

- President Obama should provide leadership for ratification of the Comprehensive Test Ban Treaty with no conditions at the earliest possible date.
- President Obama should appoint a senior advisor to coordinate disarmament and nonproliferation policies.

Alliance for Nuclear Accountability

322 Fourth Street, NE

Washington, DC 20002

202.544.0217

www.ananuclear.org