Excellencies,
Ladies and Gentlemen,

I am honoured to address this Assembly under the agenda item “Cooperation between the United Nations and the Preparatory Commission of the Comprehensive Nuclear-Test-Ban Treaty Organization”. I am also pleased to speak today on behalf of Executive Secretary Lassina Zerbo, who is currently engaged with the Integrated Field Exercise 2014 being held in Jordan. When the IFE14 is completed, it will represent the largest and most comprehensive on-site inspection field exercise ever to be conducted. I will address this important activity in further detail later.

The United Nations has worked tirelessly to maintain international peace and security through collective action. Reducing the threat of nuclear weapons through multilateral non-proliferation and disarmament measures – such as the Comprehensive Nuclear-Test-Ban Treaty (CTBT) – has been a crucial part of these efforts. Active and sustained cooperation among States and between States and international organizations is vital to our success in the advancing these objectives.

Since the CTBT was opened for signature in 1996, the United Nations has consistently supported the effective implementation of the Treaty and its steady progress towards entry into force. Secretary-General Ban Ki-moon’s leadership on the CTBT has been instrumental in strengthening the cooperative security structures that promote international peace and stability, and has reinforced the Treaty as a rallying point for nuclear disarmament and non-proliferation. The General Assembly resolution on Cooperation between the United Nations and the Commission is an embodiment of the importance of such cooperation. It is a necessity if we are to realize the longstanding international objective of a world free from the threats of nuclear weapons.

I represent the Organization whose mission is to bring an end to nuclear test explosions once and for all, by anyone, anywhere, a goal that has been on the international agenda for more than six decades. During the Cold War, strategic competition among the great powers drove scientists and technicians to develop smaller and more destructive nuclear weapons, to be
delivered by bombers and all types of missiles – often carrying multiple warheads. The development of these sophisticated weapons necessitated extensive nuclear testing programmes to validate the designs of the warheads and delivery vehicles. Between 1945 and 1990, more than two thousand nuclear tests were carried out, at a rate of nearly 500 per decade. However, the conclusion of the CTBT and the steadily reinforced global norm against nuclear testing has all but completely relegated this dangerous legacy of the Cold War to the dustbin of history.

Although the CTBT has yet to enter into force, the good news is that the Treaty is working. The verification system has the proven capability to detect nuclear tests at a fraction of the yield of the first nuclear weapon test in the desert near Alamogordo in July 1945. The international community forcefully condemns any violations of this norm today, as has been the case with each of the announced nuclear tests by the Democratic People’s Republic of Korea – the only State to conduct a nuclear test in this millennium.

With 183 States Signatories and 163 ratifying States, the CTBT is one of the most adhered-to instruments in its field. Nearly 90% of the Treaty’s verification system is complete, giving it a truly global reach. Nonetheless, there remain eight Annex 2 States that must ratify the Treaty in order to achieve its entry into force. Without a legally binding and effectively verifiable test ban in place, the international community has no insurance against a return to an era of unrestrained nuclear testing, which would have disastrous implications for regional stability, international peace and security, as well as detrimental consequences for human health and the environment.

The final chapter on nuclear testing must be brought to a close through the codification of the Treaty into international law. We have to draw that irrevocable line in the sand. History teaches us that voluntary moratoria are inadequate. Between 1958 and 1961, the United States and the Soviet Union adhered to a voluntary moratorium on nuclear weapons tests. A breakdown in test ban negotiations and rising geopolitical tensions resulted in the two superpowers carrying out more nuclear tests in 1961 than in the whole of the previous decade.

Without the CTBT in force, there is no firm legal barrier preventing the resumption of unrestrained nuclear testing that could potentially trigger a new nuclear arms race, which would inevitably include more players than during the Cold War. This would dramatically increase tensions and instability in the international system.

We must not allow this to happen, and as an organization, we are doing everything we can to prevent this outcome. As outlined in the Commission’s Midterm Strategy 2014-2017, we are focused on the two overarching missions of establishing a credible and trustworthy verification system, and providing support and preparation for the Treaty’s entry into force.

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In the two years since the previous Executive Secretary addressed the General Assembly, I am pleased to report that there has been substantial progress in the development of the Treaty’s verification system. The Commission has come within sight of the fulfilment of its mandate. Commitment and hard work by a relatively small but determined group of people has resulted in bringing the CTBT verification system close to full readiness. As of November 2014, there are 278 certified stations in the International Monitoring System and
another 40 installed or under construction, bringing the verification system close to 90% completion. Importantly, we have also exceeded 90% data availability in the first half of 2014.

The International Data Centre (IDC) continuously processes and analyses the data registered at monitoring stations, which are shared with 1,300 institutions in 120 countries in an all-inclusive, democratic, transparent, and non-discriminatory manner, thereby fostering the trust and credibility in the system and the data. Alongside the steady instalment and certification of IMS stations, the IDC has continued to strengthen its capabilities, resulting in a lower detection threshold for events worldwide.

Enormous investments have already been made in the system by Member States. With more than $1 billion dollars invested and over 1,000 scientist years dedicated to its establishment, it is imperative that these investments be protected. Moreover, as more stations come online and the volume of data increases, it is crucial that the international community continues to recognize the importance of sustaining the IMS and IDC operations in order to improve the provision of data, products and services.

Demonstrating the credibility of the IMS and IDC by maintaining their readiness to provide timely response to suspicious events directly aligns with the overall objective of achieving the Treaty’s entry into force. In other words, continuing to demonstrate the effective and efficient detection capabilities of the verification system serves as the bedrock foundation of the added value that the Treaty provides for ratifying States and those considering its ratification.

The verification regime has continued to evolve over the past decade as the number of monitoring stations steadily increased and the technologies used continue to improve. The system’s reliability and sustainability has also improved as our operational experience with the system increases over time.

This has been demonstrated by the performance of the system in detecting the nuclear tests announced by the Democratic People’s Republic of Korea. In 2006 the identified test area was 880 km², whereas in 2013 the increased accuracy of our system allowed us to narrow the test area down to 181 km², well within the 1000 km² that the Treaty mandates for an on-site inspection. In addition, analysis of the ratios of Xenon gasses detected by our Noble gas station in Japan 55 days after the 2013 announced DPRK nuclear test were consistent with a late release of the gasses from the DPRK test site.

Even with a comparatively small estimated yield, the 2013 event was detected by 94 IMS seismic stations and 2 infrasound stations, 88 of which were used in the event location. The more stations that are used in the location, the smaller the size of the error ellipse, which increases the probability of a successful on-site inspection (OSI) in the event of a Treaty violation.

As previously mentioned, consistent progress has also been made in the area of OSI, the CTBT’s ultimate verification measure. Our strategic goal to achieve OSI readiness at entry into force of the Treaty is well underway. The second full-fledged OSI simulation, the Integrated Field Exercise 2014, is currently being conducted on the banks of the Dead Sea in Jordan.
This exercise is unprecedented in a number of ways – almost 150 tons of equipment was shipped to Jordan and more than 200 experts have travelled from all over the globe to take part in the event. An exercise of such scope can only be carried out through concerted efforts from across the entire organization. I also wish to highlight that this enormous undertaking would not have been possible without the critical support of Jordan, the voluntary contributions from States of equipment and expertise, and the Member States’ decision to make available a budget of more than $10 million for the exercise.

When the IMS is combined with an effective on-site inspection regime, no potential violator would be confident that a nuclear test could go undetected. We’ve proven that the Treaty is verifiable through an international monitoring system that is unique, reliable and efficient. And we’ve built a deterrent that gives States peace of mind.

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In order to ensure that the verification regime remains current, we must also strive to identify key scientific and technological developments that could affect its future operations. We have sought to strengthen our relationship with the broader scientific community through the Science and Technology Conferences, which are organized for scientists and experts from a broad range of disciplines related to nuclear test monitoring.

The S&T conferences attract participants from national agencies involved in the CTBTO’s work, as well as those from independent academic and research institutions. Members of the diplomatic community, international media and civil society are also actively participating. Four conferences have been held to date in Vienna, and the next S&T Conference will take place in June 2015.

We recognize the true value of the investment with which we were entrusted. As an organization operating at the cutting edge of scientific and technological knowledge, we are determined to share that knowledge with our member states. This unique verification system offers a host of opportunities for scientific research. Whether it is in the area of tsunami warning, aviation safety, climate change, or marine life research, the Treaty’s monitoring technologies can provide obvious benefits. We see this investment as a platform for scientific knowledge and capacity development.

The Commission is also providing assistance in the legislative and constitutional issues arising from the Treaty, and is working closely with member states to set up their National Data Centres. Through the provision of the necessary training, technical infrastructure and equipment, we ensure that Member States enjoy the benefits of this unique organization. Such capacity building enhances the scientific and technical capabilities of member states, which have a spill over effect into other areas of development.

Another key focus of the organization is empowering the next generation of CTBT experts to ensure the Treaty’s verifiability well into the 21st century and beyond. This is the predominant vision behind the Commission’s Integrated Capacity Building activities, which promote the active engagement with the current and next generation of CTBT experts, particularly in the developing world and among women, one that is committed to applying science for peace.
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The Executive Secretary has been holding extensive consultations over the last few months with senior officials from nearly all States that have not yet ratified or signed the Treaty, including all but one Annex 2 State, and has found greater engagement in the establishment and operation of the verification system, and political commitment where others had anticipated unsurmountable obstacles. Additionally, we have seen steady progress in the Treaty’s universalization. Brunei-Darussalam, Chad, Guinea-Bissau, Iraq, Niue and, more recently, the Republic of the Congo, have all ratified since the last time this General Assembly agenda item was addressed. Several other countries, including Angola and Yemen, are close to completing their ratification processes. On behalf of the Executive Secretary, I would like to commend them for their commitment to the vision of a nuclear test free world.

Nonetheless, the longer it takes for the Treaty to enter into force, and the longer it remains in legal limbo, the more difficult it will become to sustain the momentum so many have fought so hard to achieve. As more time passes without substantial progress on EIF, there will be an increased likelihood that that States will be less inclined to honour their commitments to the Treaty and the organization.

For this reason, the Executive Secretary has established a Group of Eminent Persons (GEM) that is identifying and seizing upon opportunities to advance the Treaty’s entry into force, thus complementing the Article XIV process currently co-chaired by Indonesia and Hungary. GEM is leveraging the wealth of experience of its members to advise on ways to promote the Treaty in the remaining Annex 2 States. The group is also utilizing regional understanding and expertise to facilitate dialogue among leaders in various regions and carry out the message of the CTBT in international conferences and other events.

The value of the CTBT verification regime has become more and more evident; the human and security benefits of the test-ban continue to be appreciated; a growing number of countries, institutions and people are demonstrating leadership in promoting the Treaty’s entry into force. The CTBT is edging closer towards universality.

Together, let us strengthen our resolve and build on recent achievements. The good will and momentum generated in recent years needs to be met with equally good action. Action on your part; you the member states; the stakeholders and owners of this process. Will we rise to the challenge? The vision of a test-free world certainly deserves all the determination and commitment to the pursuit of our final and noble goal.