



**Virtual High-level Meeting of the United Nations General Assembly to  
commemorate the International Day against Nuclear Tests 2020**

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His Excellency Mr. Tijjani Muhammad-Bande, President of the General Assembly,  
Honoured guests,  
Distinguished delegates,  
Excellencies, ladies and gentlemen,

It is a great pleasure to be with you and to represent the Secretary-General at this very important observance. I am happy to note that despite the COVID-19 pandemic and its terrible ramifications, we are still able to recognise this important day.

The International Day against Nuclear Tests has been commemorated since 2010 to mark the closing, in 1991, of the nuclear test site in Semipalatinsk, Kazakhstan, the largest nuclear test site in the former Soviet Union.

In 2020, this day takes on an even more special meaning. It was 75 years ago, in July 1945, that the first-ever nuclear test, code named Trinity, was conducted in the United States.

Trinity not only resulted in the actual use of nuclear weapons in Hiroshima and Nagasaki 75 years ago, but also initiated a decades-long series of more than 2,000 nuclear tests, conducted by at least eight countries, resulting in profound harmful effects on the environment, human health and the economic development of populations in many of our world's most vulnerable regions. These effects are being felt even today, many years after the tests had been conducted. The testimonies of survivors, some of which we will hear today, attest to the horrific damage that nuclear tests invariably cause. The best way to honour the victims of past nuclear tests is to prevent any in the future. As the Secretary-General has said, nuclear testing is a relic of another age and it should remain there.

The Comprehensive Nuclear-Test-Ban Treaty, which bans all nuclear explosions, is at the core of our efforts to confine nuclear testing to the pages of history. But even though almost a quarter century has passed since the adoption of the Treaty in 1996, and despite its widespread support – with 184 signatories and 168 ratifying States – it has still not entered into force, requiring the ratification of eight so-called “Annex 2” states to do so.

The norm against nuclear testing is one of the most significant achievements of the Cold War. Yet today it is seemingly under threat as relations between nuclear armed States become increasingly hostile and they seek to improve the quality and, in some cases, quantity, of their nuclear arsenals. In this fraught geostrategic environment, we need to re-double our efforts to

uphold the norm against nuclear testing. The voluntary moratoria imposed by most nuclear-armed States are welcome, but a legally binding prohibition is the best bulwark against any future tests. It is also an important vehicle to prevent further proliferation of nuclear weapons, reduce tension among nuclear powers, and to help shepherd countries back to the path leading to the total elimination of nuclear weapons.

On this solemn occasion, I wish to reiterate the Secretary-General's call for all States that have not yet done so, to sign and ratify the Comprehensive Nuclear-Test-Ban Treaty, especially those whose ratification is needed for the Treaty's entry into force. There are no excuses for further delay in achieving a noble goal of achieving a global ban, to ensure that we never repeat the horrific human and environmental catastrophe caused by nuclear tests.

I thank you very much.