

Permit me, before addressing the test ban issue in more detail, to make a few observations with respect to the two bilateral, so-called threshold, treaties concluded between the United States and the Soviet Union in 1974 and 1976. In the absence, for the time being, of a comprehensive test ban, ratification of these treaties would seem to be of great importance.

The Netherlands is aware of existing problems, for example, with regard to the calibration of test-sites, but we ask ourselves whether these are not outweighed by the advantages of ratification. Those treaties contain interesting provisions with regard to data exchange and international on-site inspection which also have an important confidence-building potential. In case there are problems, these can perhaps be discussed in the joint consultative commission as foreseen in the treaty on peaceful nuclear explosions. My Government, therefore, urges the United States and the Soviet Union to remove the remaining obstacles and to ratify the treaties as soon as possible.

Mr. President, recently the threshold approach has also been mentioned by the Foreign Minister of Japan, H.E. Mr. Shintaro Abe, who suggested that this Conference should look into the possibilities of this option. My delegation agrees with the Japanese delegation that no avenue towards reaching the objective of a CTB should be left unexplored.

We still have doubts, however, on the desirability of a multilateral threshold treaty. It could, for instance, have the effect of "legitimizing" tests in the permitted yield-range by non-nuclear-weapon States parties to such a treaty. On the other hand, we of course welcome the observance of a lower threshold by the present nuclear-weapon States until such time as a CTB is achieved.

What could at present be done by the Conference on Disarmament with regard to a comprehensive test ban? We think quite a bit. First, the ad hoc committee to be established should direct its activities at fully elaborating the institutional set-up accompanying a future CTB, such as the international seismic data exchange system, data centres, complaint procedures, etc. The "trilateral" Powers could give their views on how they wish to see verification problems solved or how they had them solved already amongst themselves at the time of their talks. Much of this will have to be based on the reports of the Ad Hoc Group of Scientific Experts. My delegation was impressed by the Third Report of the Group indicating the greatly increased possibilities for the effective verification of a CTB, on the basis of the model of a global system, described in the report. Similar suggestions of increased possibilities for verification are contained in the interesting Working Paper (CD/491) submitted by the Federal Republic of Germany.

We welcome the testing of methods of exchanging and analysis of level I data through the WMO/GTS communications system later this year. The Netherlands will be pleased to participate in this exercise, as we hope many other countries will do, including those from the Southern hemisphere. Of course, we realize that much work has yet to be done in this field, such as carrying out tests which would include level II data. The improved possibilities for verification, however, are a cause for optimism. In the 1970s the identification of seismic events was possible for all nuclear explosions above 10-20 kilotons. Now this has been reduced to no more than a few kilotons. Today we wish to urge countries to make full use of those new possibilities. Our substantive work on this most important subject must not be stalled by the present procedural impasse.

As part of the consideration of such concrete measures, the Conference on Disarmament should on a priority basis focus attention on the issues raised by the development of anti-satellite weapon systems (ASAT), in particular on a prohibition of the testing, deployment and use of specific anti-satellite weapon systems.