

# CTBTO INVITES INDIA TO BE AN OBSERVER AT MEETINGS

Relevant for: International Relations | Topic: International Treaties & Agreements, and other important organizations

The executive secretary of the Comprehensive Test Ban Treaty Organization (CTBTO), Lassina Zerbo, has invited India to be an observer in the CTBT.

“I’m not asking India to ratify [the treaty] — I know that is not possible now — but I think giving India the opportunity to join as an observer could be a good starting point,” he said.

He was speaking to a group of Indian journalists at the CTBTO in Vienna.

He spoke of the changes in the organisation, which has moved from being more confined in CTBT and International Monitoring System (IMS). “[This is] because we are making the data available to people — which is not traditional. This wasn’t possible at the beginning of the organisation. We had what was called the ‘task leader for data confidentiality’, which does not exist any more,” he said.

Being an observer would give India access to data from the IMS — a network which when complete will consist of 337 facilities (321 monitoring stations and 16 radionuclide labs) located in 89 countries. This system can detect even small nuclear explosions using seismology, hydroacoustics, infrasound and radionuclide technology.

“I think India will gain a lot with data that you don’t have access to now... it is clear to everyone that the IMS is the system that can provide this level of data... Nowhere can you get this quality of data necessary for earthquake monitoring and following the radioisotope dispersion,” said Mr. Zerbo.

## Flawed way

When asked for an opinion, Rakesh Sood, who was formerly a special envoy on disarmament, said: “The CTBT will never see the light of day. Because of the flawed way in which it was dealt with, we need not give it any legitimacy by considering this.” Mr. Sood has served as India’s Permanent Representative to the Conference on Disarmament at the UN in Geneva.

Mr. Zerbo also said he was urging China to take up leadership in this field. The Ministry of External Affairs declined to comment on whether the CTBTO proposal was under consideration.

( *Shubashree Desikan was in Vienna at the invitation of James Martin Center for Nonproliferation Studies, U.S.* )

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