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## REVIVING THE CTBT DEBATE

# Should India sign?

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**T**HE Comprehensive Test Ban Treaty Organisation chief, Dr Wolfgang Hoffman, has made some statements recently to revive the debate among researchers worldwide on whether the CTBT will come into effect or not without the signatures of India, Pakistan and North Korea.

The debate on the subject has also become important because one of the so-called threshold countries, Israel, is a signatory and has refrained from signing the nuclear Non-Proliferation Treaty. North Korea is a signatory to the NPT but has refused to sign the CTBT.

### On a global basis

India's consistency in not signing the CTBT has been a major factor in the debate. It might be recalled that India's position is that it does not only want a ban on tests but nuclear disarmament on a global basis within a specific time framework.

Meanwhile, the recent statement by the Foreign Minister of Pakistan has shown a shift in its policy regarding the CTBT. Pakistan was earlier of the opinion that its decision to sign the CTBT would depend on India's signature. Pakistan is now of the view that even if India signs the treaty, it will not owing to the existing disparities in the sizes of the armed forces of the two countries. However, it is still fairly likely that if India signs the proposed treaty, the nuclear weapon States will persuade Pakistan to comply.

It should also be kept in mind that the nuclear weapon States in general, and the US in particular, will make all possible efforts to compel India to become a signatory to the CTBT. Only a couple of years remain before the issue of whether the CTBT can enter into force or not or whether it will be implemented on a provisional

basis has to be settled. Dr Hoffman has clearly indicated that international pressure is being built up and will be brought to bear on India.

Unlike the International Atomic Energy Agency, which is the world's nuclear technology monitoring organ, the CTBTO is a relatively sophisticated global verification regime to monitor all future nuclear explosions.

Following the Indian refusal to sign the CTBT endorsed by the United Nations General Assembly, the US and its allies are closely anticipating the Indian response because the US perceives the CTBT to be a major aspect of its arms control objectives. The US has persuaded India and Pakistan to bring their nuclear and missile programmes in line with international non-proliferation standards.

India does not want to sign this treaty because it thinks that the CTBT is not a genuine attempt towards comprehensive nuclear disarmament. The nuclear weapon States will continue to have the freedom to upgrade their nuclear arsenals through simulation tests and computer operations in their laboratories. Yet the safeguards and monitoring/inspection regimes do not fully cover the existing nuclear weapons capacities of the nuclear weapons powers.

### Security concerns

The provisions of the CTBT impose discriminatory restrictions on the power of non-nuclear weapon powers to develop their own technologies even for peaceful purposes. According to India's thinking on the CTBT, the nuclear weapon powers retain the option to resume their nuclear tests on the basis of their overriding security concerns. Yet this option is not available to non-nuclear weapon

States.

Sanctions stipulated in the CTBT against countries violating its provisions are discriminatory, punitive and can be unilaterally imposed by the five nuclear weapon powers under pretended instrumentalities of the UN. The proposed CTBT does not in any manner provide for the complete elimination of nuclear weapons within any timeframe, short-term or long-term.

### Shared approach

The negotiations on the CTBT at the Conference on Disarmament may have begun in 1994, but there have been many discussions on the subject over several decades. A shared approach is required to avoid incomplete results. The absence of such an approach at crucial times prevented a successful outcome. The text of the CTBT agreement does not take into account or address any of the concerns expressed by India mentioned above in the meetings of the CD on the CTBT from last year to the present date. It is a paradox that the signature of India is required to ratify it but its concerns were not even discussed or negotiated upon before the finalisation of the text which had been endorsed by the UN General Assembly.

Given India's national security interests, it is clear that it cannot be a party to the CTBT in the form that it has been endorsed by the UNGA. The manifestos of all the major political parties in India have clearly articulated their opposition to a discriminatory CTBT. India has to retain its nuclear capabilities for security as well as peaceful purposes and at the same time it should avoid being isolated from the general orientation of the international com-

munity towards a test ban.

It bears recalling that a Non-Aligned Movement-sponsored resolution at the UNGA has urged the nuclear weapon States to immediately stop the qualitative improvement and stockpiling of nuclear warheads and delivery systems and called on them to undertake phased reductions with a view to their total elimination "within a timebound framework." This resolution garnered 110 votes in favour and 39 against (mostly the developed countries) and 20 abstentions. Most of the non-nuclear weapon States who are signatories to the CTBT have also expressed their concern for time-bound disarmament.

Recently, the US was seen almost totally isolated in its opposition to the convening in 1999 of a UN Special Session devoted to disarmament. (The UN has convened such sessions in 1978, 1982 and 1988). With the exception of a few countries, the entire UN membership backed the non-aligned States' call for a fourth special session in 1999, because they believe that there is a clear need for a new security and disarmament agenda as the world enters the 21st century.

Now the question arises as to why India has been singled out for attention despite the fact that the proposal to link the CTBT to a time-bound global disarmament programme has already been made by the non-aligned nations party to the CTBT.

### Reiterated position

India should therefore take note of its reiterated position. India should wait for the special session to be convened by the UN in 1999 to put its case across. The point that has to be held up in the session among the non-aligned world is the questionable commitment of the nuclear powers to disarmament.