



**United Nations Office
for Disarmament Affairs**

Remarks at the CTBTO Research Fellowship 2026 Opening Session

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As delivered



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Online

Dr. Floyd,
Mr. Khlopkov,
Dear fellows,
Ladies and gentlemen,

It is a pleasure to join you as we open the 2026 CTBTO Research Fellowship.

I would like to thank the CTBTO and the Center for Energy and Security Studies (CENESS) for creating this opportunity, and the experts who will share their knowledge with you over the coming months.

At a closing session, we usually ask what has been learned. At an opening session, however, the more important question is: what do we still need to learn?

The Fellowship's programme explores the Comprehensive Nuclear-Test-Ban Treaty and its significance from several perspectives. It considers the Treaty's legal and political framework, the role of its verification regime, the broader non-proliferation landscape and the challenges of universalization, and sustaining the global norm against nuclear testing.

Together, these point to a central challenge: how to translate broad political support, advanced verification capabilities and decades of restraint into the CTBT's long-awaited entry into force.

Thirty years after the CTBT opened for signature, its impact is unmistakable. It has fundamentally changed international expectations concerning nuclear explosive testing and has attracted near-universal adherence. Tonga's

ratification in July marked another important milestone towards the Treaty's universalization.

Its verification system is equally significant. The International Monitoring System (IMS) records signals across the earth, oceans and atmosphere, while the International Data Centre turns those signals into information that States can examine and assess.

The system therefore offers more than technical reach. It provides a common factual basis at precisely those moments when political confidence may be weakest.

Yet without the Treaty's entry into force, the architecture remains incomplete.

The remaining Annex 2 States must sign and/or ratify the Treaty without further delay. Entry into force would place the Treaty's prohibition on nuclear explosive testing on a permanent, legally binding and verifiable footing.

The current geopolitical climate makes this especially urgent. Recent developments have brought renewed attention to the possibility of nuclear explosive testing. Any such test would not remain an isolated event. Rather, it would deepen mistrust, risk triggering reciprocal tests and further fuel a nuclear arms race.

All States possessing nuclear weapons must therefore maintain their existing moratoria on nuclear explosive testing. Such restraint remains essential, but voluntary moratoria cannot be the final destination.

Nor should nuclear testing be considered only in strategic, legal or technical terms.

Past nuclear tests left lasting consequences for communities and environments, many of which endure across generations. Victims and survivors are not a historical footnote. Their experiences help explain why the Treaty matters today. Preventing future harm must therefore go hand in hand with efforts to address the damage that remains.

Looking ahead, that responsibility also requires engaging a new generation in the work on disarmament.

Youth inclusion therefore remains a priority for my Office. Like CTBTO, we recognize that without the meaningful participation of young people, disarmament efforts risk losing both their relevance and long-term sustainability.

Since 2019, through Youth4Disarmament, UNODA has cultivated an alumni network of over 400 young people and created opportunities for meaningful youth participation, policy experience and creative engagement in disarmament processes.

Just recently, we also commemorated the International Day Against Nuclear Tests on 29 August with our annual youth campaign StepUp4Disarmament. I was pleased that Executive Secretary Floyd joined us in this effort.

UNODA is also committed to ensuring that opportunities for engagement extend beyond young people already studying or working in peace, security and disarmament. Young people from different backgrounds, disciplines and communities bring perspectives and connections that can strengthen our work.

Ladies and gentlemen,

This Fellowship provides another important opportunity for young people to bring those perspectives to questions at the heart of disarmament and non-proliferation.

During the course of this Fellowship, your research groups will bring together different disciplines and perspectives. I encourage you to use that diversity to examine these questions from more than one angle and to consider how technical evidence, legal frameworks and political realities interact.

I also encourage you to consider how your research might be useful beyond this Fellowship. A strong paper can do more than describe a problem. It can help policymakers understand their options and identify practical paths forward.

By the closing session in January, I hope you will have produced work that makes a meaningful contribution to the discussion. I also hope you will have built professional connections that continue well beyond this programme.

The CTBT brings science, law and diplomacy together in pursuit of one clear purpose – ensuring that nuclear explosive testing ends permanently. The research undertaken through this Fellowship can help advance that purpose.

I look forward to our discussion today and wish you every success in the months ahead.

I thank you very much for your attention.