

5 September 2013

**Statement of H.E. Mr. Vuk Jeremić,  
President of the 67<sup>th</sup> Session of the General Assembly,  
on the Observance of the  
International Day Against Nuclear Tests**

Minister Bozhko,  
Madame High Representative,  
Excellencies,  
Distinguished Guests,  
Ladies and Gentlemen,

It is a great honor to preside over this meeting of the General Assembly to observe the International Day against Nuclear Tests, which provides us with an opportunity to remind the world of the existence of this grave threat to peace.

At the onset of my remarks, I would like to pay tribute to Her Excellency Ambassador Byrganym Aitimova, Permanent Representative of the Republic of Kazakhstan, for having worked so diligently on making this day an important and integral part of our agenda.

Her Government—represented this morning by His Excellency Mr. Vladimir Bozhko, Minister for Emergency Situations—has stood at the vanguard of efforts to promote nuclear disarmament and non-proliferation. In 1991, it unilaterally closed down the Semipalatinsk test site, and in an unprecedented demonstration of leadership, voluntarily renounced the world's fourth-largest atomic arsenal.

I would also like to recognize Secretary-General Ban Ki-moon for his strong support of efforts to rid what he has called our “over-armed world” of nuclear weapons.

Excellencies,

The very first resolution adopted by the General Assembly called for the elimination of atomic arms and “all other major weapons adaptable to mass destruction.”

In the decades that have followed, the nuclear issue has remained high on the agenda, resulting in some notable achievements.

In October 1963, the Limited Test Ban Treaty came into force, representing what U.S. President John F. Kennedy defined as “the first [...] specific step [...] to limit the nuclear arms race.”

Another took place in 1996, when the General Assembly opened the Comprehensive Test Ban Treaty for signature, following lengthy negotiations on the text. Before this watershed moment, more than

2000 atomic weapons tests had been carried out at over 60 locations across the globe. Since then, around 10 have regrettably been carried out, in violation of the internationally-agreed moratorium.

We may have traveled a long way on the “Path to Zero,” but we are still far from having arrived at our ultimate destination. The CTBT has not yet entered into force, despite the fact that 183 Member States have signed it, and 159 have ratified it.

I take this opportunity to respectfully urge those that have not, to do so as expeditiously as possible, and so help lift the threatening cloud of obliteration that still hangs over humanity.

I also take this opportunity to invite Member States to participate in the first-ever High-level meeting of the General Assembly on nuclear disarmament, which will take place later this month, in accordance with resolution 67/39. It has been a great privilege to be entrusted with the responsibility of organizing this event, and I hope it will turn out to be a significant step in fulfilling our goal to excise atomic arms from every corner of the planet.

Excellencies,

During the 67th Session, we adopted a resolution reiterating that the “cessation of nuclear weapons test explosions or any other nuclear explosions constitute an effective [...] non-proliferation measure,” which represents a “meaningful step in the realization of a systematic process for achieving nuclear disarmament.”

On August 6th, I carried this important message with me, when I had the privilege to address the Hiroshima Peace Memorial Ceremony, in commemoration of the hundreds of thousands of victims and survivors who bore the onslaught of the most destructive killing device used in the annals of history.

The sadness and grief that I felt on that day will stay with me for the rest of my life.

What happened there is a permanent reminder of the horrible, unmatched devastation caused by the use of nuclear weapons. Any test, conducted by anyone anywhere, increases the likelihood they will be used again one day.

What could possibly be gained by the use of such obliterating arms in our century?

There are some who reason that we are all safer today because of the deterring strength of such weapons. Let them go to Hiroshima, and walk through the corridors of the Peace Memorial Museum.

There are some who see nothing wrong with stockpiling atomic bombs that can destroy entire cities in a heartbeat. Let them go to Hiroshima; let them stand before the cenotaph—the somber monument to the victims of an unparalleled calamity inflicted by the hand of man; and let them read the solemn inscription that says “May all the souls here rest in peace, for we shall not repeat the evil.”

Thank you for your attention.