

The Comprehensive Test Ban Treaty Organization (CTBTO): Interview with Francesca Giovannini



Francesca Giovannini is the strategy and policy planning officer at the Comprehensive Test Ban Treaty Organization (CTBTO). Before joining the Organization, she worked at the American Academy of Arts & Sciences, at the Belfer Center for Science and International Affairs, and at the Center for International Security and Cooperation at Stanford University. She holds a PhD from the University of Oxford.

The CTBTO promotes the entry into force of the CTBT, a Treaty that bans any type of nuclear explosions. 184 countries have so far signed the CTBT, of which 168 have also ratified it. What are the main obstacles to the Treaty's entry into force and how can they be overcome?

While the entry into force of the CTBT is a goal supported by almost all member states of the international community, the procedure for its entry into force procedure is highly complex. Generally, an international treaty enters into force when the majority of countries (or a qualified majority) signs and ratifies it. The CTBT is the only treaty whose entry into force is conditional upon the ratification of specific states: 44 states (called Annex II states) that at the time of negotiations were considered nuclear capable. At present, 8 remaining states are holding off the entry into force of the Treaty. It would be a mistake, however, to generalize over their resistance to the Treaty. Each case is different. While some countries are facing complex regional security challenges and refuse to be limited in the expansion or development of their arsenal, others are concerned over the aging of their stockpiles and ultimately believe that a return to nuclear testing might make their nuclear deterrence system more effective. It is worth mentioning that although the Treaty is not yet in force, the CTBTO Monitoring System, composed by hundreds of stations, is operational and continues to provide robust data to ensure that the nuclear test moratorium is enforced worldwide without exception.

The CTBTO also works on the build-up of a comprehensive and effective verification regime which is meant to become operational once the Treaty enters into force. How is this activity developing?

While it is true that the CTBT verification system will be fully operational with the entry into force of the Treaty, part of its verification system is already operational and rather successful. The Treaty envisaged two methods for verification: a remote verification system and an on-site inspection system. The verification system is

composed by hundreds of seismic, radionuclide, infrasound and hydro acoustic stations. Thus far we have 297 certified stations, 9 installed, 6 certified and 25 planned. And as you have probably seen during the DPRK Tests, all CTBTO stations provided very reliable data on the actual detonation even at significant distance. The on-site inspections however will only be possible when the Treaty enters into force. The possibility of deploying inspectors on the ground adds another layer of credibility and precision to the data provided by the remote system.

Many European countries, including the two with nuclear weapons - France and the UK - have signed and ratified the Treaty. What role can the EU play in promoting universal ratification?

The European Union is already doing a lot. We have an extraordinary partnership with the EU and with individual European countries. The EU has fully supported the establishment of the CTBTO Youth Group Initiative to promote the Treaty among younger generations. It has also collaborated with the CTBTO in developing and launching capacity building workshops for technical experts from developing countries. I am very grateful for what the EU has done for us and with us until now. But of course, there is always room for growth. The European Union should continue to engage with the 8 remaining Annex II states to help mitigate some of their concerns over CTBT. In addition, the EU could function as a dialogue convener among different social movements and groups. In the 60s, banning nuclear testing was a key goal for human rights, environmental and anti-nuclear movements. Over time, nuclear testing has been cast as a marginal and technical issue. The environmental movement has started looking elsewhere. But the EU has the credibility and the authority to facilitate and promote a new dialogue among various social forces concerned over the environment, nuclear weapons and other issues. Living in a world free of nuclear testing is a global aspiration. It is an inter-generational and a cross-domain issue that requires the involvement of all spheres of societies.

Iran Nuclear Issue After Biarritz

Iran was one of the central and most contentious issues at the recent G7 Summit, held in Biarritz on 24-26 August 2019. In the meeting's unusually succinct final declaration the seven leaders did not go beyond reaffirming two general objectives: "to ensure that Iran never acquires nuclear weapons and to foster peace and stability in the region". However, the surprise appearance of Iran's foreign minister, Mohammad Javad Zarif, in Biarritz at the invitation of French President Emmanuel Macron has rekindled hopes that diplomacy with Iran can be revived and a direct channel of negotiation can eventually be opened between Washington and Teheran. Over the last three months President Macron, with the support of the EU, has laboriously pursued these goals. The EU remains committed to the 2015 nuclear deal with Iran – the Joint Comprehensive Plan of Action (JCPOA) – from which the US withdrew in May 2018 re-imposing sanctions against Teheran. However, the Europeans have subsequently also stigmatized Iran's decision – taken in response to the US's unilateral withdrawal – to scale back compliance with certain parts of the deal.

Macron's plan calls on the US to re-issue oil export waivers in exchange for Iran's return to full compliance with the deal. This quid pro quo would help de-escalate tensions in the Gulf and open a window of opportunity for direct talks between Washington and Teheran. Fundamental divergences between the EU and the US remain however. President Trump has so far ruled out any sanction relief but has declared himself open to the possibility of talks sometime in the future. However, while the EU and the other parties to the JCPOA aim at preserving the deal – and indeed the ongoing talks in Vienna have this declared goal – Trump wants to replace it. The Europeans favour a more comprehensive political agreement with Teheran which includes its ballistic missile programme and its role in regional conflicts, but see these as elements that would complement and eventually help salvage the JCPOA. The EU should stick to this diplomatic stance which offers a fair basis for compromise and gives the Union concrete chances to play an effective mediation role.

Ettore Greco

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Network Call

The Small Arms Survey is organising an international expert discussion on “The Challenges Of Compliance With UN Arms Embargoes”. The workshop is intended for subject-matter experts interested in proactively contributing to the discussion. The event will be held in Geneva, on 9-10 September 2019.

For more information:

sigrid.lipott@smallarmssurvey.org
david.atwood@smallarmssurvey.org
erica.moret@graduateinstitute.ch

Consortium Call

CALL FOR INTERNSHIP

The Istituto Affari Internazionali (IAI) is looking for an intern for its “Non-Proliferation and Disarmament” programme. The internship is offered within the framework of the EU Non-Proliferation and Disarmament Internship programme, an educational initiative of the EU Non-Proliferation and Disarmament Consortium.

The internship is open to junior diplomats, Master’s degree students, PhD students, and post-docs from EU Member States and non-European countries.

The intern is expected to conduct research and produce a final essay on a topic related to arms control, non-proliferation and disarmament.

Duration: three months (13 weeks)

Starting date: December 2019

Location: Rome, Italy

Financial support: € 500 a month

Application deadline: 15th September 2019

More info [here](#)

EU INSTITUTIONAL NEWS

EU statement in support of the Comprehensive Nuclear-Test-Ban Treaty Organisation (CTBTO)

On 30 July 2019, during the Conference on Disarmament, the European Union delivered a statement expressing support for the work of the [Comprehensive Nuclear-Test-Ban Treaty Organisation \(CTBTO\)](#).

The CTBTO is the implementing body of the [Comprehensive Test Ban Treaty](#), a treaty negotiated between 1994 and 1996 to ban all nuclear explosions: on the Earth’s surface, in the atmosphere, underwater and underground. Since the Treaty is not yet in force, the Organisation’s official name is the Preparatory Commission for the CTBTO and it is tasked with the promotion of the Treaty and the build-up of the verification regime that will become operational when the Treaty enters into force.

The EU reiterated its strong support for the CTBTO, noting that all EU Member States have ratified the CTBT and emphasising that it is a “key pillar of the international disarmament and non-proliferation architecture” as well as a vital contributor to global peace and security, establishing a de facto norm against nuclear testing.

Since 2006, the EU has provided the CTBTO with voluntary contributions of more than 27.5 million Euros to fund a variety of technical projects to strengthen the Organisation’s monitoring and verification regime.

The EU called on all States to abide by the moratorium on nuclear explosions, urging China, Egypt, India, Iran, Israel, North Korea, Pakistan and the United States to sign and ratify the treaty without any preconditions or further delay.

For more information: [Full Statement](#)

[EU steps up its support for the Biological Weapons Convention](#)

NETWORK NEWS

The EU Non-Proliferation and Disarmament Papers Series

As part of its mandate, defined in [Council Decision \(CFSP\) 2018/299 of 26 February 2018](#), the EU Non-Proliferation Consortium publishes a new series of Non-Proliferation and Disarmament Policy Papers. The latest paper is authored by Una Becker-Jakob, research fellow at the Peace Research Institute, Frankfurt.

Countering the Use of Chemical Weapons in Syria, by Una Becker-Jakob

Summary:

Chemical weapons are banned by international law. Nonetheless, there have been numerous alleged and proven chemical attacks during the Syrian civil war. The international community has found ways to address this problem, but it has not managed to exclude the possibility of further chemical attacks once and for all. Nor has it created accountability for the perpetrators. The establishment in 2018 of the Investigation and Identification Team within the Organisation for the Prohibition of Chemical Weapons (OPCW) is a step in the right direction, but it came at the price of increased polarization among member states. To maintain the OPCW’s effectiveness, move closer to accountability and uphold the international norm on the non-use of chemical weapons, the European Union and its member states should consider short- and longer-term steps, such as emphasizing the norm’s viability over potential threats, pressing the United Nations General Assembly to employ the Uniting for Peace principle, enhancing national criminal investigations or adopting universal jurisdiction pending the possibility of international legal prosecution for chemical weapon use, and supporting the OPCW and its ad hoc mechanisms in every possible way.

Read the full paper [here](#)

Previous papers can be found [here](#)