

FACT SHEET

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Comprehensive Test Ban Treaty



What is the Comprehensive Test Ban Treaty? The Comprehensive Nuclear Test Ban Treaty (CTBT) is an international treaty that was adopted by the United Nations on Sept. 10, 1996, but which has not yet entered into force. Under the treaty, states are obliged to refrain from

1. Carrying out all types of nuclear weapon explosions, including tests

2. Causing, encouraging or participating in the explosive nuclear tests of other states

What prevents the CTBT from entering into force? In order for the treaty to enter into force, all 44 states listed in Annex 2 of the treaty must sign and ratify it. To date, only 35 Annex 2 states have signed and ratified the CTBT. China, Egypt, Indonesia, Iran, Israel and the United States have yet to ratify, while India, North Korea and Pakistan have yet to sign and ratify.

U.S. ratification of the CTBT is seen as being particularly important as it may encourage other reluctant states to follow suit. The United States has made CTBT ratification contingent upon certain conditions, allowing it to maintain the reliability of its nuclear weapons. These measures would effectively undermine the CTBT's central goal of curbing the advancement of nuclear weapons technology.

What are the central features of the CTBT?

Unlimited duration

Verification and inspection mechanisms, including onsite inspections and confidence-building measures, to aid the CTBTO in its work.

A Comprehensive Nuclear Test Ban Treaty Organization (CTBTO), to ensure the implementation of treaty provisions and verification measures.

Guidelines to follow in the event of non-compliance, including sanctions, for the settlement of disputes.

A three-part protocol (i.e. addition, related agreement) that details the international monitoring system, provides for onsite inspections and outlines confidence-building measures.

Rules regarding the amendment of the treaty, which requires unanimous consent.

Why is the CTBT necessary?

1. Between 1945 and 2010, more than 2,000 nuclear tests were conducted by various states. The radioactive fallout, which caused untold health and environmental damage, was and continues to be cause for concern. By banning nuclear weapon explosions, the CTBT would prevent further damage.
2. The initial development and subsequent improvement of nuclear weapons relies to a great extent on nuclear testing. The CTBT would make it difficult for non-nuclear weapon states (NNWS) to achieve a nuclear weapons capability. It would also make it difficult for nuclear weapon states (NWS) to develop new or more advanced nuclear weapons.
3. The Partial Test Ban Treaty (PTBT), signed in 1963, applies only to explosive nuclear tests occurring in the atmosphere, in space and underwater. The CTBT would supersede the PTBT and ban nuclear weapon explosions in all environments, including underground.
4. The CTBT will foster state confidence in the international commitment to a nuclear weapons-free world.

