

# npt now a reality

The Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons under which nations, for the first time in history, accept international control connected with arms limitation, is now a reality. Twenty months after it was approved by the United Nations and opened for signature, the conditions to bring it into force were completed.

On 5 March this year, at ceremonies in Washington, Moscow and London, the United States and the Soviet Union completed formally the process of ratification, joining the United Kingdom and the 42 other countries which had agreed by then to be bound by the terms of the Treaty — two more than were required. Within another week the number had reached 50.

World leaders hailed the Treaty as a first step on the road to nuclear disarmament.

U Thant, Secretary-General of the United Nations, declared that "in preventing the further spread of nuclear weapons and in establishing a safeguards system for verifying the faithful implementation of its obligations the Treaty cannot fail to play a very significant role."

The Soviet Prime Minister, Mr. Kosygin, said the Treaty was "important and necessary ... for the benefit of all nations and people."

Mr. Wilson, the Prime Minister of Great Britain, urged countries which have not ratified the Treaty to recognise that it "offers to them individually and to mankind in general the best hope of avoiding nuclear war."

President Nixon, of the United States, expressed his hope that in future "we will look back and say that this was one of the first and major steps in that process in which the nations of the world moved from a period of confrontation to a period of negotiation and a period of lasting peace."

## The Important First Step

Also on 5 March a Press Conference for journalists in Vienna was held at the Agency. In welcoming them the Director General, Dr. Sigvard Eklund, said:

"Today the USSR and the USA deposited their instruments of ratification of the Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons. The UK had ratified and deposited on 27 November 1968. The Treaty stipulates that, when three nuclear States, plus 40 non-nuclear States ratify, the Treaty comes into force. As of today a total of 45 States have ratified the Treaty.

"In the 20 months which have passed since the General Assembly of the United Nations recommended action, it has been thoroughly reviewed and discussed. This period, however, has given the Agency time to assess its new responsibilities and to prepare the way for the Treaty's implementation.

"It must be pointed out that at present many highly-industrialized countries and countries with substantial atomic energy programmes have not yet signed and ratified the Treaty. Without the full participation of these countries the Treaty does not represent the complete fulfilment of the hopes attached to it when it was commended for signature by 95 Member States at the United Nations General Assembly on 12 June 1968.

"The Treaty is, however, a reality. Its direct effect on the Agency will begin the day that negotiations on the first safeguards agreement to be concluded under it are opened. The indirect effects of NPT have already been felt; many of the matters the Board of Governors was discussing a few days ago are tied up with the Treaty and the interest which it has aroused in the Agency, its structure and its work.

"I have often said that NPT was only a first step: the significance of this 'first step', however, should not be underestimated. For the first time in history, an international organization has been entrusted with the control functions in a treaty for arms limitation. The way in which the Agency carries out this function may have far-reaching effects on the future structure of international affairs."

## Transition Period for the Agency

An explanation of the way in which the NPT will affect the safeguards work of the Agency was given by Dr. Rudolf Rometsch, the Inspector General. He pointed out that it would now be the Agency's task to follow nuclear materials through the fuel cycle by applying safeguards to the nuclear activities of the States party to the Treaty.

"This does not mean", he said, "that the Agency will swing into action next Monday, spreading a net of safeguards over the whole world. It will take some time before all parties have concluded the necessary agreements.

"Besides the obvious expansion in volume the main difference which will take place will be in the details of the procedures to be applied. We can draw heavily on our experience. Our work has grown steadily from the observation of a small number of research reactors to the

safeguarding of power reactors and of all types of associated nuclear facilities: fuel fabrication plants, where the nuclear materials are manufactured for use in the reactor; conversion plants, where the material is readied for use as fuel; reprocessing plants for the chemical separation of nuclear material that has left the reactor, etc.

"The process of reviewing and refining our procedures with the help of high-level experts from many different countries is continuing. In this way we are confident that we not only profit from the best technical advice available but also reach the highest likelihood that our safeguards procedures are in accordance with the views of the greatest number of governments."

#### Points of Interest

A lively interest in the subject was shown by the 40 journalists who attended and many questions were asked. Points which emerged were:

There must ensue an extension of the staff in the Department of Safeguards and Inspection.

At present there are 43 inspectors.

Proposals for 1971, including the Budget, will be submitted to the Board of Governors in the near future.

Agreements for safeguards will have to be made with all parties, including States which are not members of the Agency.

A group of 20 engineers and scientists in the Agency is working systematically on the technical improvement of safeguards procedures.

It is hoped that there will be more technical meetings to collect information on peaceful uses of explosions.