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CTBT Objectives into ASEAN's Regional Framework: A Pathway to Universalisation

Eroding trust among Annex II states, and Russia's de-ratification of CTBT continue to hinder its entry into force (EIF). The stagnation in Annex II ratifications underscores the importance of universalising CTBT norms through regional cooperation. ASEAN presents a compelling case for such an approach: while all ASEAN Member States have ratified the CTBT, the region remains susceptible, yet strategic, to major power dynamics. Renewed discourse on nuclear weapons further highlights the need to reinforce the relevant norms to avoid nuclear catastrophe. This research explores how ASEAN can advance CTBT universalisation through capacity-building initiatives that ensure the preservation of its norms, foster engagement with non-ratifying states, and confidence-building measures. ASEAN's commitment to nuclear non-proliferation is reflected in its ongoing efforts to operationalise the Southeast Asia Nuclear-Weapon-Free Zone (SEANWFZ), which remains unratified by nuclear-weapon states (NWS), sharing similar challenge with CTCT. Additionally, leveraging ASEAN's expertise—such as the AHA Centre's role in disaster management—can strengthen technical cooperation, embedding CTBT norms beyond the political sphere. By integrating CTBT norms into ASEAN's broader security framework, ASEAN can reinforce the CTBT's inseparability from its non-proliferation and disarmament agenda while generating momentum toward CTBT EIF and eliminating motives for shifting away from its course.

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