

# International Seabed Authority

Press Release



**Fourteenth Session  
Kingston Jamaica  
26 May - 6 June 2008**

Assembly (AM)

**SB/14/16  
5 June 2008**

---

## **ASSEMBLY ELECTS NII ALLOTEY ODUNTON OF GHANA SECRETARY-GENERAL OF SEABED AUTHORITY; ADOPTS \$12,516,500 BUDGET FOR 2009-2010 BIENNIUM**

The Assembly of the International Seabed Authority, meeting at Kingston, this morning elected by acclamation Nii Allotey Odunton of Ghana as Secretary-General of the Authority for a four-year term from 1 January 2009.

The decision, in accordance with article 160, paragraph 2 (b), of the United Nations Convention on the Law of the Sea of 10 December 1982, is contained in document ISBA/14/A/L.3.

Mr. Odunton, currently Deputy to the Secretary-General, succeeds Satya N. Nandan of Fiji, the Authority's first Secretary-General, who is retiring on 31 December 2008 after serving three consecutive four-year terms.

Speaking after his election, Mr. Odunton commended Mr. Nandan for the innovative steps he had taken to increase the Authority's knowledge base. He assured the Assembly that he would continue in that vein. He noted that with the ever improving economic conditions for nickel, copper, cobalt and manganese, the Authority would have to work towards adopting a code for exploitation or mining of polymetallic nodule deposits in a timely fashion.

Representative of the various regional groups congratulated Mr. Odunton on his election, paying tribute to his experience and expressing confidence that there would be continuity and innovation.

In other actions, the Assembly adopted a \$12,516,500 budget for the Authority's operations for the 2009-2010 biennium (ISBA/14/A/L.2). It also adopted the report of the Credentials Committee (ISBA/14/A/10) 1.

- more -

**Statement of Mr. Odunton**

In his statement, Mr. Odunton thanked the members of the Assembly for the trust and confidence they had shown in him by electing him as the second Secretary-General of the Authority. It was a singular honour which he would cherish. He assured the Assembly that there would be continuity in the work and policies established during Mr. Nandan's terms as Secretary-General, and that with its support and guidance the Authority would continue to fulfil its mandate of realizing "the full benefits that are obtainable from the common heritage of mankind."

Mr. Odunton recalled how he became involved in the work of the Third United Nations Conference on the Law of the Sea in 1974, when he and two colleagues at Columbia University in New York, United States, prepared a paper on resource assessment of the polymetallic nodule deposits in the Area.

His subsequent recruitment into the United Nations by Mr. Jean Pierre Levy (then Chief of the Ocean Economics and Technology Branch of the United Nations Department of Economic and Social Affairs), afforded him the opportunity to work on the First Committee of the Third United Nations Conference on the Law of the Sea as well as other resource issues related to the marine environment. Mr. Odunton expressed his gratitude to Mr. Levy, who is now a member of the French delegation to the Authority, for his guidance and confidence.

Commending Secretary-General Nandan for the achievements made by the Authority under his watch, Mr. Odunton pledged to continue the work started, completing the Authority's work on exploration codes for the various ocean resources and facilitating collaborations for technology development. He also hoped the Authority would be able to set up an internship programme, to generate greater awareness of its work.

Secretary-General Satya Nandan congratulated the Assembly on selecting such a capable Secretary-General, describing Mr. Odunton as a dedicated international civil servant who had served meritoriously as a senior member of the Secretariat team. He congratulated his "colleague and friend of long standing" and gave the assurance that he would do everything possible to ensure a smooth transition.

Speaking on behalf of the Western European and other States group, the representative of Spain congratulated Mr. Odunton on his election and pledged the full support of that regional group. He expressed confidence in the experience and expertise of the newly elected Secretary-General.

Senegal's representative, speaking on behalf of the African group, said that the election of Mr. Odunton was "a cause of pride for all of Africa". It was a well-deserved reward for the work he had done for the International Seabed Authority. Through his skilful leadership, the representative added, the Authority would be able to accomplish its task of managing the ocean's resources for the benefit of humanity.

The representative of Ghana expressed appreciation to the members of the Assembly for the election of Mr. Odunton, and to the African group, in particular, for the support and encouragement during the campaign. He declared that the election was not about one individual but was indeed a vote for continuity and the future of the International Seabed Authority, and indicated the clear will of the membership to sustain the progress made thus far. Through continued collaboration, the representative said, the Authority could achieve the ideal of true universality as envisaged by the Convention.

Fiji recalled that when Jamaica was selected to be the headquarters for the Authority, Mr. Odunton was one of those who were instrumental in laying the foundations of the organization. It was fitting that Mr. Odunton had now “emerged from the engine room to assume the helm” and take over the stewardship of the Authority, he stated. His election was a sign of the support and confidence of the international community in his ability.

The representative of Chile said that Mr. Odunton’s election inspired confidence that the work of the Authority would be characterized by both continuity and innovation. He pledged the full cooperation of the Latin American and Caribbean Group in all the future activities of the new Secretary-General.

France, speaking on behalf of the member States of the European Union, said that Mr. Odunton’s experience, skills and human qualities would ensure that the Authority continued to carry out its mandate under the best conditions possible. The Russian Federation observed that the unanimity of Mr. Odunton’s election was a demonstration of the high regard in which he was held for his expertise.

Uganda and Nigeria, endorsing the statement made by Senegal on behalf of their regional group, added that, while the new Secretary-General was stepping into large footprints made by Mr. Nandan, they were very confident that the Authority would be in very good hands.

Jamaica, speaking as the host country, announced that its Ministry of Foreign Affairs and Foreign Trade would formally convey the government’s congratulations on Mr. Odunton’s election. From a personal perspective, the representative said that it was no surprise that Mr. Odunton had been chosen to lead the Authority. Given his credentials and experience, he was “well-placed to assume those high responsibilities.” Furthermore, he said, he was confident that the good relations between his government and the Authority would continue to flourish.

Brazil, Cameroon, China, Kenya, Trinidad and Tobago, and Ukraine, also expressed their congratulations to Mr. Odunton and said they looked forward to working closely with him.

### **Credentials Committee’s report**

The Credentials Committee Report (ISBA14/A/10) was presented by its Chairman, Mr. Scott Sheeran (New Zealand). He said the Committee accepted the credentials of 77 States present at the fourteenth session. The Chairman noted that Austria had presented its credentials after the Committee had concluded its work, increasing the number of States represented to 78.

The Credentials Committee, which was appointed on 3 June, 2008, consisted of the following nine members: Burkina Faso, China, Finland, Japan, Mexico, New Zealand, Russian Federation, Suriname and United Republic of Tanzania.

The Assembly meets at 10 a.m. tomorrow, Friday, 6 June, to elect half of the membership of the Authority's Council, and to take note of the reports of the Council and Assembly Presidents. It is also scheduled to wind up the Authority's fourteenth session after hearing the announcement of the dates for the next session in 2009 from the Secretary-General.

\* \* \* \* \*