

International Seabed Authority

Press Release



**Sixteenth Session
Kingston, Jamaica
23 April - 7 May 2010**

**Council (AM)
Assembly (AM)**

**SB/16/2
27 April 2010**

SEABED AUTHORITY BEGINS SIXTEENTH SESSION IN KINGSTON; ASSEMBLY AND COUNCIL ADOPT AGENDAS

Assembly Elects President

The International Seabed Authority began its sixteenth session in Kingston this morning with its policy-making Assembly and executive Council, at separate meetings, adopting their agendas for the session scheduled to conclude on Friday, 7 May.

Jesus Silva-Fernandez of Spain was elected by acclamation as the President of the sixteenth session of the Assembly. Mr. Silva-Fernandez who was nominated by the representative of Germany, on behalf of the Western European and Others Group, is the Permanent Representative of Spain to the Authority in Kingston and his country's Ambassador to Jamaica. (See biographical note SB/16/3).

Trinidad and Tobago was elected by consensus as Vice President for the Latin American and Caribbean States Group, while the election of the remaining three Vice Presidents for Africa, Asia and Eastern Europe were postponed until the Assembly's next meeting.

The Assembly adopted a 17-point agenda which includes elections to fill vacancies on the Council in accordance with article 161, paragraph 3, of the United Nations Convention on the Law of the Sea. It will also act on proposed amendments to the Authority's Staff Regulations after these have been considered by the Council.

Other matters on the agenda include consideration and approval of the regulations on prospecting and exploration for polymetallic sulphides; the adoption of 2011-2012 budget as well as scale of assessment of contributions to it; and the annual report of the Secretary-General.

Elections to Finance Committee

In other actions, the Assembly elected Zaw Ming Aung (Myanmar) and Pradip Kumar Choudhary (India), to fill vacancies on the Finance Committee, replacing their compatriots Soe Lynn Han and Neeru Chadha who had resigned. The new members will serve for the remainder of the terms of their predecessors which were to end on 31 December 2011.

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The Assembly also approved two requests for observer status submitted by the International Cable Protection Committee Ltd., which promotes the safeguarding of submarine cables against man-made and natural hazards; and by OSPAR Commission, a body established by the 1992 Convention for the Protection of the Marine Environment of the North-East Atlantic. The request was annexed to a Note by the Secretariat. Rule 82, paragraph 1 (e), of the rules of procedure of the Assembly allows non-governmental organizations to participate in the work of the Assembly as observers.

Under item 17 of the agenda, "Other matters", the representative of Argentina proposed the addition of a new item relating to the designation of maritime boundaries in the Authority's Central Data Repository.

At the outset of the meeting, a minute of silence was observed in memory of the victims of recent natural disasters, particularly in Haiti, China and Chile.

The Assembly will meet next in the afternoon on Thursday, 29 April.

The Council met soon after the adjournment of the Assembly. Election of the President for the current session of the Council was postponed to allow the Asian Group more time to propose a candidate. The meeting was therefore led by the outgoing President, Mahmoud Samy (Egypt). All regional groups were to meet immediately following the Council meeting to select their respective candidates to fill the posts of President and Vice Presidents of the Council.

The main business of the Council will be the continuation, with a view to adoption, of the draft regulations for prospecting and exploration for polymetallic sulphides in the Area (ISBA/15/C/WP.1/Rev.1). It will also consider a similar text on cobalt-rich ferromanganese crusts submitted at the last session by the Legal and Technical Commission (ISBA/16/C/WP.2), as well as other recommendations of the Commission.

Other items on its agenda include consideration of the recommendations of the Finance Committee which began its closed session yesterday, 26 April. These recommendations would, among other financial issues, include the Authority's budget and the scale of assessment of contributions to it by two new members – Chad and the Dominican Republic.

Furthermore, the Council will discuss a proposal by the delegation of Nauru for an advisory opinion to be sought from the Seabed Disputes Chamber of the International Tribunal for the Law of the Sea (article 191 of the United Nations Convention on the Law of the Sea) on matters relating to the responsibility and liability of sponsoring States.

The Council will also consider a Note by the Secretary-General (ISBA) relating to the functioning of the Legal and Technical Commission. The Secretary-General invites the Council to provide direction on the size and composition of the Commission to be elected in 2011.

The Council will meet again tomorrow Wednesday, 28 April.