

Decision of the Assembly of the International Seabed Authority relating to the final report of the international regime of the Area pursuant to article 154 of the United Nations Convention on the Law of the Sea

Farewell remarks by Ambassador Helmut Tuerk
Chair of the Article 154 Review Committee

Friday, 18 August 2017

Mr. President,
Mr. Secretary-General
Excellencies,
Distinguished delegates,

First of all, let me congratulate you, Mr. President, for having brought the current agenda item regarding the first periodic review of the international regime of the area pursuant to article 154 of the United Nations Convention on the Law of the Sea to a successful conclusion, the respective draft decision having just now been adopted by this Assembly, the supreme organ of the International Seabed Authority, by consensus.

Let me underline that it has been a particular privilege for me as well as all the Members and Observers of the Review Committee, to work with you, Mr. President, the Secretary-General and his most devoted staff and last not least with the members of the Assembly on this review exercise. I believe that during that two year period we were also able to learn a lot ourselves.

Distinguished delegates,

I wish to thank you for the great confidence you have put in the Members and Observers of the Review Committee and myself as Chairman in entrusting us with the highly important task of submitting to you a number of recommendations regarding the future work and direction of the International Seabed Authority. Today this task has been brought to a successful end as you have unanimously approved the final report of the periodic review which I had the honour to submit to you on behalf of the Review Committee. The decision adopted by the Assembly undoubtedly constitutes a faithful reflection of the Committee's recommendations. The revised schedule of meetings for 2018 and 2019, as proposed by the Secretary-General, will certainly facilitate and speed up the work of the Authority.

Today's decision by the Assembly constitutes a great step forward in the history of the International Seabed Authority. The groundwork has also been laid for future reviews of the functioning of the international seabed regime. Any future review can draw on the experience gained by the Authority this time. The next review in five years from now might thus be an easier task than this first one.

Distinguished delegates, colleagues and dear friends,

Permit me also to make a few personal comments:

The successful conclusion of this article 154 review marks the end of my personal active participation in law of the sea matters after 44 years. I started out in the UN Seabed Committee in 1973, participated for a number of years in the Third United Nations Conference on the Law of the Sea and later the Preparatory Commission regarding the establishment of the International Tribunal for the Law of the Sea and the International Seabed Authority. I had the privilege of serving as the President of a States Parties Meeting, as a Judge and Vice-President of the Tribunal and last not least at this Authority as Chairman of the Credentials Committee for more than a decade and two years ago as President of the Assembly and since as Chair of the Review Committee. The law of the sea has thus continually accompanied me during the different stages of my professional career.

Time has now come for me to leave the bridge and to go below deck – to use a sailors expression. This does not mean that I will not continue to closely follow the developments in the International Seabed Authority. Should the Chair of a future Review Committee wish to rely on my advice and assistance I would, of course, be at his or her service.

Let me now bid farewell to all of you, I will certainly be missing you. I will also miss the generous hospitality and the great friendship of the people of Jamaica. I may wish all of you the very best for your personal and professional future, in particular for your further work in this organization, and the International Seabed Authority a highly successful evolution for the benefit of humankind as a whole.

Thank you very much for your kind attention!