

International Seabed Authority

Press Release



Twelfth Session
Kingston, Jamaica
7 - 18 August 2006

Assembly/Council (PM)

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7 August 2006**

ISA OPENS 12TH SESSION ASSEMBLY, COUNCIL ADOPT AGENDA; FILLS TWO VACANCIES ON FINANCE COMMITTEE

The International Seabed Authority opened its twelfth session in Kingston this afternoon, with its two principal organs, the Assembly and the Council, adopting their agendas for two weeks of meetings which will end on 18 August.

This afternoon's Assembly meeting was chaired by last year's president Olav Mycklebust (Norway) as the election of the President of the Assembly for the 2006 session was postponed to allow time for the Asian Group, whose turn it is to present a candidate, to reach a consensus on its nomination.

The representative of Argentina took the floor to offer congratulations on behalf of the Assembly to the host country Jamaica on the celebration of its 44th year of independence today, August 7, 2006. In response, Jamaica thanked all members but expressed regret that the opening of Authority's twelfth session coincided with his nation's independence celebrations and hoped that this could be avoided in the future.

The Assembly elected two new members to the Finance Committee. Pavel Kavina, plenipotentiary representative of the Czech Republic in the Council of the Interoceanmetal Joint Organization, fills the seat left vacant by the resignation of Antonín Pařízek on 14 March 2006. Shinichi Yamanaka, Deputy Director the National Security Policy Division in the Japanese Foreign Ministry, replaces Tadanori Inomata who resigned on 5 June. They will serve out the remaining terms through to the end of 2006.

The Assembly then took up the agenda item relating to the election of members of the Finance Committee to serve after the end of the 2006, in accordance with Section 9 of the annex to the Agreement relating to the Implementation of Part XI of the 1982 United Nations

Convention on the Law of the Sea (UNCLOS). The president noted that the Secretariat had circulated an informal note in May, inviting member states to present candidates by 9 June 2006.

Assembly members agreed to a deadline set for 6.00 pm tomorrow, Tuesday 8 August, for all nominations to be presented. The Finance Committee elections are to take place when the Assembly meets next on Thursday, 10 August.

This year the Assembly and the Council are mandated to elect new members to serve on the Finance Committee and the Legal and Technical Commission respectively, as the terms of office of all the current members are due to expire on 31 December 2006. According to the provisions of the Convention, members of these bodies can hold office for a five-year term and are eligible for re-election for further term.

Another major task to be dealt with in the Assembly is the holding of elections to fill vacancies on the Council in accordance with article 161, paragraph 3 of the Convention. Other matters include the consideration of the annual report of Secretary-General Satya N. Nandan which reviews the Authority's work since the 2005 session, and the adoption of a budget for the Authority for 2007 and 2008.

In the absence of Hee Kwon Park (Republic of Korea) Jamaica presided over the meeting of the Council, immediately after the Assembly meeting. It adopted a fourteen-point agenda for this session, including election of members of the Legal and Technical Commission and consideration of the Authority's budget and scale of assessment of contributions, after action in the Finance Committee.

The Council will also resume its review of the draft regulations on prospecting and exploration for polymetallic sulphides and cobalt-rich crusts in the international seabed Area. A first reading of the draft text was completed at the last session. The regulations, when finally adopted by the Assembly, will govern the process by which contractors prospect and explore for these two marine resources.

The Secretariat has also completed detailed analysis and elaboration on a number of complex issues in the draft. Primary among these issues are the size of the exploration area, the proposed system for allocating exploration blocks and the way in which it would operate in practice, as well as the proposed schedule for relinquishment of one half of the exploration area.

On the election of members to the LTC, the representative from Jamaica referred to previous discussions on the composition of the Commission in terms of competencies, expertise and number of members. With regard to the number of members, some delegations had advocated a reduction of the current membership from 24 to 15 in line with Article 163 of the Convention. Chile suggested that the report of the Chairman of the LTC should include an account of the Commission's experience with the current membership composition.

Speaking on the format of the agenda, Brazil noted the usefulness, in the interest of clarity, of including references and notes relating to specific agenda items, as was the practice in other organizations. In response, the Authority's Secretary-General, Satya N. Nandan said the Secretariat would make every effort to provide information on issues to be addressed and pointed out that documents pertaining to this session's matters were accessible on the Authority's website.

The work of the Council when it resumes tomorrow at 10 am, will commence with a specialized presentation aimed at clarifying a number of questions raised at last year's session on certain technical aspects of the draft regulations.

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