

International Seabed Authority

Press Release



**Twenty-first Session
Kingston, Jamaica
11 - 22 July 2016**

Assembly (AM)

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21 July 2016**

ASSEMBLY ELECTS MICHAEL LODGE OF THE UNITED KINGDOM SECRETARY-GENERAL OF SEABED AUTHORITY; HEARS ADDRESS BY PRIME MINISTER OF TRINIDAD AND TOBAGO

Mr. Michael W. Lodge of the United Kingdom was today elected, by consensus, Secretary-General of the International Seabed Authority at its 22nd Session in Kingston. He has since 2011 been deputy to the Secretary-General of the Authority and its Legal Counsel since 2007.

He succeeds Mr. Nii Allotey Odunton of Ghana, who has been Secretary-General since 2009. The President of the Assembly, Rear Admiral Md Khurshed Alam (Rtd) (Bangladesh), presided over the elections in accordance with the Rules of Procedure of the Authority.

Statements were made after the Assembly's decision by the sponsors of the two candidates, Chairmen of the regional groups, and individual delegations.

Also this morning, the Assembly heard a statement by the Prime Minister of Trinidad and Tobago, Dr. Keith Rowley. It approved the report of the Credentials Committee.

Election of Secretary-General

At the start of the meeting, the President of the Assembly referred to paragraph 1 Rule 61 of the Rules of Procedure of the Authority which states that "As a general rule, decision-making in the Authority should be by consensus". He said the Authority had for the most part of its 20-year existence utilized consensus as a convenient tool in arriving at a decision.

To facilitate the achievement of the consensus an informal indicative vote was carried out with the agreement of the two candidates – Nii Allotey Odunton, sponsored by Ghana, and Michael W. Lodge, sponsored by the United Kingdom.

The process was employed in 1996 to elect the first Secretary-General of the Authority, Ambassador Satya Nandan of Fiji, the President stated.

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The President suspended the meeting to allow the informal indicative vote to take place.

The results of the vote were communicated only to the President who in turn informed the candidates of the result. When the meeting resumed informal session, he announced that Mr. Lodge had become the Secretary-General of the Authority by consensus.

Statements after the election

The representative of Ghana expressed her country's appreciation to the President of the Assembly for the smooth conduct of the election process. She stated that the candidature of Mr. Odunton had been withdrawn in the spirit of consensus, and expressed gratitude to all the member States who had supported her country's bid for the post. The representative congratulated Mr. Lodge on his election as Secretary-General for 2017 to 2020 and assured him of Ghana's full support and urged all members to remain committed to fostering the aims and objectives of the Authority in the common interest of humanity.

All speakers taking the floor this morning congratulated Mr. Lodge on his election as the new Secretary-General. They spoke of his expertise and knowledge of matters relating to seabed law, as evidenced by his excellent work during his tenure as Legal Counsel and Deputy Secretary-General of the Authority. The members reiterated their intention to support him in his new role and expressed confidence in his ability to move the Authority forward.

Members also commended the President of the Assembly on the professional and transparent manner in which the electoral process had been conducted.

Tributes to Mr. Odunton

France praised Secretary-General Odunton for his graciousness, his dynamism and his technical know-how. It noted that he had dedicated his entire life to the Law of the Sea and to the notion that the common heritage of mankind should be truly valued. The name of Mr. Odunton, the representative said, was already inscribed in the annals of international law and the history of mankind.

Other members, including Brazil, Czech Republic, Fiji, India, Japan, Mexico, Morocco and South Africa spoke of the invaluable contribution Mr. Odunton had brought to the Authority by sharing his profound knowledge and experience. Argentina applauded his passion in building up an organization that now had a brilliant future. Kenya praised Mr. Odunton as "a gallant son of Africa" who had charted a course and set the Authority on a solid foundation. Nigeria echoed the sentiment, hailing the outgoing Secretary-General for his hard work and sacrifices.

Jamaica highlighted the milestones achieved by the Authority under Mr. Odunton's tenure: rules, regulations and procedures for the exploration for three different mineral resources in the Area; 16 approvals for plans of work by contractors; and the negotiation of an overhead charge payable by contractors to offset costs to the Authority. Along the same vein, China also pointed to the increase, under his leadership, in the number of contractors now in effect for exploration in the Area.

Cameroon said that generations to come would be inspired by his precious contribution, “the mark in the sand” left by Odunton’s footsteps.

The representative of the United Kingdom expressed appreciation on behalf of his country for the support afforded Mr. Lodge as its candidate. He added his voice to the tribute to the outgoing Secretary-General, praising him as a “true public servant”.

The Assembly president also congratulated Mr. Lodge on his election as Secretary-General for the next four years. Addressing Mr. Odunton, he said that the Ghanaian national had been among those early leaders who had set the Authority in the right direction. Now, he said, “the task is ours to fulfil your dream”.

Prime Minister of Trinidad and Tobago

Prime Minister Keith Rowley of Trinidad and Tobago addressing the Assembly earlier, said the mandate of the International Seabed Authority must be expanded to make it responsible for helping States implement their obligations under the future legal instrument on the conservation and sustainable use of marine biological diversity in areas beyond national jurisdiction.

Dr. Rowley, who is on an official visit to Jamaica, said his country, like other developing countries, believed that all marine resources in the deep seabed Area beyond national jurisdiction were the common heritage of mankind. That should be a cardinal principle founded in the future Convention, he added.

(The Authority, under the 1982 United Nations Convention on the Law of the Sea, administers the mineral resources of the deep seabed beyond areas of national jurisdiction, A preparatory committee of the United Nations General Assembly is working on the elements of the legally binding instrument under the future Convention).

Dr. Rowley expressed the commitment of his government to work with the Authority and all of its member States to achieve their common objective. It was doing so due to Trinidad and Tobago’s “distinguished and historical contribution” to many facets of the law of the sea which predated its negotiation, adoption and entry into force.

In his statement, Dr. Rowley also said the Authority should as a matter of priority work on the resolution of important practical issues germane to the uniform implementation of Article 82 of the United Nations Convention on the Law of the Sea. (The article states that it was a duty of States to make contributions in kind with regard to production from non-living resources of the outer continental shelf – that is areas beyond the 200 nautical mile limit.)

He noted that a number of States had received favourable recommendations from the Commission on the Limits of the Continental Shelf to establish the outer limits of their continental shelf. States could ill afford “to sit and wait” until there was exploitation of the mineral resources in those areas, he stated.

Credentials Committee Report

The Assembly approved the report of the Credentials Committee (document ISBA/22/A/8) which was presented by its Chair, Helmut Tuerk (Austria).

The Credentials Committee comprised Algeria, Argentina, Austria, Cameroon, Germany, Jamaica, Japan, Myanmar and the Russian Federation.

The Committee Chairman reported that as at 19 July, 2016, of the Authority's 168 members, the credentials of 83 States and the European Union were received by the Secretariat.

The Assembly meets again this afternoon to continue its discussions on agenda item 9, the interim report on the periodic review of the international region of the Area.

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