

INTERNATIONAL SEABED AUTHORITY

Assembly



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INTERNATIONAL SEABED AUTHORITY
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STATEMENT OF THE PRESIDENT ON THE WORK OF THE ASSEMBLY DURING THE RESUMED FOURTH SESSION

1. The second part of the fourth session of the Assembly of the International Seabed Authority was held at Kingston, Jamaica, from 17 to 28 August 1998. The matters considered by the Assembly during this part of the session included the annual report of the Secretary-General, as required by article 166, paragraph 4, of the Convention, the proposed budget of the Authority for 1999, and the assessment of contributions of members of the Authority for 1999.

2. At the 56th plenary meeting, on 17 August 1998, the President informed the Assembly that, as at 17 August 1998, only 59 out of 138 members of the Authority had paid their contributions to the budget for 1998. He noted that by the end of August, the budget of the Authority would be in arrears in the amount of US\$ 184,961 unless additional contributions were received. The Assembly appealed to members of the Authority to pay their contributions to the budget for 1998 as soon as possible and requested the Secretary-General to inform members of this appeal (ISBA/4/A/12).

Annual report of the Secretary-General

3. The Secretary-General introduced his second annual report, as required by article 166, paragraph 4, of the Convention (ISBA/4/A/11).

4. Many delegations expressed their satisfaction with the comprehensive report, particularly section XII dealing with the substantive work of the Authority. A number of delegations expressed gratitude to the secretariat for organizing the workshop on the development of guidelines for the assessment of the possible environmental impacts arising from exploration for polymetallic nodules held in China in June 1998. Several delegations stated that such workshops formed an important part of the substantive work of the Authority and that they looked forward to the dissemination of the findings and

recommendations of the workshop. The Secretary-General informed the Assembly that it was the intention of the secretariat to publish the proceedings of the workshop in due course. The recommendations would also be submitted to the Legal and Technical Commission for its consideration.

5. A number of delegations also requested information on the evaluation of the Preparatory Commission training programme being carried out by the secretariat. The Secretary-General informed the Assembly that the study was not yet complete, but that the results of the study would be presented to the Legal and Technical Commission in due course.

6. With regard to section VI of the report, dealing with relations with the host country, many delegations expressed their concern with regard to the lack of space available to the secretariat in its current location. The Assembly urged the Secretary-General and the Government of Jamaica to work together to find a solution to the problem.

7. The Secretary-General informed the Assembly that he had not been able to prepare a report on the offer made by the Government of Jamaica regarding the location of the permanent headquarters of the Authority during the first part of the current session because the engineers and architects appointed by the secretariat had not been given access to the building until the Thursday before the opening of the resumed fourth session. The Secretary-General was therefore still awaiting reports on the status of the building and major equipment in it. The representative of Jamaica assured the Assembly that action at the highest political level would be taken to ensure a speedy resolution.

8. The Assembly requested the Secretary-General to write to those States which are members of the Authority on a provisional basis to remind them that provisional membership, for all States, would terminate on 16 November 1998. It was noted that several of the States which had not yet completed the necessary steps to become parties to the Agreement relating to the implementation of Part XI of the United Nations Convention on the Law of the Sea of 10 December 1982 had already embarked upon the constitutional and legal steps necessary and expected to become parties to the Agreement in the near future.

Credentials Committee

9. The Credentials Committee met on 25 August 1998. The report of the Credentials Committee is contained in document ISBA/4/A/14. At the 59th plenary meeting, on 26 August 1998, the Assembly adopted the report of the Credentials Committee. The decision of the Assembly relating to the credentials is contained in document ISBA/4/A/15.

Protocol on the privileges and immunities of the International Seabed Authority

10. The Protocol on the privileges and immunities of the International Seabed Authority was opened for signature on 26 August 1998. It was signed by the representatives of the Bahamas, Brazil, Indonesia, Jamaica, Kenya, the Netherlands and Trinidad and Tobago. In accordance with its article 16, the Protocol will be open for signature at United Nations Headquarters in New York until 16 August 2000.

Budget of the Authority for 1999

11. The Assembly considered the proposed budget for the Authority for 1999 as contained in the report of the Secretary-General (ISBA/4/A/10 and Add.1). In reviewing the proposed budget the Assembly took into account the recommendations of the Finance Committee as contained in its report of 20 August (ISBA/4/A/13/Rev.1) and the decision and recommendations of the Council relating to the budget of the Authority for 1999 (ISBA/4/C/11 and Corr.1). The Assembly adopted the budget of the Authority for 1999 in the sum of US\$ 5,011,700. The decision of the Assembly relating to the budget of the Authority for 1999 is contained in document ISBA/4/A/17.

Appointment of auditors

12. In accordance with article 175 of the Convention, the Assembly, acting on the basis of the recommendation of the Finance Committee, decided to request the Secretary-General to seek the appointment of a United Nations External Auditor to audit the Authority for the financial year 1998. The Assembly also requested the Secretary-General to make a proposal regarding the appointment of an auditor for the consideration of the Finance Committee in 1999, including the appointment of government auditors, or a private audit firm, in each case on the most cost-effective basis (ISBA/4/A/17).

Assessment of contributions of members of the Authority

13. The Assembly also considered the proposed scales of assessment for the contributions of members to the administrative budget of the Authority as recommended by the Council (ISBA/4/A/L.7). The delegation of the Russian Federation proposed an amendment to the draft decision (ISBA/4/A/L.8). The Assembly was unable to reach a decision by consensus on the scale of assessment of contributions of members of the Authority and it was therefore agreed to defer taking a decision on both the proposal and the proposed amendment to a resumed meeting of the Assembly to be convened on a date to be announced by the Secretary-General.

Other matters

14. The representative of the Russian Federation noted that, in addition to polymetallic nodules, other mineral resources of the Area existed, including hydrothermal polymetallic sulphides and cobalt-bearing crusts. In accordance with article 162, paragraph 2 (o) (ii), of the Convention, the Russian Federation requested the Authority to adopt, within a period of three years, rules, regulations and procedures for exploration for hydrothermal polymetallic sulphides and cobalt-bearing crusts.

Other matters subject to the consideration of the Council

15. According to the agenda adopted during the first part of the current session (ISBA/4/A/3), the following items were to be considered by the Assembly, subject to prior consideration by the Council: draft agreement between the Government of Jamaica and the International Seabed Authority; Financial Regulations of the Authority; and Staff Regulations of the Authority. As the

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Council did not complete its consideration of these matters, the Assembly did not have the opportunity to consider them during the current session.

Next meeting of the Assembly

16. In order to take a decision on the scale of assessment for the contributions of members to the administrative budget of the Authority, the Assembly decided to adjourn temporarily the resumed fourth session and resume its meeting on a date to be fixed by the Secretary-General.

17. The Assembly, taking into account the recommendation of the Council, decided that, in view of the exceptional budgetary situation, there should be one three-week session of the Authority in 1999. The fifth session of the Authority will therefore take place at Kingston, Jamaica, from 9 to 27 August 1999. The representative of Chile, on behalf of the Group of Latin American and Caribbean States, announced the interest of his group in providing a candidate for the presidency of the Assembly in 1999. The representative of the Netherlands, on behalf of the Western European and Others Group, expressed her support of such a candidacy on the basis that the Western European and Others Group would have an opportunity to hold the presidency of the Assembly in 2000, by which time all regional groups would have held the presidency.

18. The representative of Chile, on behalf of the Group of Latin American and Caribbean States, placed on record the strong concern of his group with respect to the decision to hold one three-week session of the Authority in 1999. Although, in the spirit of cooperation, his group had joined the consensus, the group wished to state that, in its view, the decision had been taken in view of the prevailing exceptional budgetary situation and in no way constituted a precedent for future sessions of the Authority.
