



Assembly

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Statement by the President on the work of the Assembly of the International Seabed Authority at its twenty-first session

1. The twenty-first session of the Assembly of the International Seabed Authority was held in Kingston, from 13 to 24 July 2015, and comprised its 150th to 154th meetings.

I. Adoption of the agenda

2. At its 150th meeting, on 14 July, the Assembly adopted the agenda of its twenty-first session ([ISBA/21/A/1](#)).

II. Election of the President and Vice-Presidents

3. At the same meeting, Helmut Tuerk (Austria), the nominee of the Western European and Other States Group, was elected President of the Assembly for the twenty-first session. At the 151st meeting, on 21 July, following consultations of the regional groups, the representatives of Cameroon (African States Group), Chile (Latin American and Caribbean States Group), the Republic of Korea (Asia-Pacific States Group) and the Russian Federation (Eastern European States Group) were elected Vice-Presidents.

III. Election to fill vacancies on the Finance Committee

4. At its 150th meeting, the Assembly elected Mr. Madimi Koteswara Rao (India) and Mr. Ye Minn Thein (Myanmar) as members of the Finance Committee for the remainder of the terms of Mr. Vishnu Dutt Sharma (India) and Mr. Han Thein Kyaw (Myanmar), respectively, that is until 31 December 2016.



IV. Annual report of the Secretary-General

5. At its 151st and 152nd meetings, on 21 July, and 153rd meeting, on 22 July, the Assembly considered and debated the annual report of the Secretary-General of the Authority, submitted in compliance with article 166, paragraph 4, of the United Nations Convention on the Law of the Sea ([ISBA/21/A/2](#)).

6. At the 151st meeting, the Secretary-General introduced his report, which covered the period from July 2014 to June 2015. He highlighted the cordial nature of the relationship between the Authority and the host country, Jamaica, urged coastal States to deposit with him charts and geographical coordinates regarding the outer limits of their continental shelves, as required under article 84, paragraph 2, of the Convention on the Law of the Sea, and welcomed the State of Palestine as the 167th member of the Authority, following its accession to the Convention on 2 January 2015. He also commended Yemen for ratifying the Agreement of 1994 relating to the implementation of part XI of the Convention.

7. Among the items covered by the report of the Secretary-General were the membership of the Authority, relations with the host country, the Protocol on the Privileges and Immunities of the Authority, financial and administrative matters, and the voluntary trust fund and the Endowment Fund for Marine Scientific Research in the Area. The report also contained an account of the latest activities of the Authority and publications available at the Satya N. Nandan Library, information on the venues and subjects of the various seminars and workshops held during the reporting period and a discussion on the progressive development of the regulatory regime for deep-sea mining. The Secretary-General also highlighted the pressing need for members in arrears for two or more years to settle those arrears.

8. The three meetings allocated to the general debate on the report of the Secretary-General saw a record 35 interventions from member States and 11 by observers. After welcoming all the delegations, the Minister for Foreign Affairs and Foreign Trade of Jamaica, Arnold J. Nicholson, addressed concerns raised by the Secretary-General regarding the relations between the Authority and the host country. The Minister commended the efforts of the Authority to build capacity in developing countries through its voluntary trust fund, Endowment Fund and recently established internship programme. He highlighted that, in 2015, the Endowment Fund, through the at sea training programme, had provided two young researchers from Jamaica and Nigeria with the means to acquire valuable training in deep seabed mining investigation in the South-West Indian Ridge. Statements were made by the delegations of Cameroon, Monaco, New Zealand (also speaking on behalf of Australia and Canada), the Russian Federation, South Africa (on behalf of the African States Group), Tonga (on behalf of the Pacific small island developing States) and Trinidad and Tobago.

9. The Assembly also heard interventions from the delegations of Argentina (on behalf of the Latin American and Caribbean States Group), Bangladesh, Brazil, China, Cuba, France, Fiji, Germany, Ghana, Guyana, India, Indonesia, Japan, Kenya, the Marshall Islands, Mexico, Myanmar, Norway, the Philippines, the Republic of Korea, Senegal, Singapore, Thailand and the United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland. In addition, statements were made by the observer delegations of the Convention on Biological Diversity, the Division for Ocean Affairs and the Law of the Sea of the Office of Legal Affairs of the Secretariat, the

International Maritime Organization (IMO), the International Union for Conservation of Nature, the Pacific Community and the World Ocean Council. The Assembly also heard interventions from the representatives of the Deep Sea Conservation Coalition, the Fish Reef Project, Greenpeace, the International Dialogue on Underwater Munitions and the World Wildlife Fund. Speakers expressed their general satisfaction with the detailed report and indicated their support for the work undertaken by the Authority during the reporting period.

10. Several delegations reaffirmed the importance of the voluntary trust fund and the Endowment Fund. As at 30 April 2015, the balance of the voluntary trust fund stood at \$225,187. The most recent contributor had been Japan, with a donation of \$21,660 in September 2014. As at 31 May 2015, the balance of the Endowment Fund stood at \$3,455,538. A total of 66 scientists or government officials from 36 developing countries had benefited from the Endowment Fund. Mexico and Tonga had recently made contributions to the Fund of \$7,500 and \$1,000, respectively.

11. Also speaking on behalf of Australia and Canada, the representative of New Zealand welcomed the progress made towards the formulation of exploitation regulations and the practice of drawing on stakeholders' submissions in the preparation of such regulations. It was emphasized that the Authority should be forward-looking, building on the current momentum, and that the revised draft framework and action plan of the Legal and Technical Commission were exactly what was needed at this point in time. That sentiment was echoed by several delegations. A number of delegations commended the substantial amount of preparatory work already carried out by the Authority and expected further consideration of the exploitation code for polymetallic nodules at the following session of the Authority, in 2016, in particular on the issues of the extension of contractors' licences, draft regulations on the exploitation of minerals in the area and the protection of the marine environment.

12. Many delegations congratulated the Legal and Technical Commission and the secretariat on the work and progress made during the past 12 months. Others stressed the significance of training and capacity-building and the need for developing countries to benefit from ocean resources. One delegation called for a comprehensive assessment to be conducted on the capacity-building needs of member States in relation to ocean affairs and the law of the sea. A number of delegations attached importance to the protection of the marine environment. Several others welcomed the recommendations issued by the Commission for the guidance of contractors for the assessment of the possible environmental impacts arising from exploration for marine minerals in the Area. Some delegations commented on the environment management plan for the Clarion-Clipperton Fracture Zone, while others emphasized that the management of activities undertaken in the Area required accurate environmental baseline data.

13. Several delegations supported and echoed the appeal of the Secretary-General to those members of the Authority in arrears in the payment of their assessed contributions for two years or more to honour their obligations and settle their accounts. Others reiterated the call for all coastal States to deposit charts or relevant information describing the outer limits of their continental shelf. A few delegations supported the suggestion made by the Secretary-General to develop a fact sheet explaining the work of the Authority in the area of the protection of the marine

environment and stressed the importance of taxonomy and standardization workshops. Others welcomed the cooperation of the Authority with the Convention for the Protection of the Marine Environment of the North-East Atlantic, IMO, the Pacific Community and other organizations. One delegation stated that it would be desirable to have more permanent missions to the Authority as it would draw the attention of the international community to the relevance of its work.

V. Periodic review pursuant to article 154

14. At its 152nd meeting, the Assembly began its consideration of agenda item 10 on the terms of reference for the periodic review of the international regime of the Area pursuant to article 154 of the Convention. The Secretary-General had prepared a note ([ISBA/21/A/4](#)) containing, among other things, a recommendation for the conduct of such a review and suggested terms of reference. Many delegations expressed general support for the review and some stated that it was long overdue. Differing views were expressed regarding the possible modalities for the conduct of the review. Discussion of the item continued at the 153rd and 154th meetings, on 22 and 24 July, respectively.

15. At its 154th meeting, the Assembly decided among other things to undertake, pursuant to article 154, a general and systematic review of the manner in which the international regime of the Area had operated in practice and that such a review would be carried out under the oversight of a review committee comprising the President and the Bureau of the Assembly, and the President of the Council, with the current President of the Assembly remaining on the committee until the completion of the review. The Assembly also decided that the Chairs of the regional groups might also participate as observers in the review committee. The review would be conducted by consultants appointed by the review committee, based on a shortlist of qualified consultants prepared by the Secretary-General according to the established procurement procedures of the Authority. Details on the scope and terms of reference of the review are contained in document [ISBA/21/A/9](#).

VI. Report and recommendations of the Finance Committee

16. The Assembly heard a briefing by the Chair of the Finance Committee at its 152nd meeting and considered the report of the Committee ([ISBA/21/A/6-ISBA/21/C/15](#)) at its 154th meeting. On the basis of the recommendations of the Council, the Assembly adopted the decisions contained in document [ISBA/21/A/10](#).

VII. Appointment and report of the Credentials Committee

17. At its 151st meeting, the Assembly appointed a Credentials Committee consisting of the following nine members: Argentina, Canada, Czech Republic, Guyana, Indonesia, Nigeria, South Africa, Tonga and United Kingdom.

18. The Credentials Committee held one meeting, on 22 July 2015, during which it elected Indera Persaud (Guyana) as its Chair for the present session. The Committee examined the credentials of the representatives participating in the

session. The Committee had before it a memorandum by the secretariat dated 22 July 2015 on the status of those credentials.

19. At its 154th meeting, the Assembly adopted the report of the Committee. The decision of the Assembly relating to credentials is contained in document [ISBA/21/A/8](#).

VIII. Dates of the next session of the Assembly

20. The twenty-second session of the Assembly will be held from 11 to 22 July 2016. It will be the turn of the Asia-Pacific States Group to nominate a candidate for the Presidency of the Assembly in 2016.

IX. Other matters

21. Before the closure of the twenty-first session, the delegation of Trinidad and Tobago raised a question on procedures regarding decisions of the Council requiring the approval of the Assembly and stated that it would be raising that matter at the twenty-second session.
