



Assembly

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

1. The twenty-fourth session of the Assembly of the International Seabed Authority was held in Kingston from 23 to 27 July 2018.

I. Adoption of the agenda

2. At its 171st meeting, on 23 July, the Assembly adopted the agenda of its twenty-fourth session ([ISBA/24/A/1](#)).

II. Election of the President and Vice-Presidents

3. At the same meeting, Mariusz Orion Jędrysek (Poland), nominated by the Eastern European States group, was elected as President of the Assembly for the twenty-fourth session. Following consultations in the regional groups, representatives of Bangladesh (Asia-Pacific States group), Belgium (Western European and other States group), Mexico (Latin American and Caribbean States group) and Morocco (African States group) were elected Vice-Presidents.

III. Appointment and report of the Credential Committee

4. At the same meeting, the Assembly appointed a Credential Committee consisting of the following nine members: Belgium, Chile, Germany, Jamaica, Myanmar, Poland, Senegal, South Africa and Tonga.

5. The Credential Committee held one meeting, on 25 July, during which it elected Urs Daniel Engels (Germany) as its Chair. The Committee examined the credentials of the representatives participating in the present session of the Assembly.

6. At the 177th meeting, on 26 July, the Chair of the Credential Committee presented the report of the Committee ([ISBA/24/A/7](#)), which the Assembly approved (see [ISBA/24/A/8](#)).



IV. Consideration of requests for observer status

7. At its 171st meeting, the Assembly considered requests for observer status in accordance with rule 82, paragraph 1 (e), of its rules of procedure submitted by Earthworks, the Japan Agency for Marine-Earth Science and Technology and Mining Standards International (see [ISBA/24/A/INF/1](#), [ISBA/24/A/INF/2](#) and [ISBA/24/A/INF/3](#), respectively) and granted observer status to all three organizations.

8. The Assembly also considered a note by the secretariat on the application process and other procedures for non-governmental organizations for observer status ([ISBA/24/A/3](#)) and requested the secretariat to develop more detailed guidelines and criteria for assessing the merits of observer applicants, for consideration by the Assembly at its twenty-fifth session.

V. Annual report of the Secretary-General

9. At the 172nd meeting, on 23 July, the Secretary-General introduced his annual report ([ISBA/24/A/2](#)) under article 166, paragraph 4, of the United Nations Convention on the Law of the Sea. He acknowledged the excellent working relationship with the host country, Jamaica, and initiatives to build on that relationship. He urged coastal States to deposit with him charts and geographical coordinates regarding the outer limits of their continental shelves, in conformity with article 84 of the Convention. He noted that, as at 23 July 2018, 72 per cent of the contributions to the 2018 budget had been received, 62 per cent of the members of the Authority had paid their contributions to the 2018 budget in full, and outstanding contributions from prior periods (1998–2017) had been reduced from \$946,983 to \$370,072. The Secretary-General reported that 50 members of the Authority had been in arrears for two years or more. He emphasized the positive results of the cost-saving measures taken by the secretariat, which had notably cut conference servicing costs by 20 per cent. He also provided updates on the voluntary trust fund for the members of the Legal and Technical Commission and of the Finance Committee and on the voluntary trust fund for the members of the Council. He thanked Argentina, China and the United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland for their contributions to the fund for the members of the Commission and of the Committee, and Norway for its contribution pledge, and called for further voluntary contributions from member States and observers. Lastly, the Secretary-General thanked Global Sea Mineral Resources NV, UK Seabed Resources Ltd., Nauru Ocean Resources Inc., Ocean Mineral Singapore Pte. Ltd. and Pew Environment Group for contributing to the voluntary trust fund for the members of the Council.

10. The Secretary-General also reported on a number of initiatives, including the evolving structure of the secretariat, the implementation of the revised International Civil Service Commission compensation package and of the International Public Sector Accounting Standards, recent cost-saving measures and the implementation of a new library management system that used a commercially available digital cloud system. He underlined the increased collaboration between the Authority and other international organizations. He highlighted the progress made in the development of regional environmental management plans, referring to a workshop held in May 2018 in Qingdao, China, on the development of such a plan for cobalt-rich ferromanganese crusts in the north-west Pacific, and another held in June 2018 in Szczecin, Poland, on the development of such a plan for polymetallic sulphides in mid-ocean ridges. The Secretary-General further reported that the implementation of the database management programme was expected to be completed in October 2018. He reaffirmed the importance of marine scientific research in the Area and pointed out that the Authority had become the tenth sponsoring organization of the Joint Group

of Experts on the Scientific Aspects of Marine Environmental Protection, which would benefit the different organs of the Authority in terms of enhanced scientific cooperation and expert advice in matters related to the protection of the marine environment. He also provided delegates with an update on the implementation of the voluntary commitments registered by the Authority at the United Nations Conference to Support the Implementation of Sustainable Development Goal 14: Conserve and sustainably use the oceans, seas and marine resources for sustainable development, in 2017, as well as on the implementation of the training and capacity-building programmes.

11. The Assembly discussed the report of the Secretary-General at its 173rd and 174th meetings, on 24 July, and 175th meeting, on 25 July. At the first of those meetings, the Minister of State, Minister of Foreign Affairs and Foreign Trade of Jamaica, Parnell P. Charles Jr., welcomed the members of the Authority to the session. He encouraged the secretariat to continue its sustained outreach efforts to achieve universal acceptance of the Convention. He urged member States that were in arrears with their contributions to fulfil their financial obligations towards the Authority as soon as possible and appealed to member States to contribute to the Endowment Fund for Marine Scientific Research in the Area and the voluntary trust funds. He reaffirmed the support of Jamaica for the Authority's efforts to reach an agreement on measures to explore and exploit the mineral resources in the Area in a responsible manner and to avoid any possible negative environmental consequences that might arise from those activities.

12. The following delegations made interventions relating to the annual report of the Secretary-General: Algeria (on behalf of the African States group), Antigua and Barbuda, Bahamas, Bangladesh, Brazil, Cameroon, New Zealand (also speaking on behalf of Australia and Canada), Chile, China, Cook Islands, Côte d'Ivoire, Ecuador, Fiji, France, Gambia, Germany, Ghana, India, Italy, Japan, Kenya, Kiribati, Mexico, Micronesia (Federated States of), Morocco, Monaco, Myanmar, Nauru,¹ Nepal, Norway, Poland, Philippines, Singapore, South Africa, Tonga and United Kingdom. Representatives of the following observers also made statements: Holy See, Deep Sea Conservation Coalition, International Union for Conservation of Nature and Natural Resources, Pew Environment Group, Shanghai Jiao Tong University Center for Polar and Deep Ocean Development, and United Nations (through its Division for Ocean Affairs and the Law of the Sea, Office of Legal Affairs).

13. Delegations took note with appreciation of the comprehensive and informative report of the Secretary-General and commended him and his staff for the notable achievements made internally and externally during the reporting period.

14. Several delegations underlined the necessity to establish the exact geographic limits of the Area. It was noted that many members of the Authority had completed the delimitation or delineation of the outer limits of their continental shelf, or were in the final stage of doing so. Those members were encouraged to deposit the corresponding charts and geographical coordinates with the Secretary-General.

15. With regard to financial and budgetary matters, a number of delegations urged member States in arrears with their contributions to fulfil their financial obligations. Many delegations welcomed the secretariat's cost-saving measures and encouraged the secretariat to explore other areas that had the potential for creating savings on costs and expenses.

¹ The representative of Nauru made two interventions: one in his national capacity, and the other on behalf of 10 States of the Pacific: Australia, Cook Islands, Fiji, Kiribati, Micronesia (Federated States of), Nauru, New Zealand, Papua New Guinea, Tonga and Tuvalu.

16. Delegations voiced their support for the work on the regulatory framework for the exploitation of mineral resources in the Area, which would be another significant milestone in the evolution of the Authority towards the effective discharge of its mandate and responsibilities. A number of delegations expressed their satisfaction and gratitude to the Legal and Technical Commission for preparing a revised draft of the regulations on exploitation. Many delegations emphasized that the principle of the common heritage of mankind must be reflected in the regulations. Many also reaffirmed the importance of the protection of the marine environment, and it was suggested that the precautionary principle be translated into adaptive rules and that flexible and adaptive management mechanisms be taken into account. Some delegations underlined that a balance should be achieved between the exploitation of mineral resources and the protection of the marine environment in the Area. It was stated that scientific evidence, technological development, economic expertise and the socioeconomic impacts of future exploitation activities in the Area should be taken into consideration. Several delegations stressed the need for exploitation activities to be undertaken with reasonable regard for other activities in the marine environment, such as fishing and the laying and maintenance of submarine cables. It was also suggested that various guidelines and standards referred to in the draft regulations be developed in parallel, and that the Authority have the necessary regulatory functions and capacity to monitor compliance with the regulations. Several delegations appreciated the transparent and consultative approach adopted for the regulatory development and recommended that the Commission hold public meetings where no confidential information was involved. Some delegations welcomed the joint meeting between the Commission and the Finance Committee and suggested that the Committee continue to work on matters that were within its purview, such as the determination of administrative fees and environmental performance guarantee. It was also suggested to continue to develop equitable-sharing criteria for economic benefits from exploitation activities in the Area and a payment regime under article 82 of the Convention. Some delegations stated that the Authority should take note of other available financial models, in addition to the model presented by the team from the Massachusetts Institute of Technology, and that any model must take into account the potential negative effect of the exploitation of certain minerals on the economy of developing States. Many delegations stressed the importance for the Enterprise to operate independently, considering its special significance to the participation of developing States in the activities in the Area.

17. Many delegations appreciated the increase in training opportunities provided by contractors, as well as those made possible by the Endowment Fund. Some delegations highlighted the importance of training opportunities for individuals from developing countries as one of the immediate non-monetary benefits resulting from the implementation of Part XI of the Convention and of the related 1994 Agreement. It was suggested that the training programmes be targeted to address the needs of developing countries, while ensuring gender parity. The Authority was encouraged to continue to hold technical workshops and information seminars, run its training and internship programmes and organize other capacity-building activities.

18. Delegates noted with appreciation that the secretariat had made great progress in the implementation of its data management strategy, which would facilitate information-sharing among the Authority, the contractors and the scientific community. It was proposed that the Authority work with contractors to ensure that the data management system struck the right balance between transparency and confidentiality. Given the progress made in data management, some delegations encouraged the Authority to launch training programmes in this field for stakeholders.

19. Many delegations commended the secretariat for its dedication to the development of regional environmental management plans and encouraged it to

continue to support studies and workshops in that respect. Some delegations emphasized that the development of such plans would require a collaborative and transparent approach, as well as inclusive mechanisms under the auspices of the Authority, with the full engagement of all relevant stakeholders, including the scientific community and regional ocean and fisheries management organizations. Some delegations stated that lessons should be drawn from the design and implementation of the Environmental Management Plan for the Clarion-Clipperton Zone when developing plans in other priority areas. As for the future regional environmental management plan for cobalt-rich ferromanganese crusts in the north-west Pacific, it was recommended that the adjacent coastal States be adequately consulted, given the potential for activities in that region to have a direct impact on those States.

20. Some delegations commended the progress made by the secretariat in promoting and encouraging marine scientific research, referring in particular to its work on issues relating to the environmental impact of activities in the Area. It was stated that the means and methodologies used to mobilize adequate resources for marine scientific research were fundamental and should be identified and planned for in future. The interface between contractors and the scientific research community should also be enhanced to facilitate the conduct of studies, and the results of research should be disseminated widely.

21. A number of delegates expressed their concerns over the financial status of the voluntary trust funds and the Endowment Fund and made a call for contributions. Some delegations stated that the Authority should seek other stable sources of funding in addition to voluntary contributions. Several delegations urged the secretariat to explore innovative means of funding to support the participation of young officials and students from developing countries in the internship programme of the Authority. Attention was also drawn to the need for providing travel assistance to support the participation of developing States in the meetings of the Assembly, in particular least developed States, small island developing States and landlocked developing countries.

22. Many delegations welcomed the actions taken by the secretariat to implement the voluntary commitments made at the United Nations Ocean Conference to Support the Implementation of Sustainable Development Goal 14, including the introduction of the Secretary-General's Awards for Excellence in Deep-Sea Research. Some delegations noted with appreciation the workshop to be held in Tonga in September 2018, in cooperation with the Department of Economic and Social Affairs of the United Nations and the Pacific Community, to make progress with the implementation of the Abyssal Initiative for Blue Growth, and welcomed the workshop to be held in Abidjan in October 2018 to start the implementation of the voluntary commitment to fostering cooperation to promote the sustainable development of Africa's deep seabed resources, in support for Africa's blue economy. One delegation noted that the Secretary-General of the Authority was a focal point in the Community of Ocean Action for supporting the implementation of international law as reflected in the Convention, and it suggested that the Authority's work in this regard be included in the following report of the Secretary-General.

23. Several delegations emphasized the need for continued cooperation between the Authority and other international organizations, in particular on the marine environment.

24. Many delegations expressed their support for the involvement of the Authority in the negotiation process of an international legally binding instrument on the conservation and sustainable use of marine biological diversity of areas beyond national jurisdiction. Delegations were encouraged to keep in mind the possible links

and common issues being considered by the Authority and in the negotiation process, such as environmental impact assessments, the administration of exploitation activities in the Area and the need to take into account the potential impacts on the interests of adjacent coastal States. It was emphasized that the perspective of the Authority and its mandate should be taken duly into account in the negotiations.

25. Some delegations highlighted the need for greater transparency and inclusiveness in the work of the Authority. They commended the secretariat for the first live streaming of the Council and Assembly meetings and encouraged the continuation of such practice at future sessions of the Authority. Some delegations welcomed the proposals to improve the working methods of the Authority in order to enhance its efficiency and effectiveness in the delivery of its mandate. The early notification of forthcoming workshops and a detailed schedule of training opportunities, in particular, would allow for early preparation, broader dissemination and the maximization of applications.

26. The proposal to establish a museum to commemorate the previous Secretary-General, Nii Allotey Odunton was recalled by several delegations. The Finance Committee was encouraged to consider this matter at its earliest opportunity.

27. The Secretary-General thanked delegates and observers for their contributions to the discussion on his report. He also thanked Germany for its recent offer to contribute to the voluntary trust fund to support the members of the Legal and Technical Commission and of the Finance Committee. Lastly, he thanked the National Oceanography Centre of the United Kingdom for its contribution to support prospective interns from developing countries.

VI. Consideration and adoption of the Strategic Plan of the Authority for the period 2019–2023

28. At the 175th meeting, the Secretary-General presented the draft strategic plan of the Authority for the period 2019–2023 (see [ISBA/24/A/4](#), annex).

29. Many delegations welcomed the first strategic plan in the history of the Authority, deeming it essential to ensure that the organs of the Authority worked in a focused, efficient and prioritized manner. Many delegations commended the transparency and consultation process in developing the draft strategic plan.

30. At the 177th meeting, a number of modifications to the draft strategic plan were proposed and discussed by delegates. Following further discussions, the Assembly adopted a decision relating to the strategic plan ([ISBA/24/A/10](#)) at its 178th meeting, on 26 July.

VII. Report of the Finance Committee

31. At its 176th meeting, on 25 July, the Assembly considered the report of the Finance Committee ([ISBA/24/A/6–ISBA/24/C/9](#)), presented by the Chair of the Finance Committee, Andrzej Przybycin (Poland).

32. At its 177th meeting, the Assembly adopted a decision relating to the budget of the Authority for the financial period 2019–2020 ([ISBA/24/A/11](#)), with the understanding that those contractors that are not in a position to pay the full amount of the revised overhead charge in 2019 may inform the Secretary-General to defer payment of the balance of the full amount to 2020.

VIII. Election to fill vacancies on the Council

33. At its 177th meeting, the Assembly adopted a decision relating to the election to fill vacancies on the Council ([ISBA/24/A/9](#)). The Bureau met three times to discuss matters related to the election. It was noted that the total number of seats in the Council would be 37 thereafter and that it would be the turn of the African States group to relinquish one seat on the Council at the twenty-fifth session. The African States group agreed to designate Mozambique to participate in the deliberations of the Council without the right to vote during the twenty-fifth session.

IX. Dates of the next session

34. The twenty-fifth session of the Assembly will be held from 22 to 26 July 2019. It will be the turn of the Latin American and Caribbean States group to nominate a candidate for the presidency of the Assembly.

X. Other matters

35. At the 171st meeting, the President of the Council, Olav Myklebust (Norway), introduced his statement on the work of the Council during the twenty-fourth session ([ISBA/24/C/8](#) and [ISBA/24/C/8/Add.1](#)). The Assembly endorsed the proposal that the statement by the President of the Council in this respect be a standing item on the agenda of future sessions of the Assembly.

36. On 23 July, the Assembly attended the inaugural ceremony for the first Secretary-General's Award for Excellence in Deep-Sea Research. Diva Amon (Trinidad and Tobago) was announced as the winner of the Award for her work on deep-sea ecology and her dedication to raising awareness of those remote ecosystems. The Secretary-General presented Ms. Amon with a trophy contributed by Tonga Offshore Mining Limited. Many delegations extended their congratulations to Ms. Amon and emphasized the importance of promoting the participation of women in marine scientific research.
