THE ASSEMBLY OF THE INTERNATIONAL SEABED AUTHORITY ADOPTS DECISION ON TERMS OF REFERENCE ON ENDOWMENT FUND

The Assembly of the International Seabed Authority, by a draft decision, this afternoon adopted the terms of reference, guidelines and procedures for the International Seabed Authority Endowment Fund contained in an annex to document ISBA/13/A/L.2.

Acting on the recommendations of the Finance Committee, the Assembly also encouraged all members of the Authority, other States, relevant international organizations, academic, scientific and technical institutions, philanthropic organizations, corporations and private persons to make contributions to the Endowment Fund.

The report of the Finance Committee to the Assembly was introduced by its Chairman, Hasjim Djalal of Indonesia.

The Assembly also took note of other recommendations of the Finance Committee, covering the status of the Voluntary Trust Fund, the audit report on the Authority, the appointment of an independent auditor, and the assessed contributions of five new States members of the Authority, terms and conditions of service for the Secretary-General, the estimated cost of an intersessional meeting of the Legal and Technical Commission and the adoption by the Authority of the International Public Sector Accounting Standards.

The decision was adopted without comments by representatives.

The purposes of the International Seabed Authority Endowment Fund, which was established at the 12th Session of the Authority in 2006, is to promote and encourage the conduct of marine scientific research in the international seabed Area for the benefit of mankind as a whole by supporting the participation of qualified scientists and technical personnel from developing countries in marine scientific research programmes.

The Assembly will meet tomorrow morning to conclude its business for the thirteenth session.
According to the annex to document, (ISBA/13/A/L.2), application for assistance from the Fund shall be submitted by a developing country member of the Authority, although the Secretary-General may accept an application from any other country provided he was satisfied that the application would benefit scientists from developing countries. The purpose for which financial assistance is sought would have to be specified.

The secretariat of the Authority shall administer the Fund, while a panel of six to nine eminent persons in the law of the sea and its implementation shall be appointed by the Secretary-General to evaluate applications and make recommendations for the award of assistance from the Fund.

**Finance Committee report**

The Finance Committee report (ISBA/13/A/3-ISBA/13/C/5), states that the balance of the Voluntary Trust Fund totalled $65,537 as at 30 June 2007. The Committee recommended that the amount of $135,000 that had been advanced to the Voluntary Trust Fund from the application fees paid by the registered pioneer investors under resolution II of the Third United Nations Conference on the Law of the Sea since the Fund’s establishment should be considered as a contribution.

The Committee recommended that Deloitte and Touche be reappointed for a further two years to audit the Authority’s accounts for 2007 and 2008 as it did in 2006.

The Finance Committee expressed concern at the outstanding contributions from members for prior periods (1998 to 2006) in the amount of $302,218, and requested the Secretary-General to continue to recover those amounts. It recommended to the Assembly to encourage observers attending and participating in the meetings of the Authority to make voluntary contributions to its budget. It also requested the Secretary-General to approach the European Community about a possible increase in its contributions to the Authority’s budget.

On the terms and conditions of service for the Secretary-General, the Finance Committee recommended that the four-year term of office commence on 1 January in the year following election and end on 31 December of the fourth year, in order to bring the Secretary-General’s term of office into line with other elected positions within the Authority.

With regard to a request for an intersessional meeting of the Legal and Technical Commission, the Finance Committee said that considering the costs involved, it would be more prudent at this stage to have an extended session of the Commission immediately prior to the Authority’s fourteenth session rather than a separate meeting.

The Committee drew attention to the fact that all entities of the United Nations system planned to adopt the International Public Sector Accounting Standards effective no later than 2010, and requested the Secretary-General to follow the development of the Standards and to report on their implementation.

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