The International Seabed Authority opened its thirteenth session in Kingston this afternoon with the Assembly and Council meeting separately to elect their presidents and adopt agendas on which the two principal bodies will deliberate over the next two weeks.

As its president for the 13th session, the 155-member Assembly elected Chief Olufolajimi Modupe Akintola, Permanent Representative of Nigeria to the Authority and her country’s High Commissioner to Jamaica. (A biographical note is contained in SB/13/2). She was nominated by South African on behalf of the African Group.

Honduras was elected to fill one of the four regional vice-president positions of the Assembly. Election of the remaining three was deferred to allow members of the regional groups time to deliberate.

Secretary-General Satya N. Nandan noted that a number of delegations had been held over in London due to flight cancellations.

Among the main items for consideration by the Assembly is the annual report of the Secretary-General (ISBA/13/A/2) which will highlight the work of the Authority over the past 12 months, examine its programme of work for 2005-2007, and present proposals for 2008-2010. The Assembly will also review reports and recommendations of the Finance Committee and the Credentials Committee.

At its meeting immediately following the adjournment of the Assembly, the Council of the Authority elected the representative of Jamaica, Ambassador Raymond Wolfe, as its president for the Authority’s thirteenth session (see Biographical note in SB/13/4). He was nominated by the Latin American and Caribbean Group (GRULAC). The election of the vice-presidents was deferred to give regional groups time to consult.
During the session, the main work of the Council will be to continue considering draft regulations on prospecting and exploration for polymetallic sulphides in the Area (ISBA/13/C/WP.1), and also examine separate draft regulations for cobalt-rich ferromanganese crusts as it had decided at the last session. The Secretariat has been requested to prepare two separate draft regulations on the two mineral resources taking into account recommendations on the specific technical and economic considerations on mining them. The Legal and Technical Commission (LTC) has been examining the regulations for cobalt-rich crusts in closed session for a week, since 2 July 2007 prior to the opening of the 13th session. It continued its meeting today and will resume tomorrow. Its final recommendations will be presented to Council this week.

The Council will also hear a report prepared by the Secretary-General (ISBA/13/C/2) relating to the future size and composition of the Commission and the process for future elections to that body.

The Secretary-General announced that, in keeping with a Cabinet decision taken last year by the Government of Jamaica, the main conference room at the Jamaica Conference Centre will be dedicated to the memory of the late Dr. Kenneth Rattray, who died in January 2005. Dr. Rattray, a prominent jurist and former Solicitor-General of Jamaica, is hailed as one of the founding fathers of the Authority for his leading role in the development of the 1982 United Nations Convention on the Law of the Sea (UNCLOS). The dedication ceremony is to take place at 10.00 am on Wednesday, 18 July.

The Council will meet next at 10 am tomorrow, Tuesday, 10 July.

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