International Seabed Authority

Press Release

Sixteenth Session
Kingston, Jamaica
26 April - 7 May 2010

Assembly (AM)

SB/16/20
7 May 2010

SEABED AUTHORITY CONCLUDES SIXTEENTH SESSION WITH THE ADOPTION OF DRAFT SULPHIDES REGULATIONS AND ELECTIONS TO FILL VACANCIES IN COUNCIL

SEVENTEENTH SESSION SCHEDULED FOR KINGSTON 25 APRIL TO 6 MAY 2011

The Assembly of the International Seabed Authority, at its final meeting of the sixteenth session in Kingston this morning, unanimously approved the regulations on prospecting and exploration for polymetallic sulphides in the Area. The draft decision (ISBA/16/A/L.5) was provisionally adopted by the Council on 6 May.

The text of the draft regulations on prospecting and exploration for polymetallic sulphides consists of a preamble, and 44 regulations organized into ten parts and four annexes. The regulations deal only with prospecting and exploration phases, and apply only to polymetallic sulphides.

The Assembly also elected 17 members to fill vacancies in the Council for a four-year period, beginning 1 January 2011.

It was announced that the 17th session of the Authority would take place in Kingston, Jamaica, from 25 April to 6 May 2011.

In other matters the Secretariat responded to Argentina’s earlier objections concerning borders that appeared in one of its maps.

Elections

The Assembly elected 17 members to the Council for a four-year term from 2011 to 2013. The election, based on lists drawn up by the various groups represented on the Council, was uncontested.

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The Council membership is drawn from five groups of States members of the Authority. Four of these have special interests in aspects of seabed mining and the fifth is a group chosen to ensure equitable geographical balance in the Council as a whole.

The agreed allocation of seats on the Council is 10 seats to the African Group, 9 seats to the Asian Group, 8 seats to the Western European and Others Group, 7 seats to the Latin American and Caribbean Group and 3 seats to the Eastern European Group. Since the total number of seats allocated according to that formula is 37, it is understood that, in accordance with the understanding reached in 1996 (ISBA/A/L.8), each regional group other than the Eastern European Group will relinquish a seat in rotation. The regional group which relinquishes a seat will have the right to designate a member of that group to participate in the deliberations of the Council without the right to vote during the period the regional group relinquishes the seat.

Council members elected at this session begin a four-year term as from 1 January 2011, subject to the understandings reached in the regional and interest groups. The breakdown of the Council membership, following the election, is as follows:

Group A (4 States from among the largest consumers or net importers of minerals to be derived from seabed mining): Italy and Russian Federation were elected for new four-year terms. China and Japan (terms expire 31 December 2012). It was agreed that Italy would relinquish its seat in Group A in favour of the United States if that country became a member of the Authority. This does not prejudice the position of any country with respect to any intervening election to the Council.

Group B (4 States from those with the largest investment in seabed mining): the Republic of Korea, France and Germany were elected new members; and India (term expires 2012).

Group C (4 States that are major land-based net exporters of minerals found in the seabed): Canada, and South Africa (terms expire 31 December 2012); Australia and Indonesia (re-elected/new members). Indonesia was elected for a four-year term as a member of Group C with the understanding that it will relinquish its seat to Chile after two years and will take up the seat in Group E that was previously occupied by Chile for the remainder of the four-year term.

Group D (6 developing States representing special interests, including those with large populations, the land-locked or geographically disadvantaged, islands, major mineral importers, or potential producers, and the least developed): Egypt, Fiji and Jamaica whose terms expire at the end of the year were re-elected today for a further four years. The four-year terms of Bangladesh, Brazil, and Sudan expire on 31 December 2012.

Group E (18 States reflecting the principle of geographical representation, as well as balance between developed and developing States): Angola, Argentina, the Czech Republic, Guyana, Kenya, Namibia, the Netherlands, Poland, Senegal, Spain, Trinidad and Tobago the United Kingdom (terms expiring on 31 December 2012). Cameroon, Chile, Côte d'Ivoire, Mexico, Nigeria, Qatar, and Viet Nam were re-elected today. Qatar was elected with the understanding that it will relinquish its seat to Sri Lanka after two years for the remainder of the four-year term. Chile was elected with the understanding that it will relinquish its seat to Indonesia after two years for the remainder of the four-year term.
Other matters

Argentina stated that the Secretariat had resolved the matter concerning their objection to the inclusion of “political borders” on a map displayed on the Secretariat’s dataset. Responding, the Legal Counsel said that the error in the publicly available dataset which had been used as one of the sources for a map, was corrected as soon as it was made known to the appropriate unit within the Secretariat.

The Legal Counsel explained that in relation to the maps appearing in all formats, which are issued by the Authority, including on its website, the Secretariat applies the same policy guidelines as the United Nations Secretariat and follows the guidance set out in the United Nations Terminology Manual in all references to names and designations. He said all such maps and publications include a disclaimer in the following terms as stipulated in ST/Al/189/Add.25/Rev.1 (1997). He said the Secretariat regretted any error that might have occurred, and was grateful to Argentina for pointing out the discrepancy in the map concerned.

Nicaragua also made a statement with regard to the interactive maps featured on the Authority’s website. The representative stated that his country had a dispute before the International Court of Justice which sought to determine sovereign rights over an important area of the southern Caribbean. Nicaragua therefore reserved its rights pending a technical study of the published maps.

Argentina expressed its appreciation for the readiness of the Secretariat to address the discrepancy and requested that the Legal Counsel’s clarification be included in the report on the session.

Uganda reiterated his invitation to all members to attend the first review conference of the 1998 Rome Statute that established the International Criminal Court which takes place in Kampala from May 31 to June 11, 2010. The representative recommended that some of the future events planned by the Authority, such as workshops and seminars, could be held in land-locked states such as his. This would raise awareness of the work of the Authority, he said, and would encourage increased attendance at the annual sessions.

Chairmen of the regional groups, and Spain and St Kitts and Nevis on their own behalf, took the floor to express satisfaction with the work of the Authority during the sixteenth session. Jamaica predicated improved attendance at the 2011 session in light of the contentious, but positive accomplishments at this session.

The Assembly president Jesús Silva Fernández, (Spain) noting that the Assembly had completed its entire agenda with no postponements to next year, commended the members on the “fine working spirit” they had displayed in advancing the work of the Authority.

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