International Seabed Authority

Press Release

Twentieth Session
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Council (PM) 21 July 2014

SB/20/10

SEABED COUNCIL TO TAKE UP DECISION ON LTC REPORT AT MEETING ON WEDNESDAY; DISCUSSES NOTE ON COLLECTIVE AGREEMENT WITH OSPAR

This afternoon’s meeting of the Council of the International Seabed Authority in Kingston was briefly suspended to allow delegations to work informally to revise a second proposed draft decision on the summary report of the Chairman of the Legal and Technical Commission.

The conference room text (ISBA/20/C/CRP.1/Rev.1) was submitted by Brazil with contributions by other members of the Council but consensus on the document in its current form could not be reached.

In other matters, the 36-member Council discussed a note by the Secretariat concerning a note verbale it received from the Legal Directorate of the Foreign and Commonwealth Office of the United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland.

The note referred to a paper entitled “Collective arrangement between competent international organizations on cooperation and coordination regarding selected areas in areas beyond national jurisdiction in the North-East Atlantic” (ISBA/20/C/15).

The note verbale informed the Authority that this collective arrangement now exists between the North-East Atlantic Fisheries Commission and the OSPAR Commission for the Protection of the Marine Environment of the North-East Atlantic. The Secretariat’s note said Germany and the United Kingdom jointly request that this item be included in the agenda for the twentieth session of the Council, under item 17 (Other matters), with a view to requesting the Secretariat of the Authority to consider joining the collective arrangement.

Argentina, supported by Mexico said the document was circulated too close to the opening of the current session with not enough time for delegations to consider its contents. Furthermore, Argentina said the language of the Secretariat’s note appeared to indicate that a collective arrangement was already in effect. The representative added that before adopting any decision on the matter, the Council should take into account that paragraph 162 of the final document of Rio+20 Sustainable Development, called on the UN General Assembly Working Group on Marine Biodiversity to take a decision on the development of an international instrument on the preservation of marine biodiversity within the framework of United Nations Convention on the Law of the Sea (UNCLOS).

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The Netherlands, Norway, and France supported the United Kingdom and Germany that the Secretariat should consider the collective agreement as an approach to advancing information sharing and cooperation between States parties and entities, and to demonstrate the relevance and importance of the Authority in the protection and preservation of the marine environment.

The Netherlands delegation pointed out that various articles of the United Nations Convention on the Law of the Sea call upon States parties to cooperate in matters related to the marine environment. Brazil pointed to existing signed memorandum of understanding between OSPAR and the Authority on the various marine environmental protection issues.

Secretary-General Nii Allotey Odunton (Ghana) said the Secretariat would conduct intercessional discussions on terms of the collaborative arrangement and report back to Council at its 2015 meeting.

**Draft decision on LTC report**

The Council began discussions on the draft decision on the 32-paragraph document, submitted by Brazil and based on comments and contributions by members of the Council. The draft decision is a revision of a previous text.

Australia supported the draft decision, saying that it contained important elements to provide guidance for the Legal and Technical Commission in managing its increasing workload.

Other members, including China, France and the Russian Federation considered the document too long. They also noted that some paragraphs of the proposal did not directly relate to the report of the Legal and Technical Commission, and therefore took the proposal outside the framework of its objective. Brazil suggested a paragraph by paragraph examination of the proposal. However, the Council President, Tommo Monthe (Cameroon) decided to suspend the meeting to allow members to meet in informal consultations to rework the proposal.

Upon resumption of the Council meeting, the representative of Brazil stated that a streamlined consensus text, comprising 14 paragraphs, had been formulated. He said that members had decided to request that those elements omitted from the abbreviated text be reflected in the President’s report on the work of the Council during this session.

Although this afternoon’s meeting was scheduled to be the last for the session. It was decided that time would be allocated for the Council to meet briefly on Wednesday morning, 23 July, once the proposal was available in all six languages, to adopt it.

Tomorrow, 22 July, a special session will be held by the Assembly to commemorate the twentieth anniversary of the Authority.

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