International Seabed Authority

Press Release

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ASSEMBLY CONTINUES DISCUSSION ON SECRETARY-GENERAL’S ANNUAL REPORT; HEARS JAMAICAN MINISTER OF FOREIGN AFFAIRS AND FOREIGN TRADE

The Assembly of the International Seabed Authority resumed discussion on the report of the Secretary-General Nii Allotey Odunton (Ghana) this afternoon in Kingston. The ninety-three paragraph report covered the work of the Authority during the period from July 2013 to June 2014.

The afternoon’s session resumed with the Minister of Foreign Affairs and Foreign Trade of Jamaica, Senator the Honourable Arnold J. Nicholson, stating that it was fitting that the twentieth anniversary of the Authority coincided with the International year of Small Island Developing States (SIDS), as well as the convening of the Third International Conference on Small Island Developing States in Samoa later this year.

Senator Nicholson expressed satisfaction that Jamaica was the host country of an organization which offered support to SIDS to pursue their goals of sustainable development. Article 148 of the Convention, the Minister noted, speaks to the facilitation of the effective participation of developing States in activities in the Area.

Minister Nicholson commended the Authority for its role in advancing training opportunities for qualified candidates of member States, especially developing countries, in various areas of marine research. He said such training served to develop the knowledge base and expertise conducive to the good governance of the seas and its resources.

The number of exploration contracts in force, as well as new applications approved plus those approved but not yet concluded was highlighted by many members of the Assembly as proof of the achievements made by the Authority. Norway said it was a positive development that applications came from new States and corporations, developed and developing States, thus broadening the variety of contractors. Mozambique said the seven applications for exploration

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recently approved were clear indication of the critical work of the Authority through its various organs since its establishment.

Singapore said it was pleased with the excellent performance of the Secretariat despite the challenges that it faced. Singapore listed sensitization seminars in Mexico in November last year and in New York in April this year that promoted the work of the Authority, and the launch of its ISA-HQ mobile application on 2 June 2014 as encouraging efforts to better manage and disseminate the various aspects of its work.

Bangladesh and Tonga made comments concerning capacity development, training and outreach. Bangladesh urged the Secretariat to engage universities, scientific institutions and other entities of the developing countries so that more of their scientists could participate in marine scientific activities through the Endowment Fund for Marine Scientific Research. Tonga said it had, for the first time, become a beneficiary of the Fund by way of one of its environmental lawyers currently attending the Rhodes Academy of Ocean Law and Policy in Greece.

Cameroon aligned itself with Nigeria with regard to training opportunities for participants from developing States and the need for more sensitization sessions. Chile said it was essential that a sensitization session be planned in that country, and offered to be in touch with the Secretariat on the matter.

Argentina, Cameroon, China, Japan and Myanmar supported the Secretary-General’s efforts for the speedy adoption of exploitation regulations. Japan also described as “meaningful” the Secretariat’s stakeholder survey for developing a regulatory framework for minerals exploration in the Area, to which it had submitted its views. China said the work related to the formulation of the exploration regulations should proceed progressively and galvanize consensus to reflect a balance between resource utilization and environmental protection.

As a memento to the twentieth anniversary of the establishment of the Authority, the Japan-sponsored JOGMEC, the first contractor for cobalt-rich crust, presented a sample of the crust to the Secretary-General.

With regard to the matter of the extension of exploration contracts for nodules, due to expire in 2016 and 2017, Trinidad and Tobago expressed the hope that in formulating criteria for the possible extension of such contracts, the Legal and Technical Commission would require applicants to provide economic or technological reasons why they had not been able to fulfil their contractual requirements for the past fifteen years. Furthermore, any request for extension should be accompanied by a work programme for the next five years.

Mexico proposed that the Assembly create an advisory group to support the Authority. This group would be open to any member wanting to participate. The delegation had drafted a simple text to be submitted for consideration. Cameroon and Norway deemed it too early to take a decision on the proposal.
A number of delegations welcomed Niger as the most recent member State to become party to the Convention.

Two observers also contributed to the debate on the Secretary-General’s report. The Convention on Biological Diversity (CBD) said it was ready to work closely with States parties and the Authority to ensure that the best available scientific information on marine and coastal biodiversity could be provided for consideration by the organs of the Authority. The International Cable Protection Committee (ICPC) offered ideas on how the 2010 Memorandum of Understanding with the Authority could deliver on the mutual promise embodied in that document.

The Assembly resumes tomorrow morning, 24 July, to complete its discussion on the Secretary-General’s annual report.

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