ASSEMBLY PAYS TRIBUTE TO HELMUT BEIERSDORF
IN SPECIAL MEETING
CONTINUES DEBATE ON SECRETARY-GENERAL’S REPORT

The Assembly of the International Seabed Authority (ISA) held a special commemorative sitting in Kingston this afternoon to honour the memory of Dr. Helmut Beiersdorf, a German geologist and member of the Legal and Technical Commission since 1998. Dr. Beiersdorf, 66, who was attending the current session of the Authority, died suddenly on May 30.

Following the special sitting, the 145-member Assembly resumed its regular meeting to continue debate on the report of the Secretary-General of the Authority. The report (ISBA/10/A/3), presented yesterday, detailed the activities of the intergovernmental organization over the past year, and provided an overview of its achievements and milestones since its establishment in 1994 as well as its programme of work for 2005-2007.

Also at this afternoon’s session, Norway was elected Vice-President to represent the Western European and other States Group, completing the slate of vice-presidents of the Assembly.

The Assembly will next meet tomorrow morning, Wednesday, June 2, to hear more speakers on the report and to consider the recommendation of the Council on the Supplementary Agreement signed between the ISA and the Government of Jamaica.

At the special sitting, glowing tributes were paid to Dr. Beiersdorf by the President of the Assembly, Dennis Francis (Trinidad & Tobago), the Secretary-General of the Authority, representatives of the five regional groups, members of the Legal and Technical Commission as well as individual members of the Assembly.

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Born on 8 August 1938, Dr. Beiersdorf became a member of the Legal and Technical Commission in August 1998. He was the Director-General of the Federal Institute for Geosciences and Natural Resources in Hanover, Germany, at the time of his death.

Dr. Beiersdorf studied geology at the University of Gottingen in Germany from 1960-1965, gaining a diploma and later a doctorate in April 1969. He was made an honorary professor of the University of Hanover, Germany on 28 July 1997. He published extensively on manganese nodules and other marine mineral resources, including gas hydrates.

**Tributes**

Mr. Francis described Dr. Beiersdorf as a “pillar of the Legal and Technical Commission” who would be remembered for his “meritorious service to the International seabed Authority, and for his dedication to its ideals and principles”.

“The LTC has lost the benefit of the advice and experience of a great scientist,” the Secretary-General said. Mr. Nandan said Dr. Beiersdorf was always drafting proposals to clarify issues or to forge compromises between different views and presenting ideas for the Authority’s work. He helped to organize the workshop for the establishment of a Geological Model for the Clarion-Clipperton Zone, and was instrumental in plans for another workshop later this year on “Polymetallic Sulphides and Cobalt Crusts – their environment and considerations for the establishment of environmental baselines and an associated monitoring programme for exploration”.

Mr. Nandan included in his statement a message from Jean-Pierre Lenoble, a former member of the LTC, who said Dr. Beiersdorf was admired by his colleagues for being a gentleman devoted to the work of the Authority.

Speaking on behalf of the European Union, the representative from Ireland said the LTC would not be the expert body it had become had it not been for the dedicated work of Dr. Beiersdorf. Norway echoed those sentiments on behalf of the Western European and other States Group. Jamaica said Dr. Beiersdorf’s knowledge was complemented by his willingness to serve. “We are particularly saddened that he will no longer be here to enjoy the beauty and hospitality of our country,” the representative of the host country said.

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The Republic of Korea, on behalf of the Asian delegation, said that the Authority has benefited from Mr Beiersdorf’s excellent contribution to the formulation of regulations on polymetallic nodules.

Speaking for the African group, the delegate from South Africa said Dr. Beiersdorf’s contribution to the work of the Authority would be his legacy for the next generation. Similar sentiments were shared by China, Brazil, Pakistan, Papua New Guinea, Trinidad & Tobago, the United States and Vietnam.

The representative of the Russian Federation, in his capacity as a member of the Eastern European group, described Dr. Beiersdorf as “a very good human being and an excellent professional.” He suggested that the Authority honour him by placing his portrait in the library. St. Kitts and Nevis and Nigeria endorsed the suggestion.

The Vice-Chairman of the LTC, Dr. Frida Maria Armas Pfirter, thanked the delegations for their expressions of sympathy and noted that Dr. Beiersdorf’s last formal words at the LTC meeting on Friday, May 28 included expressions of thanks to the Chairman and Vice-Chairman for the work carried out.

The delegate from Germany said he would undertake to convey the tributes and condolences to the family of Dr. Beiersdorf and to the government and people of Germany.

**Debate on Secretary-General’s report**

At the resumption of debate on the report of the Secretary-General, China said it would continue to support the Authority’s programme of work, particularly as it relates to existing contracts for exploration, the preparation of a regime for regulating future development of mineral resources of the Area, and the promotion and encouragement of marine scientific research.

Ghana urged the Authority to intensify efforts at ensuring that all countries shared the resources of the Ocean. “Developing countries must feel comfortable that there is something in the Convention (on the Law of the Sea) for them,” the representative from Ghana said. Uganda and Sudan shared similar sentiments.

Vietnam, Uganda and Pakistan raised the issue of attendance at meetings of the Assembly and the expert bodies of the Authority, calling for appropriate action to address the matter. Guinea suggested that the opening of more permanent missions in Kingston would improve attendance at meetings.

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Morocco, on behalf of the Arab states group, said it was necessary and appropriate for the Authority to focus on the implementation of items set out in paragraph 5 of section 1 of the annex to the Agreement. Of particular importance to the Arab states, the representative said, were standards for the protection and preservation of the marine environment, the promotion of marine scientific research and effective participation by developing countries in the work of the Authority.

Speaking on behalf of his own country the delegate said Morocco would soon ratify the Agreement to become a full member of the Authority.

Austria noted that the core of the Secretary-General’s report was contained in paragraphs 104 and 105, dealing with the substantive work programme for 2005 to 2007 and commended the Secretary General on the wise course of action he was taking in carrying out the work of the Authority.

Jamaica took the floor to restate his government’s commitment to provide “the most suitable and appropriate environment for the Authority to conduct its work.” He advised that the government had begun to implement a number of measures aimed at enhancing security around the premises of the Authority. These measures included: improved lighting around the perimeter of the building; the creation of No Parking zones in designated areas near the Headquarters; the demolition or restoration of nearby derelict buildings, the provision of transportation services for local staff and the raising of the perimeter wall.

On the matter of the employment of spouses and partners of ISA officers, he said that the draft text of an agreement on the matter is being “fine tuned” and his government expected a speedy resolution to this outstanding issue.

Jamaica strongly opposed any suggestions to convene the meetings of the Authority at any location other than the Headquarters in Kingston, or to have meetings every two years, which he said would “dilute” the work of the Authority. He urged members to contribute to the voluntary trust fund, to enable experts from developing countries to attend meetings of the Authority’s technical bodies.

In his intervention, the representative of Argentina described the Secretary-General’s report as a valuable reference document on the first ten years of the Authority’s work. Now that the groundwork had been completed, the Authority could turn its attention to important tasks such as scientific research.

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South Africa, speaking on behalf of the African group, formally announced its endorsement of Charles Manyang D’Awol (Sudan) as a candidate for the post of Secretary-General. The Arab states, through Morocco, also proposed Ambassador D’Awol for the position.