SEABED AUTHORITY’S ASSEMBLY ELECTS SATYA NANDAN TO THIRD TERM AS SECRETARY-GENERAL OF THE ORGANIZATION

The Assembly of the International Seabed Authority, meeting at Kingston, this afternoon elected the current Secretary-General of the Authority, Satya N. Nandan, to a third four-year term.

Ambassador Nandan, who had held the position since March 1996, obtained 48 votes compared with 29 by Ambassador Charles Manyang D’Awol of the Sudan, a choice of the African Union.

The number of members present and voting was 78. The number of invalid votes was 1.

In other action, the Assembly approved the report of its Credentials Committee, which had accepted the credentials of representatives to the tenth session. Committee Chairman Helmut Tuerk (Austria) reported that 74 members had submitted formal credentials. Additionally, information concerning the appointment of representatives participating in the session had also been communicated by facsimile or initialed notes verbales from permanent missions to the United Nations and other government offices or authorities by the 13 other States.

The Assembly decided that the eleventh session of the Authority would be 15 to 25 August 2005.

Election of Secretary-General

Before the election, Assembly President Dennis Francis (Trinidad & Tobago) spoke of efforts to reach a consensus on a candidate in the tradition of the Authority. It had been the wish of the Bureau to come to a decision without resorting to a vote, but after intensive consultations there was no consensus, he said.

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Leading into the process of the election of the Secretary-General, the President of the Assembly, Dennis Francis (Trinidad and Tobago), announced that two members of the Authority who were in arrears, Comoros and Somalia, had sought a dispensation to allow them to participate in the elections. In support of the request they cited a resolution adopted in the General Assembly of the United Nations, which grants the right to vote in decisions of the General Assembly until June 30, 2004, to less developed countries experiencing economic hardship. After careful consideration, the President explained, the bureau of the Assembly had decided to grant the vote to the two members.

Sudan and Guinea supported this decision. They said that the effort made by the two delegations to attend this session, even as the Authority was experiencing problems with regard to attendance levels, showed their considerable commitment to the work of the Authority despite their financial difficulties. Yemen and Uganda endorsed this view.

Ambassador Nandan was elected as the first Secretary-General of the ISA in March 1996 and re-elected in March 2000. Before that, he played a key role in seabed matters as head of the Fiji delegation to the Seabed Committee (1970-1973) and to the Third United Nations Conference on the Law of the Sea (1973-1982). He was among the conference leaders and participated in the negotiations on a number of key issues. As Rapporteur of the Second Committee of the Conference (the traditional law of the sea), he composed the single negotiating text for the Chairman, which became the basic text of the Committee. In 1975, he served as Chairman of the Working Groups on the Exclusive Economic Zone, Delimitation of Maritime Boundaries and the High Seas.

Ambassador Nandan served as Under-Secretary-General of the United Nations and Special Representative of the Secretary-General for the Law of the Sea from 1983-1992. He headed the United Nations Office for Ocean Affairs and the Law of the Sea and was responsible for the secretariat servicing the Preparatory Commission for the International Seabed Authority and for the International Tribunal for the Law of the Sea.

Speaking after the election, Ambassador D’Awol congratulated Ambassador Nandan on his victory and assured him of his cooperation and support. He said he had never doubted the capabilities of Ambassador Nandan. Sudan would continue to be active in the International Seabed Authority, he added.

For his part, Ambassador Nandan welcomed the “gracious statement” of Ambassador D’Awol, recalling that they had worked together in the past. He welcomed

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Ambassador D’Awol’s commitment to do so in the future. He thanked the Authority membership for their support and said he would continue to work to consolidate the progress the Authority had made. “I pledge to you that I will do my very best in the service of the Authority,” he said.

Fiji applauded the Pacific Island nations and their delegates for supporting its candidate, while Papua New Guinea noted that Mr. Nandan’s effective leadership and re-election was a milestone achievement for his country and the islands of the region. South Africa, noting that the performance of the Secretary-General had helped to bring the Authority to where it was today, said Ambassador D’Awol’s candidacy demonstrates recognition of the African continent’s role in the progress of the ISA.

Scale of assessments

With regard to the document setting out the scale of assessed contributions, Vietnam suggested that it should be considered a preliminary scale, in light of paragraph 5 of the budget decision (ISBA/10/A/8) giving the Secretary-General the authority to establish it. The Russian Federation opposed this view, stating that the scale as it stood was a definitive scale at present, which could be adjusted depending on changes in the membership of the Authority. The Secretary General suggested the addition of the following proviso to the scale of the assessment document: “subject to the provisions of paragraph 5 of the budget decision,” a suggestion which both delegations accepted.

Also this afternoon, Malaysia thanked the members of the Assembly for supporting its membership on the Council.

The Assembly will conclude its 10th session tomorrow morning after hearing statements from its president, Dennis Francis (Trinidad & Tobago) and Baïdy Diène (Senegal), President of the Council.

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