



STATEMENT BY THE SECRETARY-GENERAL OF THE INTERNATIONAL SEABED AUTHORITY TO THE 19TH MEETING OF THE STATES PARTIES TO THE 1982 UN CONVENTION ON THE LAW OF THE SEA

22 – 26 JUNE 2009

(Provisional agenda item 9)

Mr President,

I am pleased to present the usual brief report to the Meeting of States Parties on some of the important elements of the work of the International Seabed Authority over the past months.

As States Parties will be aware, the fifteenth session of the Authority took place in Kingston from 25 May to 5 June 2009. The session was preceded by a one-week meeting of the Legal and Technical Commission. These dates, which are earlier in the year than has previously been the case, had been selected following consultations with member States in order to try to ensure the best possible level of attendance. Unfortunately, whilst it was noticeable that some regional groups were better represented than in previous sessions, it does not seem that the change in dates has resulted in significantly increased overall attendance. I must therefore take this opportunity once again to urge all States Parties – who are also members of the Authority – to make the utmost effort to attend future sessions of the Authority in order to participate fully in the important work that is being carried out.

In this regard, I also wish to remind the States Parties of the efforts undertaken by the Government of Jamaica, as host government, not only to improve the facilities available in Kingston by upgrading the Jamaica Conference Centre, but also to streamline the immigration requirements for delegates to the Authority's meetings, including by waiving visa requirements for many States Parties. I wish to express my appreciation to the Government of Jamaica for its cooperation and for the efforts it has made as host government.

Significant outcomes from the fifteenth session included the following:

The Council made very good progress on tackling the outstanding issues with respect to the draft regulations on prospecting and exploration for polymetallic sulphides. I am pleased to report that all delegations approached the discussions on these difficult issues with a positive spirit and with the intention of making substantive progress. Although it was not possible to complete the work – two regulations remain outstanding – it was clear that this was not due to any lack of commitment, but due to the complex legal and

technical nature of the outstanding issues which clearly need more time to address. I am confident that it will be possible to complete the regulations at the next session in 2010.

The Council also received a very interesting and enlightening presentation from the International Cable Protection Committee about the work of that body in relation to submarine cables in the deep sea. The ICPC has a membership of 54 countries and is mandated to provide leadership and guidance on issues related to submarine cable planning, installation, operation, maintenance and protection. During subsequent discussions in the Assembly, delegations welcomed the interactions of the Authority with the ICPC and other bodies such as the Commission of the Convention for the Protection of the Marine Environment of the North-East Atlantic and the secretariat for the Convention on Biological Diversity. In particular, it was felt that cooperation with these bodies, and with other relevant regional and subregional bodies, could help to promote better understanding of the potential environmental impact of deep seabed mining in the areas beyond national jurisdiction.

Mr President,

2009 has been a particularly busy year for the Legal and Technical Commission. The Commission concluded its work on draft regulations for cobalt-rich ferromanganese crusts and decided to forward these draft regulations to the Council for its consideration in 2010. The Commission also adopted new recommendations for the guidance of contractors with the Authority on the reporting of actual and direct exploration expenditures under contracts with the Authority. This is an area which has caused considerable difficulty for the Commission in the past and it is hoped that the new recommendations, which promote the adoption of standardized and internationally-recognized accounting practices, will not only simplify the task of the contractors but will also avoid some of the misunderstandings that have arisen in the past few years between the contractors and the Commission.

One of the most important proposals considered by the Commission was a proposal to establish a network of areas of particular environmental interest in the nodule province of the Central Pacific Ocean (the so-called Clarion-Clipperton Zone). This proposal had been introduced to the Commission in 2008. It involves the designation of nine areas, each 400 km by 400 km in size, which would be protected from mining activity and used to assess the impacts of mining in other areas on the deep sea environment.

The Commission was able to review the proposal in detail, but decided that the best way forward was for the Authority to convene, as a priority activity, an international workshop, including members of the Commission with relevant expertise, as well as representatives of contractors and other experts, to review further the proposal and also to advise on the formulation of an environmental management plan at the regional scale for the whole of the Clarion-Clipperton Fracture Zone. The Commission also wished to encourage further scientific research in the proposed areas of particular environmental interest and recommended that any data collected from such research should be compared with information collected by the existing contractors with the Authority in order to

better assess how representative the proposed areas of particular environmental interest were, whether all of them were necessary, or whether the size and location of the areas should be adjusted.

Mr President,

In terms of the other activities of the Authority, I would like to report on three particular success stories.

Firstly, I am pleased to report that the long-running project to establish a geological model for the Clarion-Clipperton Zone is near completion. Presentations on the project and the expected outputs were made to both the Legal and Technical Commission and the Council during the fifteenth session. We plan to convene a workshop later in 2009 to present the results of the project.

Second, I am very pleased to report that since its establishment in 2006, the Authority's Endowment Fund for Marine Scientific Research has attracted a wide range of very good proposals aimed at providing qualified scientists and technical personnel from developing countries with opportunities to participate in international technical and scientific cooperation programmes. Amongst the programmes that have been awarded support from the Fund to date are a cooperative training programme with InterRidge, the global programme of scientific research on mid-ocean ridge formation and mineralogy, and support for the summer programme of the Rhodes Academy. Recently awards from the Fund were announced to support training programmes to be offered in collaboration with the National Institute of Oceanography in Goa, India and the China Ocean Minerals Research and Development Administration. A number of other interesting and innovative proposals are currently under review by the advisory panel established for this purpose.

In addition, I am pleased to report that the Government of Norway has announced that it will be making a contribution of \$250,000 to the Endowment Fund, and I would like to express my appreciation for this generous gesture.

The response to the Fund so far has made it very clear that, not only is there a great demand in developing countries for support with respect to marine scientific research, but also there is great interest amongst the institutions based in developed, developing and emerging economies for providing such support. This makes it all the more important that the Endowment Fund continues to grow, even in these harsh economic times. I therefore wish to appeal to all members of the Authority, other States, relevant international organizations, and philanthropic organizations to consider making contributions to the Fund.

Third, one of the most interesting recent developments in the work of the Authority has been the response to the regional sensitization seminars that have been held. The first such seminar took place in Indonesia in 2007. This was followed by seminars in Rio de Janeiro, Brazil in 2008 and in Abuja, Nigeria in February 2009. Each seminar is organized in collaboration with the host government and aims to promote wide

participation from the region concerned. The Authority brings presentations on its work by its own staff and by experts, including invited representatives from the CLCS, ITLOS and UN-DOALOS. The response to these seminars has been most encouraging. At the seminar in Abuja, for example, there were more than 200 participants from Nigeria and West Africa. The seminar in Rio led directly to the idea to develop a proposal for regional cooperation on deep ocean resource assessment between countries from Latin America and Africa bordering the equatorial Atlantic Ocean. Subject to the availability of resources, we look forward to being able to convene similar seminars in other regions in the future and making this an important element of the Authority's work programme.

Mr President,

This is only a brief snapshot of the recent work of the Authority. As usual, all the documents of the fifteenth session are on the Authority's website and I encourage delegations to study them and to continue to participate in the work of the Authority.

Finally, Mr President, I wish to touch on two issues. As several States Parties have pointed out, there are a relatively large number of States Parties which are in arrears with regard to the payment of their assessed contributions. I would like once again to urge all those in arrears to pay the outstanding amounts as soon as possible. Also, as mentioned in my annual report to the Assembly of the Authority, there are also a small number of States members of the Authority which have not yet taken the necessary steps to become party to the 1994 implementation Agreement on Part XI. I wish to urge these States to become party to that Agreement as soon as possible in order to remove this anomalous situation.

Thank you for this opportunity.