

Fiji Ambassador elected International Seabed Authority President

Written by Administrator

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15 JULY 2011 SUVA (MINFO) - The Assembly of the International Seabed Authority (ISA) has elected Fiji's permanent representative to the United Nations, Ambassador Peter Thomson, as its President for the ISA's annual session currently underway in Kingston, Jamaica.

The Assembly is the supreme body of the ISA, consisting of delegations from 161 member states. Following in the footsteps of former Fiji Ambassador and ISA Secretary-General, Satya Nandan, Fiji has played a prominent role at the ISA since its inception.

ISA was established by the 1982 United Nations Convention on the Law of the Sea, and Fiji was the first signatory to the Convention on 10th December, 1982.

The International Seabed Authority is an autonomous international organization, to which state parties to the Convention are given the responsibility of organising, controlling and administering the resources of the international seabed beyond the limits of national EEZs.

The executive body of ISA is the council made up of 36 member states elected by the assembly. In 2010, Fiji was re-elected to the Council to serve during the 2011-2014 term. Fiji is also currently represented on the ISA's Legal and Technical Commission which meets before the session in order to advise the Council.

The main work before the ISA Assembly in the 11th -22nd July session is the consideration of the Secretary-General's annual report, the election of the Finance Committee, and consideration and approval of the Council's recommendations.

During this session, the Council will deliberate on the draft regulations on exploration for *cobalt-rich ferromanganese crusts of the international seabed, and will consider the Legal and Technical Commission's recommendations regarding four applications made to ISA for approval to explore specific areas of the international seabed.

These applications have been made by China, Russia, Tonga and Nauru. In the case of Nauru and Tonga, both applications relate to plans of work for exploration for *polymetallic nodules in the Clarion-Clipperton Zone on the international seabed of the mid-east Pacific Ocean.

The Council will also consider implications of the advisory opinion handed down by the Seabed Disputes Chamber in Hamburg on 1st February, 2011.

Last year the ISA Council requested the Chamber to give an advisory opinion on the legal responsibilities and obligations of State Parties to the Convention with respect to sponsorship of seabed exploration and mining activities.

As further evidence to its ongoing commitment to a responsible and precautionary approach to seabed mining, the Government of Fiji made an oral presentation to the Chamber in Hamburg in

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2010 in the course of the Chamber's hearings on this case.

During the 2011 session, the Council will elect members for the Legal and Technical Commission's 2012-2016 term, for which Fiji has a candidature.....PNS (ENDS)

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