



Council

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Item 7 of the provisional agenda*

**Status of contracts for exploration and related matters,
including information on the periodic review of the
implementation of approved plans of work for exploration**

Report on the relinquishment of 50 per cent of the area allocated to the Institut français de recherche pour l'exploitation de la mer (Ifremer) under the contract for exploration for polymetallic sulphides between Ifremer and the International Seabed Authority

Note by the secretariat

1. The contract for exploration for polymetallic sulphides between the Institut français de recherche pour l'exploitation de la mer (Ifremer, the contractor) and the International Seabed Authority was signed on 18 November 2014. The area under the contract covers 10,000 km².
2. Pursuant to the schedule for fulfilling relinquishment obligations, as set out in regulation 27 (2) of the regulations on prospecting and exploration for polymetallic sulphides in the Area ([ISBA/16/A/12/Rev.1](#), annex), by the end of the eighth year from the date of the contract, the contractor must have relinquished at least 50 per cent of the original area allocated to it and, by the end of the tenth year from the date of the contract, the contractor must have relinquished at least 75 per cent of the original area allocated to it.
3. Accordingly, the contractor was required to relinquish at least 50 per cent of its allocated area by 18 November 2023, at the end of the eighth year. The Legal and Technical Commission may recall that in 2022 Ifremer had made a request to defer its schedule of relinquishment owing to the impacts of the coronavirus disease (COVID-19) pandemic on its operational activities ([ISBA/27/LTC/6](#)), following which the Council decided to defer the first relinquishment by one year ([ISBA/27/C/39](#)).
4. By letter dated 9 October 2023, the contractor submitted to the Secretary-General of the Authority a report on the relinquishment of 50 per cent of the area allocated to it under the exploration contract for polymetallic sulphides, with

* [ISBA/29/C/L.1](#).



cartographic material that included shapefiles of relinquished and remaining cells and an overview map with the remaining exploration areas.

5. During the first part of the twenty-ninth session, held from 4 to 15 March 2024, on the basis of the technical review carried out by the secretariat, the Commission noted that the contractor had complied with its relinquishment obligations pursuant to the applicable regulations and the recommendations for the guidance of contractors on the relinquishment of areas under exploration contracts for polymetallic sulphides or cobalt-rich ferromanganese crusts ([ISBA/25/LTC/8](#)).

6. The total original area, the maps of which are available at www.isa.org.jm/wp-content/uploads/2024/03/Map.jpg, consists of 1 km x 1 km cells within 100 blocks. The number of relinquished cells per cluster varies from 200 to 1,574. A total of 5,000 cells were relinquished from 10,000 cells in 100 blocks within six clusters, comprising an area of 5,000 km².

7. The relinquished area has reverted to the Area.

8. The Council is invited to take note of the present note.
