



## Secretariat

6 January 2020

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### Administrative instruction

#### Official documents

The Secretary-General hereby promulgates the following:

#### I. Purpose

1. The purpose of this instruction is to describe the documentation process within the Secretariat and set out provisions for processing, formatting and translating the official documents of the International Seabed Authority. Where applicable, it is to be used in conjunction with the administrative instruction on communications guidelines and publication policy ([ISBA/ST/AI/2019/1](#)).

#### II. Document format, length and submission process

##### A. Document control

2. The process of producing documents is often referred to as the document chain because one stage links to another in a continuous flow, from start (the preparation of manuscripts), to processing (editing and translation), to finish (the issuance of documents in the official languages, including the posting of documents to the Authority's website and the printing and distribution of hard copies).

3. The Documentation and Conference Management Officer is a key link in the document chain and is responsible for processing documents produced by respective departments, document formatting (layout and assignment of symbols) and coordinating document translation with the Department for General Assembly and Conference Management, in New York.

##### B. Translation and submission deadline

4. Documents prepared for intergovernmental meetings, including those of the Council and the Assembly, are issued in the six official languages of the Authority (Arabic, Chinese, English, French, Russian and Spanish). In 2019, the United Nations translation services translated over 4,800 pages of Authority documents at a considerable cost. Communicating clearly and concisely will result in lower costs and



make it more likely that the information contained in the documents will be read and absorbed.

5. All documents to be translated should be submitted to the Department for General Assembly and Conference Management through the Authority's Documentation and Conference Management Officer. Official documents must be slotted for translation with the Department at least 10 weeks, or 70 calendar days, before the meeting at which they are to be used. Pre-session documents that are submitted less than 10 weeks from the meeting dates require a footnote to indicate the reason for the late submission. The slotting system is a tool for documentation forecasting and planning. It is a means to achieve the timely issuance of documents through workload forecasting and capacity planning. The system requires that a table be submitted that outlines the estimated number of documents that will be sent for translation for a given session and that contains the title of each document, the estimated number of words and the date of submission for translation. Each document is then given a forecast number by the Documents Management Section, in New York, which is used to track the document from receipt to completion. Late submissions, incomplete texts, overly long reports and manuscripts submitted without a mandate disrupt the smooth, orderly and efficient production process and must be avoided.

### **C. Length of reports**

6. Authority reports should be as brief as possible and, whenever possible, not exceed 8,500 words (around 16 physical pages)<sup>1</sup> for documents originating in the Secretariat and 10,700 words for documents not originating in the Secretariat,<sup>2</sup> such as documents received from member States. If a document exceeds those limits, authors may wish to consider shortening the document or issuing it as a conference room paper, which is not translated and is not considered to be an official document. Exceptions to this rule are made for the annual report of the Secretary-General and legislative instruments, such as regulations.

### **D. Format of International Seabed Authority documents**

7. Official documents issued by the Authority begin with the symbol "ISBA". All documents of the Assembly, the Council, the Legal and Technical Commission and the Finance Committee carry symbols. Each symbol consists of the following elements: (a) the abbreviation "ISBA", which appears by default; (b) a number that refers to the session sequence (for example, "17" for the seventeenth session); (c) a letter or letters to indicate whether it is a document of the Assembly (A), the Council (C), the Legal and Technical Commission (LTC) or the Finance Committee (FC); and (d) a document number. In addition, the letter "L" may be placed just before the document number (for example, "L.1") to indicate that it is a provisional document for limited distribution to the members of the body concerned. Furthermore, the nature of the document may be denoted by the letters "WP" to indicate that it is a working paper or "CRP" to indicate that it is a conference room paper. The date of issue, the category of distribution (either "General" or "Limited"), the original language and the language of translation will be indicated in the document masthead. Documents issued for or under the authority of two or more organs may carry two or more symbols, one for each organ.

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<sup>1</sup> See General Assembly resolutions [52/214](#), [53/208](#) and [59/265](#).

<sup>2</sup> See General Assembly resolution [52/214](#), sect. B, para. 7, and resolution [53/208](#), sect. B, para. 15.

8. Manuscripts must be submitted in Microsoft Word. They need not be formatted, but should be single-spaced, correctly paginated and in 10-point Times New Roman font (smaller font is permissible in tables and graphics). Tables, charts, graphs, statements and other material may not be embedded in Microsoft Excel format; any file containing material embedded in non-Word format will be returned to the author for resubmission in Word-only format. Native Microsoft Excel files containing tables, charts and graphs represented within the Word document must be submitted along with the Word document. Documents must be submitted electronically by the Documentation and Conference Management Officer through the gDoc system. Direct submissions by email will not be accepted by the Department for General Assembly and Conference Management.

9. Whenever elements of a document are repeated from one year or session to the next (for example, documents that have previously been translated), those elements must be reproduced exactly, including footnotes. Submissions of a previously issued document, such as a report on a similar topic from a previous session or a draft text, must be based on the previous version that has been downloaded from the Official Document System (<http://documents.un.org>) and used as the basis for preparing the new document. Changes and new elements in the text should be indicated in track changes before submission to the Documentation and Conference Management Officer.

10. The twelfth edition of the *Concise Oxford English Dictionary* is the current standard for spelling at the Authority. If more than one spelling is given in that dictionary, use the form listed first. Authors should also consult the United Nations Editorial Manual Online ([www.dgacm.org/editorialmanual/](http://www.dgacm.org/editorialmanual/)), which contains a spelling list that can serve as a quick reference for common words and compounds for which there may be more than one possible spelling. Some words commonly used in United Nations documents that are not in the twelfth edition of the dictionary are included in that list for ease of reference. For further guidance, see also the “Abbreviations and acronyms” and “Capitalization in English” sections of the Editorial Manual.

## **E. Attribution in International Seabed Authority documents**

11. Documents of the Authority normally bear, in addition to a title corresponding to the subject or agenda item, a subtitle indicating the entity or official responsible for submitting the document, for example:

- (a) Report of the Secretary-General;
- (b) Statement of the President of the Assembly;
- (c) Report of the Finance Committee;
- (d) Summary report of the Chair of the Legal and Technical Commission.

12. Documents originating in the Secretariat shall be attributed to the Secretary-General in the following cases:

- (a) If they have been prepared in accordance with a request expressly addressed to the Secretary-General;
- (b) If they deal with a policy question that engages the responsibility of the Secretary-General;
- (c) If they involve formal acts carried out by the Secretary-General under staff rules and regulations, operational rules of the organs of the Authority or any other relevant regulation, agreement or protocol.

Documents dealing with detailed and technical matters not requiring policy clearance are normally attributed to the Secretariat.

## **F. Guidance for writers**

13. Writing for the Authority calls for the same qualities of brevity, simplicity of language and logical organization of material that are desirable in all writing of a factual character. A broad range of internal and external guidelines and resources, including support for writers, are featured in the United Nations Editorial Manual Online. Authors are encouraged to make use of those resources.

## **G. Cartographic clearance**

14. Cartographic clearance is essential for any map included in an Authority publication or document, even if it is sourced from a United Nations organization or agency. All requests for cartographic clearance must be submitted to the Office of Legal Affairs. Documents and publications may be fully prepared up to that stage immediately prior to printing, but cannot be printed or distributed until cartographic clearance has been received from the Office of Legal Affairs. Short or long form disclaimers (see annex) should be included beneath the map that is being included in the publication.

15. United Nations maps that have been pre-cleared can be found on the website of the Geospatial Information Section ([www.un.org/Depts/Cartographic/english/htmain.htm](http://www.un.org/Depts/Cartographic/english/htmain.htm)).

## **III. Final provisions**

16. The present administrative instruction shall enter into force on 1 February 2020 and shall remain in effect until further notice. Administrative instruction [ISBA/ST/AI/2017/5](#), dated 1 July 2017, is hereby withdrawn.

*(Signed)* Michael Lodge  
Secretary-General

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## Annex

### **Disclaimers used on maps**

One of the disclaimer forms set forth below should be used in connection with every map issued under the responsibility of the International Seabed Authority. Certain circumstances may require a special statement, which will be provided by the Office of Legal Affairs in consultation with the Geospatial Information Section.

#### **Short form**

##### **English**

The boundaries and names shown and the designations used on this map do not imply official endorsement or acceptance by the International Seabed Authority.

##### **French**

Les frontières et les noms indiqués et les désignations employées sur cette carte n'impliquent pas reconnaissance ou acceptation officielle par l'Autorité internationale des fonds marins.

##### **Spanish**

Los límites y los nombres y las designaciones que figuran en este mapa no implican su apoyo o aceptación oficial por la Autoridad Internacional de los Fondos Marinos.

#### **Long form**

##### **English**

The designations employed and the presentation of material on this map do not imply the expression of any opinion whatsoever on the part of the Secretariat of the International Seabed Authority concerning the legal status of any country, territory, city or area or of its authorities, or concerning the delimitation of its frontiers or boundaries.

##### **French**

Les appellations employées dans cette carte et la présentation des données qui y figurent n'impliquent de la part du Secrétariat de l'Autorité internationale des fonds marins aucune prise de position quant au statut juridique des pays, territoires, villes ou zones, ou de leurs autorités, ni quant au tracé de leurs frontières ou limites.

##### **Spanish**

Las denominaciones empleadas en este mapa y la forma en que aparecen presentados los datos que contiene no implican, de parte de la Secretaría de la Autoridad Internacional de los Fondos Marinos, juicio alguno sobre la condición jurídica de países, territorios, ciudades o zonas, o de sus autoridades, ni respecto de la delimitación de sus fronteras o límites.