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Agenda item 10

Report of the Secretary-General on the implementation of the decision of the Council in 2018 relating to the reports of the Chair of the Legal and Technical Commission

Implementation of the decision of the Council in 2018 relating to the reports of the Chair of the Legal and Technical Commission

Report of the Secretary-General

Addendum

I. Introduction

1. The present report has been prepared to update the Council on progress made in relation to certain matters raised in its decision of 2018 relating to the reports of the Chair of the Legal and Technical Commission ([ISBA/24/C/22](#)), namely, the draft regulations on exploitation of mineral resources in the Area, the activities of contractors, the development of regional environmental management plans for the Area, in particular where there are currently exploration contracts, and the data management strategy (see [ISBA/25/C/12](#), sects. II, III, V and VI, respectively).

II. Draft regulations on exploitation of mineral resources in the Area

2. During the first part of the twenty-fifth session, the Council continued its informal consideration of the draft regulations on exploitation ([ISBA/24/LTC/WP.1/Rev.1](#)) as a matter of priority in order to provide guidance to the Commission in its review of the draft.

3. In March 2019, the Legal and Technical Commission concluded its review of the draft regulations and submitted its recommendations thereon to the Council, for its consideration. The revised draft regulations prepared by the Commission ([ISBA/25/C/WP.1](#)) are accompanied by comments ([ISBA/25/C/2](#)) outlining how the

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draft regulations were fine-tuned and what further work is to be undertaken in respect of specific areas.

4. The Commission also endorsed the terms of reference for a workshop on the development of standards and guidelines, which was held in Pretoria from 13 to 17 May 2019. The objectives of the workshop were to establish a prioritized list of standards and guidelines, with reference sources, that would be required to support the implementation of the exploitation regulations, and to develop a process for the development of the standards and guidelines. The outcomes of the workshop will be made available to the Commission in July 2019.

III. Activities of contractors

5. The Secretary-General took steps to advance the issue of transparency of exploration contracts (ISBA/25/C/12, para. 25). On 22 March 2019, the Secretary-General wrote to all contractors inviting them to comment and make suggestions regarding a draft template for public disclosure. The draft template was created from schedules 2 and 3 and appendix I to the exploration contracts. Contractors were requested to respond by 30 April. The responses received were generally positive, which reflected a general agreement on increased transparency. However, details remain to be discussed and the secretariat will continue to pursue those issues with the contractors with a view to resolving the matter in 2019.

6. In line with decision ISBA/24/A/11 of the Assembly, and as indicated in paragraph 26 of report ISBA/25/C/12, the secretariat has issued separate invoices for the revised annual overhead fees and voluntary contributions. The majority of contractors have paid the full amount of the new fees, while five also made voluntary contributions of \$6,000, namely, Global Sea Mineral Resources NV, UK Seabed Resources Ltd., the Government of Poland, Nauru Ocean Resources Inc. and Marawa Research and Exploration Ltd.

7. All 29 annual reports were received by 31 March 2019.

IV. Development of regional environmental management plans for the Area, in particular where there are currently exploration contracts

8. During the first part of the twenty-fifth session, the Council considered a report by the Secretary-General on the implementation of the Authority's strategy for the development of regional environmental management plans for the Area, which included a draft programme of work for the secretariat for the period 2019–2020 (ISBA/25/C/13).

9. Several workshops have since been planned to facilitate the development and review of regional environmental management plans. In May 2019, as part of the regional environmental management project for the Atlantic Ocean (sponsored by the European Union), an expert meeting was convened in Paris in collaboration with the Authority to explore the feasibility of applying a rule-based management approach to regional environmental management plans. In October, an expert workshop on deep-sea biodiversity synthesis in the Clarion-Clipperton Fracture Zone will be convened by the secretariat and the Deep Clarion-Clipperton Zone (CCZ) Project of the University of Hawaii to review and analyse recent seafloor ecosystem data from the Fracture Zone, with a view to synthesizing patterns of biodiversity, community structure, species ranges, genetic connectivity, ecosystem function and habitat heterogeneity along and across the Fracture Zone, and to assess the representativity

of areas of particular environmental interest in exploration contract areas. The workshop is an essential preliminary step to the review of the environmental management plan for the Fracture Zone.

10. In November 2019, subject to final confirmation, a workshop on regional environmental assessment in support of the development of a regional management plan for the northern Mid-Atlantic Ridge will be held in Portugal in collaboration with the regional environmental management project for the Atlantic Ocean and the Government of Portugal. In November 2019, a workshop will be held in Germany in collaboration with the country's Ministry of the Environment to discuss strategic approaches to developing regional environmental management plans. In February 2020, a second workshop on the development of a regional environmental management plan in the cobalt-crust area of the North-West Pacific will be held in the Republic of Korea, in collaboration with the country's Ministry of Oceans and Fisheries and the Korea Institute of Ocean Science and Technology, building on the work of the first workshop, held in Qingdao, China, in May 2018. In June 2020, a workshop on developing a regional environmental management plan for the northern Mid-Atlantic Ridge will be held in the Russian Federation in collaboration with the regional environmental management project for the Atlantic Ocean and the country's Ministry of Natural Resources and Environment.

V. Data management strategy

11. Under the data management programme, all nine phases of the initial implementation plan outlined in document [ISBA/22/LTC/15](#) have been completed. This included the delivery of a fit-for-purpose database and a fit-for-purpose application interface to store the Authority's digital data. Beta versions of the database and application were released in October 2018. The first release was conducted with users who will access the system as contractors, the second with members of the Commission, in March 2019. Feedback received from both groups has been incorporated into subsequent versions. The environmental data of the Authority's database will be made available to the public with the final launch of the Authority's database management system, in July. The draft report on the data management strategy is to be submitted to the Commission for its consideration during the second part of the twenty-fifth session. A series of trainings and workshops are to be conducted with stakeholders to address issues related to data management, the effective use of the database and the website interface.

12. The secretariat has also initiated work on the evaluation of information and data relating to the areas reserved for the Authority, which will be an important requirement for the future operationalization of the Enterprise.

VI. Recommendations

13. The Council is invited to take note of the present report and to provide guidance as necessary.