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

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Report of the Secretary-General

I. Status of contracts for exploration and related matters

1. Contracts currently pertain to each of the three mineral resources for which the International Seabed Authority has adopted regulations on prospecting and exploration. These are polymetallic nodules, polymetallic sulphides and cobalt-rich ferromanganese crusts.
2. As at 31 May 2022, 31 contracts for exploration had entered into force, of which 19 were for polymetallic nodules, 7 were for polymetallic sulphides and 5 were for cobalt-rich ferromanganese crusts. For each mineral resource, a complete list, containing the name of the contractor, the sponsoring State or States, if applicable, the general location of the exploration area and the dates of entry into force and date of extension, if applicable, and expiry of each contract, is provided in annex I to the present report.
3. In December 2021, the Council approved the applications for the extension of approved plans of work for exploration for polymetallic nodules of the following seven contractors: Interoceanmetal Joint Organization; JSC Yuzhmoregeologiya; Government of the Republic of Korea; China Ocean Mineral Resources Research and Development Association; Deep Ocean Resources Development Co. Ltd.; Institut français de recherche pour l'exploitation de la mer; and Federal Institute for Geosciences and Natural Resources of Germany. Furthermore, in March 2022, on the recommendation of the Legal and Technical Commission, the Council approved the application for the extension of the approved plan of work for exploration for polymetallic nodules submitted by the Government of India. Each applicant requested a contract extension of five years. Subsequently, the secretariat sent drafts of the extension agreements to all eight contractors. The Council will be provided with an update on the status of finalizing and signing of the agreements in the next report.



4. On 21 December 2021, the Secretary-General received an application for approval of a plan of work for exploration for polymetallic nodules in the Clarion-Clipperton Zone in the Pacific Ocean submitted by Circular Metals Tuvalu Ltd. pursuant to the regulations on prospecting and exploration for polymetallic nodules in the Area. In its March 2022 meetings, the Legal and Technical Commission commenced its consideration of the application and will continue its consideration in the July 2022 meetings.

5. In January 2022, the Secretary-General informed members of the International Seabed Authority of a notification by Companhia de Pesquisa de Recursos Minerais S.A. (CPRM) renouncing without penalty the whole of its rights in the exploration area as defined in its contract for the exploration for cobalt-rich ferromanganese crusts and a notification from Brazil terminating its sponsorship of CRPM.¹ The contractor has undertaken to fulfil all outstanding legal responsibilities under the contract; the precise nature of those responsibilities and the timing of their implementation remain under discussion between the secretariat, the contractor and the sponsoring State.

II. Periodic review of the implementation of approved plans of work for exploration

6. In accordance with the regulations on exploration and the standard clauses of contracts for exploration,² the contractor and the Secretary-General are to undertake jointly a periodic review of the implementation of a plan of work for exploration at intervals of five years. The Secretary-General may request the contractor to submit such additional data and information as may be necessary for the purposes of the review. In the light of the review, the contractor is required to make such adjustments to its plan of work as are necessary and to indicate its programme of activities for the following five-year period, including a revised schedule of expected yearly expenditure. The Secretary-General is to report on the review to the Legal and Technical Commission and the Council. The Secretary-General is to indicate in the report whether any observations transmitted to him by States parties to the Convention concerning the manner in which the contractor has discharged its obligations under the regulations relating to the protection and preservation of the marine environment were taken into account in the review.

A. Periodic reviews between September 2021 and May 2022

1. Periodic review of the implementation of the approved plan of work for exploration for polymetallic sulphides by the Government of India

7. The periodic report of the contractor was under review from September 2021. For the purposes of the review, the Secretary-General requested and received information on annualized anticipated expenditure for the next five-year period, details of the planned training programme, details of resource and environmental

¹ See regulations 31 (2) and 31 (5) of the regulations on prospecting and exploration for cobalt-rich ferromanganese crusts in the Area (ISBA/18/A/11, annex).

² See regulation 28 of the regulations on prospecting and exploration for polymetallic nodules in the Area (ISBA/19/C/17, annex, and ISBA/20/A/9), regulation 30 of the regulations on prospecting and exploration for polymetallic sulphides in the Area (ISBA/16/A/12/Rev.1, annex), regulation 30 of the regulations on prospecting and exploration for cobalt-rich ferromanganese crusts in the Area (ISBA/18/A/11, annex) and standard clause 4.4 of the contracts for exploration.

sampling and clarifications regarding the submitted resource and environmental data. The review was completed on 3 February 2022.

2. Periodic review of the implementation of the approved plan of work for exploration for polymetallic nodules by Nauru Ocean Resources Inc.

8. The periodic report of the contractor was under review from September 2021. For the purposes of the review, the Secretary-General requested additional details regarding the contractor's planned environmental studies, surveys and sampling plan. The requested information was received on 2 May 2022 and is currently under review by the Legal and Technical Commission

3. Periodic review of the implementation of the approved plan of work for exploration for polymetallic nodules by the Cook Islands Investment Corporation

9. For the purposes of the review, the Secretary-General requested and received clarifications about the adverse variance between anticipated and actual expenditures and the number of persons trained in the previous five-year period, as well as additional details regarding the proposed activities for the next period. The secretariat is in the process of reviewing the additional information and anticipates completing the review during June 2022.

B. Periodic reviews due in 2022

10. Annex II to the present report provides a breakdown of the periodic reviews due in 2022 and to be reported to the Commission and the Council.

III. Recommendations

11. The Council is invited to take note of the status of the contracts for exploration, the information on the periodic review of the implementation of approved plans of work and the applications for the extension of contracts.

Annex I

Status of contracts for exploration

A. Contracts for exploration for polymetallic nodules

<i>Contractor</i>	<i>Date of entry into force</i>	<i>Sponsoring State(s)</i>	<i>General location of the exploration area</i>	<i>Date of expiry</i>
1 Interoceanmetal Joint Organization	29 March 2001	Bulgaria, Cuba, Czechia, Poland, Russian Federation, Slovakia	Clarion-Clipperton Fracture Zone	28 March 2016
	29 March 2016 ^a			28 March 2021
	29 March 2021 ^b			28 March 2026
2 JSC Yuzhmoregeologiya	29 March 2001	Russian Federation	Clarion-Clipperton Fracture Zone	28 March 2016
	29 March 2016 ^a			28 March 2021
	29 March 2021 ^b			28 March 2026
3 Government of the Republic of Korea	27 April 2001	–	Clarion-Clipperton Fracture Zone	26 April 2016
	27 April 2016 ^a			26 April 2021
	27 April 2021 ^b			26 April 2026
4 China Ocean Mineral Resources Research and Development Association	22 May 2001	China	Clarion-Clipperton Fracture Zone	21 May 2016
	22 May 2016 ^a			21 May 2021
	22 May 2021 ^b			21 May 2026
5 Deep Ocean Resources Development Co. Ltd.	20 June 2001	Japan	Clarion-Clipperton Fracture Zone	19 June 2016
	20 June 2016 ^a			19 June 2021
	20 June 2021 ^b			19 June 2026
6 Institut français de recherche pour l'exploitation de la mer	20 June 2001	France	Clarion-Clipperton Fracture Zone	19 June 2016
	20 June 2016 ^a			19 June 2021
	20 June 2021 ^b			19 June 2026
7 Government of India	25 March 2002	–	Central Indian Ocean Basin	24 March 2017
	25 March 2017 ^c			24 March 2022
	25 March 2022 ^d			24 March 2027
8 Federal Institute for Geosciences and Natural Resources	19 July 2006	Germany	Clarion-Clipperton Fracture Zone	18 July 2021
	19 July 2021 ^e			18 July 2026
9 Nauru Ocean Resources Inc.	22 July 2011	Nauru	Clarion-Clipperton Fracture Zone (reserved area)	21 July 2026
10 Tonga Offshore Mining Limited	11 January 2012	Tonga	Clarion-Clipperton Fracture Zone (reserved area)	10 January 2027
11 Global Sea Mineral Resources NV	14 January 2013	Belgium	Clarion-Clipperton Fracture Zone	13 January 2028

<i>Contractor</i>	<i>Date of entry into force</i>	<i>Sponsoring State(s)</i>	<i>General location of the exploration area</i>	<i>Date of expiry</i>
12 UK Seabed Resources Ltd.	8 February 2013	United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland	Clarion-Clipperton Fracture Zone	7 February 2028
13 Marawa Research and Exploration Ltd.	19 January 2015	Kiribati	Clarion-Clipperton Fracture Zone (reserved area)	18 January 2030
14 Ocean Mineral Singapore Pte. Ltd.	22 January 2015	Singapore	Clarion-Clipperton Fracture Zone (reserved area)	21 January 2030
15 UK Seabed Resources Ltd.	29 March 2016	United Kingdom	Clarion-Clipperton Fracture Zone	28 March 2031
16 Cook Islands Investment Corporation	15 July 2016	Cook Islands	Clarion-Clipperton Fracture Zone (reserved area)	14 July 2031
17 China Minmetals Corporation	12 May 2017	China	Clarion-Clipperton Fracture Zone (reserved area)	11 May 2032
18 Beijing Pioneer Hi-Tech Development Corporation	18 October 2019	China	Western Pacific Ocean	17 October 2034
19 Blue Minerals Jamaica Ltd.	4 April 2021	Jamaica	Clarion-Clipperton Fracture Zone (reserved area)	3 April 2036

^a First five-year extension of contract granted at the twenty-second session (2016)

^b Second five-year extension of contract granted at the twenty-sixth session (2021)

^c First five-year extension of contract granted at the twenty-third session (2017)

^d Second five-year extension of contract granted at the twenty-seventh session (2022)

^e First five-year extension of contract granted at the twenty-sixth session (2021)

B. Contracts for exploration for polymetallic sulphides

<i>Contractor</i>	<i>Date of entry into force</i>	<i>Sponsoring State(s)</i>	<i>General location of the exploration area</i>	<i>Date of expiry</i>
1 China Ocean Mineral Resources Research and Development Association	18 November 2011	China	South-West Indian Ridge	17 November 2026
2 Ministry of Natural Resources and Environment of the Russian Federation	29 October 2012	–	Mid-Atlantic Ridge	28 October 2027
3 Government of the Republic of Korea	24 June 2014	–	Central Indian Ocean	23 June 2029

<i>Contractor</i>	<i>Date of entry into force</i>	<i>Sponsoring State(s)</i>	<i>General location of the exploration area</i>	<i>Date of expiry</i>
4 Institut français de recherche pour l'exploitation de la mer	18 November 2014	France	Mid-Atlantic Ridge	17 November 2029
5 Federal Institute for Geosciences and Natural Resources	6 May 2015	Germany	Central Indian Ridge and South-East Indian Ridge	5 May 2030
6 Government of India	26 September 2016	–	Indian Ocean Ridge	25 September 2031
7 Government of Poland	12 February 2018	–	Mid-Atlantic Ridge	11 February 2033

C. Contracts for exploration for cobalt-rich ferromanganese crusts

<i>Contractor</i>	<i>Date of entry into force</i>	<i>Sponsoring State(s)</i>	<i>General location of the exploration area</i>	<i>Date of expiry</i>
1 Japan Oil, Gas and Metals National Corporation	27 January 2014	Japan	Western Pacific Ocean	26 January 2029
2 China Ocean Mineral Resources Research and Development Association	29 April 2014	China	Western Pacific Ocean	28 April 2029
3 Ministry of Natural Resources and Environment of the Russian Federation	10 March 2015	–	Magellan Mountains in the Pacific Ocean	9 March 2030
4 Companhia de Pesquisa de Recursos Minerais S.A. ^a	9 November 2015	Brazil	Rio Grande Rise in the South Atlantic Ocean	8 November 2030
5 Government of the Republic of Korea	27 March 2018	–	East of the Northern Mariana Islands in the Pacific Ocean	26 March 2033

^a In January 2022, the Secretary-General informed members of the Authority of a notification by Companhia de Pesquisa de Recursos Minerais S.A. (CPRM) of termination of its contract for the exploration of cobalt-rich ferromanganese crusts and a notification from Brazil terminating its sponsorship of CRPM.

Annex II**Periodic reviews due in 2022**

<i>Contractor</i>	<i>Type of resource</i>	<i>Expiration of five-year period^a</i>	<i>Status</i>
Cook Islands Investment Corporation	Polymetallic nodules	14 July 2021	In progress
Nauru Ocean Resources Inc.	Polymetallic nodules	22 July 2021	Completed
China Ocean Mineral Resources Research and Development Association	Polymetallic sulphides	17 November 2021	
Tonga Offshore Mining Limited	Polymetallic nodules	10 January 2022	In progress
China Minmetals Corporation	Polymetallic nodules	11 May 2022	
Ministry of Natural Resources and Environment of the Russian Federation	Polymetallic sulphides	29 October 2022	
Global Sea Mineral Resources NV	Polymetallic nodules	14 January 2023	
UK Seabed Resources Ltd. (first contract)	Polymetallic nodules	7 February 2023	
Government of Poland	Polymetallic sulphides	11 February 2023	
Government of the Republic of Korea	Cobalt-rich crusts	26 March 2023	

^a Not later than 90 days prior to the expiration of each five-year period from the date on which the contract enters into force, the contractor and the Secretary-General shall jointly undertake a review of the implementation of the plan of work for exploration under the contract (sect. 4.4 of the standard clauses for exploration contracts. See [ISBA/19/C/17](#), annex, [ISBA/16/A/12/Rev.1](#), annex, and [ISBA/18/A/11](#), annex).