



Council

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Agenda item 7

**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 two thirds of the area allocated to the China Ocean Mineral Resources Research and Development Association under the contract for exploration for cobalt-rich ferromanganese crusts signed with the International Seabed Authority

Note by the secretariat

1. The contract for exploration for cobalt-rich ferromanganese crusts between the China Ocean Mineral Resources Research and Development Association (COMRA) and the International Seabed Authority was signed on 29 April 2014. The area under the contract covers 3,000 km².
2. Pursuant to the schedule for fulfilling relinquishment obligations in regulation 27 (1) of the regulations on prospecting and exploration for cobalt-rich ferromanganese crusts in the Area ([ISBA/18/A/11](#), annex), by the end of the eighth year from the date of the contract, the contractor shall have relinquished at least one third of the original area allocated to it.
3. Accordingly, on 8 May 2022, the contractor submitted to the secretariat a report on the relinquishment of one third of the area allocated under the contract, including a list of relinquished cells and maps of the relinquished areas. The Council, acting on the recommendations of the Legal and Technical Commission, took note that the contractor had fulfilled the first part of the schedule of relinquishment obligations pursuant to regulation 27 (1). The relinquished area reverted to the Area.
4. Pursuant to regulation 27 (1), the contractor was required to relinquish at least two thirds of its allocated area by 28 April 2024 (i.e. the end of the tenth year). By a letter dated 26 April 2024, the contractor submitted to the Secretary-General cartographic material that included shapefiles of relinquished and remaining cells and an overview map with the remaining exploration areas.



5. During the second part of the twenty-ninth session, held from 1 to 12 July 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 second relinquished area, the maps of which are available at www.isa.org.jm/wp-content/uploads/2024/06/0010-COMRACRFC1-2ndRelinq-Entire-scaled.jpg, consists of 1.12 km x 1.12 km cells within 100 original blocks, varying from 27 to 797 cells in each cluster. A total of 1,600 cells were relinquished from 150 blocks within four clusters.
7. The relinquished area has reverted to the Area.
8. The Council is invited to take note of the present note.
