



## Legal and Technical Commission

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### Thirtieth session

Legal and Technical Commission, part I

Kingston, 3–14 March 2025

Item 10 of the provisional agenda\*

**Relinquishment of areas under contracts for exploration for polymetallic sulphides and cobalt-rich ferromanganese crusts**

### **Request by the Government of India to defer relinquishment of part of its contract area**

#### **Note by the secretariat**

#### **I. Background**

1. The contract for exploration for polymetallic sulphides in the Central Indian Ocean between the Government of India (the contractor) and the International Seabed Authority was signed on 26 September 2016.
2. Pursuant to regulation 27 of the regulations on prospecting and exploration for polymetallic sulphides in the Area, the Government of India was required to relinquish at least 50 per cent of the original area allocated to it by 26 September 2024, being the end of the eighth year from the date on which the contract was signed. In the same vein, 75 per cent of the original area allocated to it would need to be relinquished by 26 September 2026, being the end of the tenth year from the date on which the contract was signed (see [ISBA/16/A/12/Rev.1](#)).
3. By letter dated 11 May 2023 addressed to the Secretary-General, the contractor requested a deferment of the first relinquishment from 26 September 2024 to 30 September 2026. The Council considered this request during the twenty-eighth session and, acting on the recommendation of the Legal and Technical Commission, approved the request for deferment (see [ISBA/28/C/22](#)). As a result, the contractor would be required to submit its first relinquishment of at least 50 per cent of the original area allocated to it by 30 September 2026, and its second relinquishment of at least 75 per cent of the original area allocated to it by 26 September 2026.
4. In view of the above, by letter dated 28 November 2024 addressed to the Secretary-General, the contractor requested a two-year deferment of the schedule of the second relinquishment from 26 September 2026 to 30 September 2028.

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\* [ISBA/30/LTC/L.1](#).



## **II. Justification of the contractor for the deferment of relinquishment**

5. The contractor noted that its request for deferment in 2023 had been due to the impacts of the coronavirus disease (COVID-19) pandemic, which had significantly disrupted its exploration activities. It indicated that the required exploration activities towards meeting the target for the first relinquishment in September 2026 were in progress. The contractor further indicated that the schedule for the second relinquishment of 75 per cent of the original contract area allocated to it would also be due in September 2026, thereby overlapping with the revised schedule of the first relinquishment as approved by the Council.

6. The contractor explained that after the first relinquishment a period of two years would be required, as provided under paragraph 2 (b) of regulation 27 of the regulations on prospecting and exploration for polymetallic sulphides in the Area, to carry out further high-end exploration activities to achieve the target for the second relinquishment. According to the contractor, this implies that the timeline for the second relinquishment may logically shift to September 2028.

7. The contractor indicated as well that the residual impacts of the COVID-19 pandemic, coupled with the deferral of the first relinquishment, had adversely affected subsequent exploration activities, leading to the request for a two-year deferment of the schedule for the second relinquishment to September 2028.

## **III. Review by the Legal and Technical Commission**

8. Pursuant to paragraph 6 of regulation 27, the Secretary-General notified the contractor that its request would be placed on the agenda of the forthcoming meeting of the Commission for consideration and recommendation to the Council.

9. The Commission is invited to consider the request by the Government of India for a deferment of its relinquishment, taking into consideration the justification provided by the contractor, and to make a recommendation to the Council, as provided for in paragraph 6 of regulation 27.

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