



Legal and Technical Commission

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Consideration of applications for extension of contracts in accordance with the procedures and criteria for the extension of an approved plan of work for exploration pursuant to section 1, paragraph 9, of the annex to the Agreement relating to the Implementation of Part XI of the United Nations Convention on the Law of the Sea of 10 December 1982

Applications for the extension of approved plans of work for exploration pursuant to section 1, paragraph 9, of the annex to the Agreement relating to the Implementation of Part XI of the United Nations Convention on the Law of the Sea of 10 December 1982

Note by the secretariat

I. Introduction

1. During the thirty-first session of the International Seabed Authority, in 2026, the Legal and Technical Commission will be required to consider applications for the extension of approved plans of work for exploration, submitted in accordance with the decision of the Council of 23 July 2015 relating to the procedures and criteria for the extension of an approved plan of work for exploration pursuant to section 1, paragraph 9, of the annex to the Agreement relating to the Implementation of Part XI of the United Nations Convention on the Law of the Sea of 10 December 1982 ([ISBA/21/C/19](#)). The purpose of the present note is to inform the Commission of the status of the applications and to outline a suggested process for their consideration.

II. Status of applications

2. As at 30 January 2026 2025, eight applications for extension of approved plans of work for exploration for polymetallic nodules had been received. from the following eight contractors: the Interoceanmetal Joint Organization, JSC Yuzhmorgeologiya, the Government of the Republic of Korea and China Ocean Mineral Resources Research and Development Association (COMRA). Deep Ocean

* [ISBA/31/LTC/L.1](#).

Resources Development Co. Ltd. (DORD), Institut français de recherche pour l'exploitation de la mer (Ifremer), Federal Institute for Geosciences and Natural Resources (BGR) and Nauru Ocean Resources Inc (NORI). Each applicant has requested an extension of five years. Except one applicant¹, all other seven applicants have paid in full the required fee of \$67,000 for processing the application for extension. The applications are listed in the annex to the present note, in chronological order of receipt together with relevant details for each.

In accordance with paragraph 7 (b) of the annex to decision [ISBA/21/C/19](#), the Secretary-General notified the sponsoring States concerned of the receipt of the applications and of the requirement set out in paragraph 3 of said annex. Paragraph 3 provides that, unless otherwise indicated by the sponsoring State or States at the time of making the application for an extension, sponsorship is deemed to continue throughout the extension period and the sponsoring State or States shall continue to assume responsibility in accordance with article 139 and article 153 (4) of the Convention and article 4 (4) of annex III to the Convention. In this connection, no sponsoring State indicated that sponsorship would not be continued. Moreover, by note verbale dated 14 November 2025, China confirmed that the certificate of sponsorship for the China Ocean Mineral Resources Research and Development Association would remain in force for the extension period. By note verbale dated 17 December 2025, the Permanent Mission of France to the Authority informed that the sponsorship by France of the activities carried out under the plan of work for the contract would continue throughout the extension period and that France would continue to bear liability in accordance with article 139 and article 153, paragraph 4, of the Convention and article 4, paragraph 4, of annex III to the Convention.

III. Process for consideration

3. The process for the consideration of applications for extensions by the Commission is set out in paragraphs 8 to 13 of the annex to decision [ISBA/21/C/19](#). Under those provisions, the Commission is required to consider applications expeditiously and in the order in which they are received.

4. To facilitate consideration of the applications by the Commission, the secretariat is preparing a preliminary evaluation of the data and information provided by each applicant. The evaluations will be made available to the Commission before the start of its meetings. In this connection, information and data, as well as the proposed programme of activities for the requested period of extension, are also being evaluated against the applicable recommendations issued by the Commission.² The format of the preliminary evaluation follows appendix I to decision [ISBA/21/C/19](#). The preliminary evaluation will also identify missing or incomplete data and information, if any.

5. It should be noted that the Commission may request an applicant to submit such additional data and information as may be necessary regarding the implementation of

¹ As per a payment schedule agreed between the Republic of Korea and the secr tariat, the Republic of Korea will pay the required fee in two instalments due to constraints created by changes in budget distribution within the Ministry of Oceans and Fisheries. As for 30 January 2026, the applicant has paid the first instalment in November 2025 and is expected to pay the second instalment in February 2026.

² Recommendations for the guidance of contractors on the content, format and structure of annual reports ([ISBA/21/LTC/15/Rev.1](#)); recommendations for the guidance of contractors for the reporting of actual and direct exploration expenditure ([ISBA/21/LTC/11](#)); recommendations for the guidance of contractors and sponsoring States relating to training programmes under plans of work for exploration ([ISBA/19/LTC/14/Rev.1](#)); and recommendations for the guidance of contractors for the assessment of the possible environmental impacts arising from exploration for marine minerals in the Area ([ISBA/25/LTC/6/Rev.3](#)).

the plan of work and compliance with the standard clauses of the contract, in accordance with paragraph 9 of the annex to decision [ISBA/21/C/19](#).

6. To facilitate the submission of complete and detailed applications for extension of exploration contracts, the Commission prepared a guidance note for contractors on the preparation of an application for extension of exploration contracts. The guidance document was circulated by the secretariat to all contractors on 8 October 2025.

IV. Report and recommendations of the Legal and Technical Commission

7. Pursuant to paragraph 9 of section 1 of the annex to the agreement and paragraph 12 of the annex to decision [ISBA/21/C/19](#), the Commission will recommend approval of the application for extension of the contract for exploration if it considers that the contractor has made efforts in good faith to comply with the requirements of the contract but, for reasons beyond its control, has been unable to complete the preparatory work necessary for proceeding to the exploitation stage or if the prevailing economic circumstances do not justify proceeding to that stage.

8. The Commission is required to submit its report and recommendations on each application to the Council at the first possible opportunity, taking into account the schedule of meetings of the Authority. The Council is scheduled to meet in March and July 2026.

9. Following its previous practice regarding the consideration of complex legal and technical matters, the Commission may wish to consider dividing itself into working groups that would report to the Commission. The groups could be assigned to work on different applications, or each group could be tasked with a preliminary review of thematic aspects, such as legal, financial, training, technological, environmental or geological aspects.

Applications for extension of approved plans of work for exploration as at 30 January 2026

<i>Entity</i>	<i>Sponsoring State or States</i>	<i>Extension application deadline</i>	<i>Date of receipt of application</i>	<i>Duration of extension requested</i>	<i>Date of notification to sponsoring State or States</i>	<i>Date of notification to members of the International Seabed Authority</i>	<i>Date of notification to members of the Legal and Technical Commission</i>	<i>Date of expiry of the contract ^(a) or extension agreement ^(b)</i>
1 Interoceanmetal Joint Organization	Bulgaria, Cuba, Czechia, Poland, Russian Federation and Slovakia	28 September 2025	17 September 2025	Five years	30 September 2025	30 September 2025	30 September 2025	28 March 2026 ^b
2 JSC Yuzhmorgeologiya	Russian Federation	28 September 2025	26 September 2025	Five years	10 October 2025	10 October 2025	10 October 2025	28 March 2026 ^b
3 Government of the Republic of Korea	–	26 October 2025	21 October 2025	Five years	n/a	15 January 2026	15 January 2026	26 April 2026 ^b
4 China Ocean Mineral Resources Research and Development Association	China	21 November 2025	21 November 2025	Five years	27 November 2025	27 November 2025	27 November 2025	21 May 2026 ^b
5 Deep Ocean Resources Development Co. Ltd.	Japan	19 December 2025	9 December 2025	Five years	19 December 2025	19 December 2025	19 December 2025	19 June 2026 ^b
6 Institut français de recherche pour l'exploitation de la mer	France	19 December 2025	16 December 2025	Five years	12 January 2026	12 January 2026	12 January 2026	19 June 2026 ^b
7. Federal Institute for Geosciences and Natural Resources	Germany	18 January 2026	19 December 2025	Five years	12 January 2026	12 January 2026	12 January 2026	18 July 2026 ^b
8. Nauru Ocean Resources Inc	Nauru	21 January 2026	19 January 2026	Five years	21 January 2026	21 January 2026	21 January 2026	21 July 2026 ^a