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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 by the Secretary-General

Addendum

I. Introduction

1. The present addendum should be read in conjunction with the report prepared for consideration by the Council during the first part of the thirty-first session in March 2026 (ISBA/31/C/3), which covered the period to 31 January 2026. The addendum provides an update as at 25 May 2026.

II. Status of contracts for exploration and related matters

Environmental impact statement submitted by the Federal Institute for Geosciences and Natural Resources

2. On 9 February 2026, the Federal Institute for Geosciences and Natural Resources (BGR) submitted an updated environmental impact statement to the Secretary-General in relation to the proposed small-scale testing of an artificial intelligence-controlled nodule collector, Eureka III, to be conducted within its polymetallic nodules contract area in the Clarion-Clipperton Zone in the third quarter of 2027. It should be recalled that BGR had initially submitted an environmental impact statement on 27 December 2024 for a proposed test scheduled for the first quarter of 2026. However, due to delays in the development and readiness of the Eureka III system, the test has been postponed to 2027 or 2028.



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

3. In accordance with the relevant regulations on prospecting and exploration and the standard clauses of contracts for exploration,¹ the contractor and the Secretary-General are to undertake jointly a periodic review of the implementation of a plan of work for exploration every five years.

4. During the review, the Secretary-General may request the contractor to submit additional data and information as may be necessary for the purposes of the review. The contractor is thereafter required to make 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 outcomes of the periodic review process to the Legal and Technical Commission and the Council.

5. To give effect to those provisions, the Secretary-General consults with the Legal and Technical Commission on the content of reports submitted by contractors under the periodic review. Comments and suggestions made by the Commission are taken into account in discussions between the Secretary-General and the contractors, and adjustments are made to the proposed programme of activities as necessary. The agreed programmes of activities and the training programmes for the next five-year period are then incorporated into the contracts as revised schedules 2 and 3, respectively.

6. For the period under review, three periodic review reports on the implementation of approved plans of work for exploration were received, from UK Seabed Resources Ltd. (UKSR), Blue Minerals Jamaica Ltd. (BMJ) (resubmission) and Cook Islands Investment Corporation (CIIC).

7. The periodic review report for the second five-year period of the second contract of UKSR was due on 29 December 2025. On 13 February 2026, UKSR submitted to the Secretary-General a draft periodic review report covering the second five-year period, from 29 March 2021 to 28 March 2026. The contractor submitted its final report on 16 March 2026.

8. On 31 March 2026, BMJ submitted to the Secretary-General a revised periodic review report for the first five-year period of its contract for exploration for polymetallic nodules, from 4 April 2021 to 3 April 2026. The contractor had submitted an initial report on 31 December 2025.

9. On 15 April 2026, CIIC submitted its second five-year periodic review report for its contract for exploration for polymetallic nodules. The report covers the period from 15 July 2021 to 14 July 2026.

10. All three reports are under evaluation by the secretariat.

¹ 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.

IV. Extensions of contracts for exploration²

11. The Council will recall that six of the eight applications for contract extensions for exploration of polymetallic nodules were approved by the Council during the first part of the thirty-first session.

12. The approved applications were from the following contractors: Interoceanmetal Joint Organization, JSC Yuzhmorgeologiya, the Government of the Republic of Korea, China Ocean Mineral Resources Research and Development Association (COMRA), Deep Ocean Resources Development Co. Ltd. and the Institut français de recherche pour l'exploitation de la mer.³ The extension agreements are expected to be ready for signature by the end of July 2026.

13. During the second part of the thirty-first session of the Council, the Legal and Technical Commission, continuing its consideration of applications in order of receipt, will evaluate the two remaining applications.

14. In addition, on 15 May 2026, COMRA submitted an application for an extension of its contract for exploration for polymetallic sulphides. The full application fee was paid on 13 May and received by the secretariat on 19 May 2026. During the second part of the thirty-first session of the Council, the Legal and Technical Commission will consider the application.

V. Status of relinquishment

15. Contractors are required to relinquish parts of the areas allocated for exploration in accordance with the provisions of the regulations on prospecting and exploration.⁴ The mechanisms for relinquishing the area are guided by recommendations issued by the Legal and Technical Commission ([ISBA/25/LTC/8](#)), which are used by the contractors to prepare their relinquishment reports and maps, and by the secretariat to evaluate the contractors' reports.

16. Through its decision [ISBA/27/C/19](#) of 30 March 2022, the Council granted the request by BGR for the deferral of the schedule of relinquishment of areas under its contract for exploration for polymetallic sulphides by one year. Accordingly, the schedule for the first relinquishment of at least 50 per cent of the original contract area allocated was set for 6 May 2024 and the second relinquishment of at least 75 per cent of the original contract area allocated to it for 6 May 2026. Consequently, in May 2026, BGR submitted to the Secretary-General a report pertaining to the second relinquishment. BGR has now relinquished 75 per cent of its original allocated area and has therefore completed its relinquishment obligation pursuant to regulation 27 (2) of the regulations on prospecting and exploration for polymetallic sulphides in the Area (see [ISBA/31/LTC/7](#)).

² See [ISBA/31/LTC/3/Rev.1](#).

³ Interoceanmetal Joint Organization ([ISBA/31/C/12](#)), JSC Yuzhmorgeologiya ([ISBA/31/C/13](#)), Government of the Republic of Korea ([ISBA/31/C/14](#)), China Ocean Mineral Resources Research and Development Association ([ISBA/31/C/15](#)), Deep Ocean Resources Development Co. Ltd. ([ISBA/31/C/16](#)) and Institut français de recherche pour l'exploitation de la mer ([ISBA/31/C/17](#)).

⁴ See regulation 25 of the regulations on prospecting and exploration for polymetallic nodules in the Area ([ISBA/19/C/17](#)), regulation 27 of the regulations on prospecting and exploration for polymetallic sulphides in the Area ([ISBA/16/A/12/Rev.1](#), annex) and regulation 27 of the regulations on prospecting and exploration for cobalt-rich ferromanganese crusts in the Area ([ISBA/18/A/11](#), annex).

17. The Government of the Republic of Korea signed its contract for exploration for cobalt-rich ferromanganese crusts with the Authority on 27 March 2018. Pursuant to the schedule for fulfilling relinquishment obligations under regulation 27 (1) of the regulations on prospecting and exploration for cobalt-rich ferromanganese crusts in the Area, the contractor is required to relinquish at least one third of its original area allocated by 26 March 2026 (i.e. the end of the eight year) and at least two thirds by 26 March 2028 (i.e. the end of the tenth year). Accordingly, in March 2026, the Government of the Republic of Korea submitted to the Secretary-General a report on the relinquishment of one third of its original area allocated under the contract for exploration for cobalt-rich ferromanganese crusts (see [ISBA/31/LTC/6](#)).

VI. Recommendation

18. The Council is invited to take note of the present report.
