



Council

Advance Unedited Version
10 July 2026

English only

Thirty-first session

Council session, part II

Kingston, 13–24 July 2026

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 one-third of the area allocated to the Government of the Republic of Korea 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 Government of the Republic of Korea and the International Seabed Authority was signed on 27 March 2018. The area under the contract covers 3,000 km².
2. 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 ([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 and by the end of the tenth year, at least two thirds of the original area allocated to it.
3. Accordingly, on 26 March 2026, the Republic of Korea submitted cartographic material that included shapefiles of relinquished and remaining cells, an overview map showing the remaining exploration areas, a list of relinquished cells and maps of the relinquished areas.
4. During the second part of the thirty-first session, held from 29 June to 10 July 2026, on the basis of the technical review carried out by the secretariat, the Legal and Technical Commission noted that the contractor had fulfilled the first part of the schedule of relinquishment obligations pursuant to regulation 27 (1) of the regulations on prospecting and exploration for cobalt-rich ferromanganese crusts in the Area 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](#)).

5. The relinquished area, the maps of which are available at <https://isa.org.jm/wp-content/uploads/2026/05/Relinquishment-Map-of-one-third-of-the-original-area.pdf>, consists of 1 km x 1 km cells within 150 original blocks varying from 4 to 156 in each cluster. The lowest number of cells (42) was relinquished in KC-3 cluster, and the most in KC-5 cluster (198). A total of 1,000 cells were relinquished from 150 blocks within nine clusters.
6. The relinquished area has reverted to the Area.
7. The Council is invited to take note of the present note.
