



Council

Advance Unedited Version
10 July 2026

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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 75 per cent of the area allocated to the Federal Institute for Geosciences and Natural Resources under the contract for exploration for polymetallic sulphides signed with the International Seabed Authority

Note by the secretariat

1. The contract for exploration for polymetallic sulphides between the Federal Institute for Geoscience and Natural Resources (BGR) and the International Seabed Authority was signed on 6 May 2015. The area under the contract covers 10,000 km².
2. Pursuant to the schedule for fulfilling relinquishment obligations in regulation 27 (2) of the regulations on prospecting and exploration for polymetallic sulphides in the Area ([ISBA/16/A/12/Rev.1](#), annex), by the end of the eighth year from the date of the contract, the contractor shall have relinquished at least 50 per cent of the original area allocated to it, and by the end of the tenth year, at least 75 per cent of the original area.
3. In accordance with the regulations, the contractor was required to relinquish at least 50 per cent of its allocated area by 6 May 2023 (i.e. the end of the eighth year). In this regard, it is recalled that on 15 December 2020 and 18 March 2022, BGR had requested to defer its scheduled relinquishment due to the impacts of the coronavirus disease (COVID-19) pandemic on its operational activities (see [ISBA/27/LTC/4](#)), whereupon the Council, acting upon the recommendation by the Commission, decided to defer the schedule of the relinquishments by one year, to 6 May 2024 and 6 May 2026, respectively (see [ISBA/27/C/19](#)).

4. By a letter dated 16 April 2024, the contractor submitted to the Secretary-General a report on the relinquishment of 50 per cent of the original area allocated to it under the exploration contract for polymetallic sulphides, including a list of relinquished cells and maps of the relinquished areas. The Council, acting on the recommendation of the Legal and Technical Commission, took note that BGR had fulfilled the first part of the schedule of relinquishment obligations pursuant to regulation 27 (1). The relinquished area reverted to the Area.
 5. Pursuant to regulation 27 (1) and the decision of the Council on the deferral, BGR was required to relinquish at least 75 per cent of the original area allocated to it by 6 May 2026 (i.e. the end of the tenth year). On 6 May 2026, the contractor submitted to the Secretary-General cartographic material that included shapefiles of relinquished and remaining cells and an overview map with remaining exploration areas, a list of relinquished cells and maps of the relinquished areas.
 6. 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 second part of the schedule of relinquishment obligations pursuant to regulation 27 (2) of the regulations on prospecting and exploration for polymetallic sulphides 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](#)).
 7. The relinquished area, the maps of which are available at <https://isa.org.jm/wp-content/uploads/2026/05/Relinquishment-map-BGR-.pdf>, consists of 1 km x 1 km cells within 50 blocks varying from 0–900 in each cluster. A total of 2,500 cells were relinquished from 50 blocks within nine clusters.
 8. The relinquished area has reverted to the Area.
 9. The Council is invited to take note of the present note.
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