



**MINISTERIO
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EXTERIORES**



Workshop on the Participation of LLDCs in the Regime of the Area and the Benefit-Sharing Mechanism under UNCLOS



13 - 15 October 2026



**Santa Cruz de la Sierra,
Plurinational State of Bolivia**





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THE ROLE OF THE SPONSORING STATE IN ACTIVITIES IN THE AREA: THE EXPERIENCE OF THE RUSSIAN FEDERATION

Global Workshop on the Participation of Landlocked Developing Countries in the Regime of the Area and the Benefit-Sharing Mechanism under UNCLOS

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Outline



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01

Legal framework

UNCLOS, the 1994 Agreement,
ISA Regulations, the 2011
Advisory Opinion

02

Russian experience

Four contracts, three models of
State participation, sponsor
functions in practice

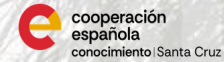
03

Lessons for LLDCs

What a landlocked State needs
in order to become a
sponsoring State

Common heritage of mankind

The absence of a coastline does not limit a State's rights in the Area



Art. 136

The Area and its resources are the common heritage of mankind

Art. 140

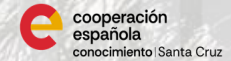
Activities in the Area are carried out for the benefit of mankind as a whole, irrespective of the geographical location of States, coastal or land-locked

Art. 141

The Area is open to use exclusively for peaceful purposes by all States without discrimination

Further developed in: art. 148 — effective participation of developing States, with due regard to the special needs of land-locked States; art. 152 — non-discrimination by the Authority

Sponsorship: the legal framework



Art. 139

Responsibility to ensure

States ensure that activities in the Area conform to Part XI

Art. 153(2)(b)

Sponsorship required

Natural and juridical persons may act only when sponsored by a State Party

Annex III, art. 4(3)

Multiple sponsors

Where an applicant has more than one nationality, all States Parties involved sponsor it

Annex III, art. 4(4)

Exemption from liability

Where laws, regulations and administrative measures reasonably appropriate for securing compliance are adopted

ISA Regulations on prospecting and exploration

Nodules ISBA/19/C/17 (2013)

Sulphides ISBA/16/A/12/Rev.1 (2010)

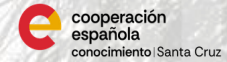
Crusts ISBA/18/A/11 (2012)

The 1994 Agreement relating to the Implementation of Part XI retains the sponsorship system and is applied together with Part XI as a single instrument

Sources: UNCLOS, arts. 139, 153; Annex III, art. 4; 1994 Agreement; ISBA/19/C/17; ISBA/16/A/12/Rev.1; ISBA/18/A/11

The 2011 ITLOS Advisory Opinion

The obligation “to ensure” is an obligation of conduct, not of result



paras. 110–111 **Due diligence**

Adopt all appropriate measures and enforce them

paras. 121–122 **Direct obligations**

Assisting the Authority, precautionary approach, best environmental practices, EIA

para. 118 **National measures**

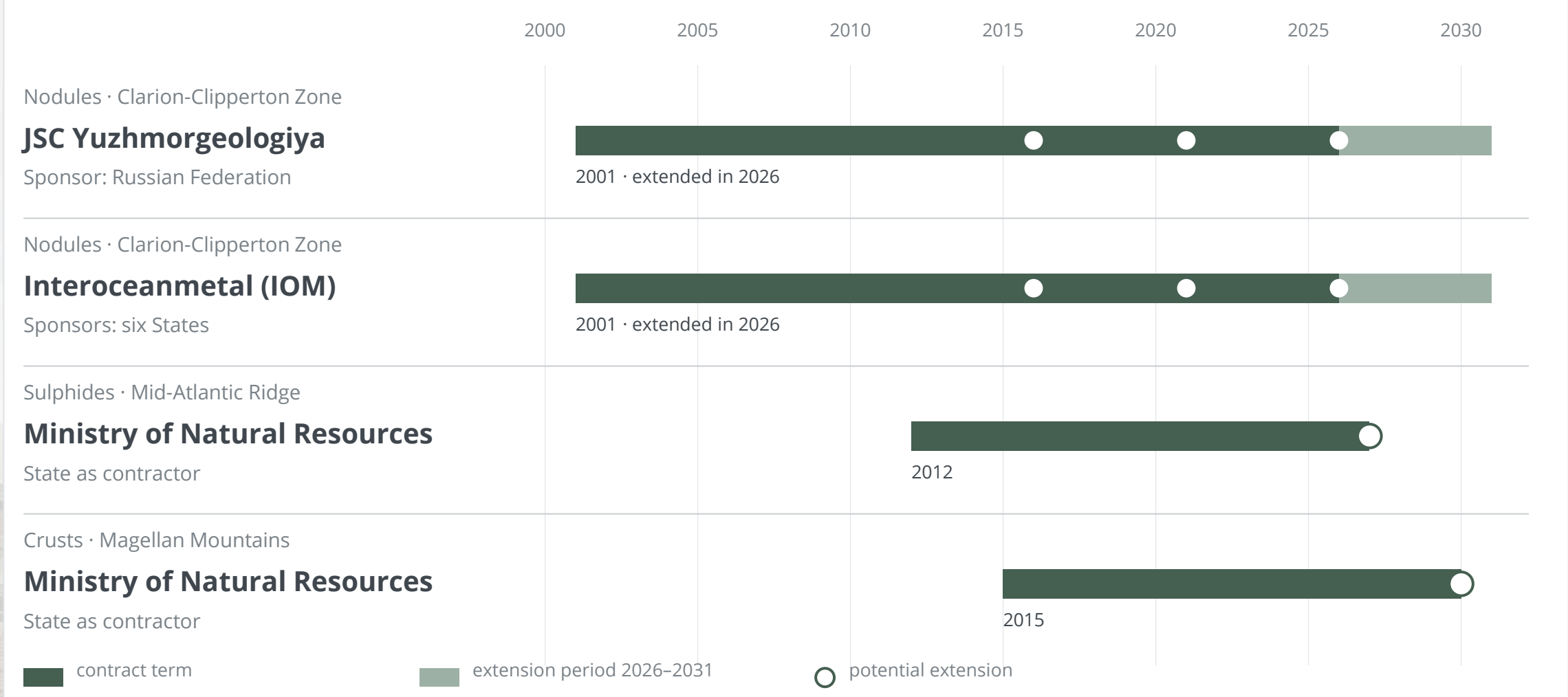
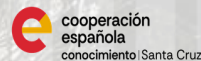
Measures are adopted within the legal system of the sponsoring State

paras. 158–159 **Equal obligations**

Same standards for developed and developing sponsors — no “sponsoring States of convenience”

para. 192 Where there are multiple sponsoring States, their liability is joint and several, unless otherwise provided in the Regulations of the Authority

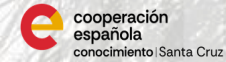
Four exploration contracts



Sources: ISBA/31/C/12 and ISBA/31/C/13 (Council decisions of 18 March 2026); ISBA/21/C/19 (extension procedure); 1994 Agreement, Annex, sect. 1, para. 9

Three models of State participation

One set of obligations under Part XI — three ways of fulfilling it



1

Sponsorship of a State-owned company

JSC Yuzhmorgeologiya

The State is the sponsor; the company is the contractor and party to the contract with the Authority

2

The State as contractor

Ministry of Natural Resources · sulphides, crusts

Direct State control at every stage and sustainable funding of plans of work

3

Collective sponsorship

Interoceanmetal (IOM)

Bulgaria, Cuba, Czech Republic, Poland, Russian Federation, Slovakia. The only ISA contract with six sponsors

Established in 1987; pioneer investor

Organization in the Russian Federation



Ministry of Foreign Affairs

Permanent representation to the Authority

Ministry of Natural Resources and Environment

Sets the direction of activities, interacts with the Authority, heads delegations to ISA sessions

Specialized research institutions

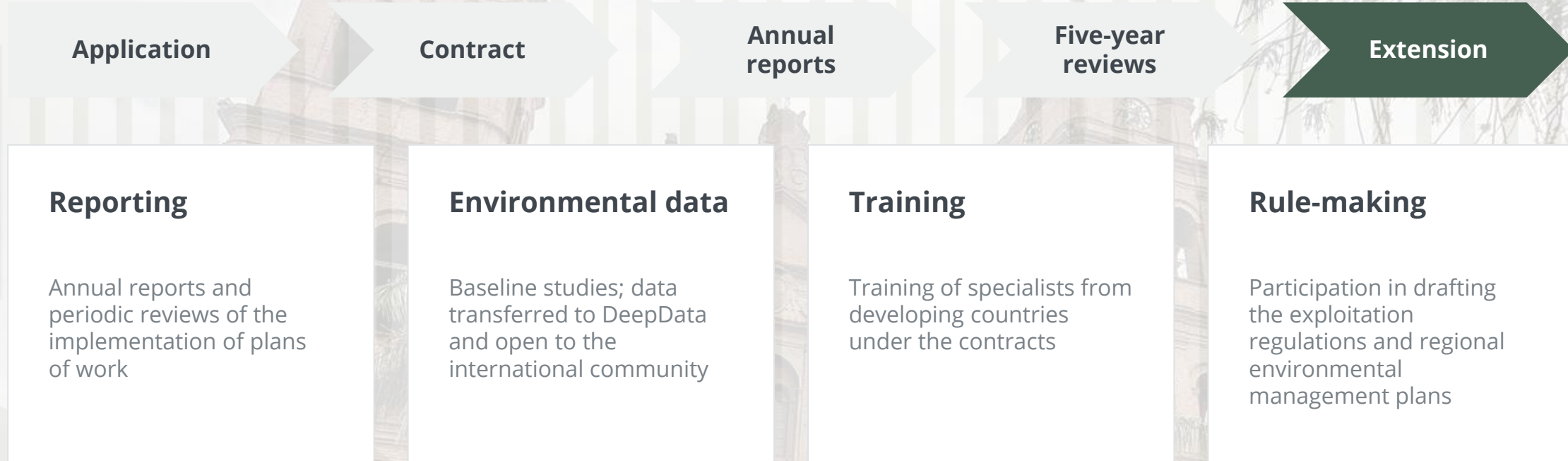
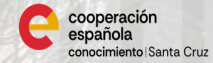
Scientific and methodological support

Experienced Russian geological exploration organizations

Field work

Legal basis: international treaties form part of Russia's legal system; sponsor obligations are fulfilled through contractual terms and national regulatory and administrative mechanisms; activities in the Area are a national priority of maritime activities

Sponsor functions: throughout the contract term



2026: extension of the Yuzhmorgeologiya and Interoceanmetal contracts — the sponsors confirmed sponsorship for the new period and ensured reporting on the work performed

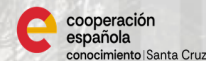
Lessons for landlocked developing countries



1	Rights	The absence of a coastline does not limit rights in the Area	arts. 140, 141, 148, 152
2	Legislation	Establishment of a system of administrative measures and departmental interaction to ensure proper control over the contractor	Annex III, art. 4(4)
3	Institutions	Competent authority, contractor vetting, effective control, financial guarantees	art. 153(2)(b)
4	Pooling efforts	Joint sponsorship shares costs and expertise	Annex III, art. 4(3)
5	Partnerships	Training, research and data exchange build capacity before sponsorship	arts. 143, 144, 148

Benefit-sharing: a reliable system of control strengthens the legitimacy of future revenues shared for the benefit of all mankind

Conclusion



01 Sponsorship

an obligation of due diligence throughout the contract term

02 Three models

sponsorship of a company, the State as contractor, collective sponsorship

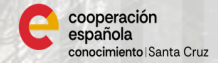
03 Legislation · institutions · partnerships

key conditions for LLDC participation

The Russian Federation is open to sharing experience and to cooperation within the ISA, including on capacity-building

Thank you for your attention

Sources



International treaties

United Nations Convention on the Law of the Sea, 1982: arts. 136, 139–141, 143, 144, 148, 152, 153; Annex III, art. 4 (UNTS, vol. 1833, No. 31363)

Agreement relating to the Implementation of Part XI of UNCLOS, 1994; Annex, sect. 1, para. 9 (UNTS, vol. 1836, No. 31364)

International case law

ITLOS, Seabed Disputes Chamber. Responsibilities and obligations of States with respect to activities in the Area, Advisory Opinion of 1 February 2011, Case No. 17 (ITLOS Reports 2011, p. 10)

National law

Constitution of the Russian Federation, art. 15(4)

Strategic planning documents on maritime activities

ISA instruments and documents

ISBA/19/C/17 — Regulations on Prospecting and Exploration for Polymetallic Nodules (2013)

ISBA/16/A/12/Rev.1 — Regulations on Prospecting and Exploration for Polymetallic Sulphides (2010)

ISBA/18/A/11 — Regulations on Prospecting and Exploration for Cobalt-rich Ferromanganese Crusts (2012)

ISBA/21/C/19 — Procedures and criteria for the extension of approved plans of work for exploration (2015)

ISBA/31/C/12, ISBA/31/C/13 — Council decisions on the extension of the Interoceanmetal and Yuzhmorgeologiya contracts (18 March 2026)

ISBA/21/LTC/15/Rev.1 — LTC recommendations on contractors' annual reports

ISBA/19/LTC/14/Rev.1 — LTC recommendations on training programmes
DeepData database; ISA database of national legislation (isa.org.jm)