



## Council

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## Report of the Chairman of the Legal and Technical Commission on the work of the Commission during the seventh session

1. The Legal and Technical Commission held five meetings during the seventh session of the Authority. The Commission re-elected Inge Zaamwani (Namibia) as Chairman and Boris Winterhalter (Finland) as Vice-Chairman.

2. The Commission considered the following items:

(a) Draft recommendations for the guidance of contractors for the assessment of the possible environmental impacts arising from exploration for polymetallic nodules in the Area (ISBA/7/LTC/1);

(b) Report on the final relinquishment of the pioneer area submitted by Interoceanmetal Joint Organization (ISBA/7/LTC/R.1);

(c) Periodic report on the activities of India for the period from 1 January to 31 December 2000 (ISBA/7/LTC/R.2);

(d) Report on training programmes under resolution II of the Third United Nations Conference on the Law of the Sea (ISBA/7/LTC/2);

(e) Report on resource assessment of the reserved areas of the Authority in the Pacific and Indian Oceans.

3. At its 1st meeting the Commission began its consideration of the draft recommendations for the guidance of contractors for the assessment of the possible environmental impacts arising from exploration for polymetallic nodules in the Area, prepared by the Secretariat in the light of the

discussions that had taken place during the meetings of the Commission in 2000 and taking into account comments submitted by individual members of the Commission.

4. The Commission further revised the document and made technical adjustments to the draft recommendations. The Commission also revised the explanatory commentary contained in the annex to the document in the light of the preliminary outcomes and recommendations of the Authority's workshop on standardization of environmental data, which was held from 25 to 29 June 2001. On 4 July 2001, the Commission adopted the recommendations for guidance and decided to issue them pursuant to regulation 38 of the Regulations for Prospecting and Exploration for Polymetallic Nodules in the Area (ISBA/6/A/18).

5. The recommendations for guidance (ISBA/7/LTC/1/Rev.1) describe the procedures to be followed in the acquisition of baseline data and the monitoring to be performed during and after any activities in the exploration area with potential to cause serious harm to the environment. Their specific purposes are:

(a) To define the biological, chemical, geological and physical components to be measured and the procedures to be followed by contractors to ensure effective protection of the marine environment from harmful effects which may arise from the contractors' activities in the Area;

(b) To facilitate reporting by contractors;

(c) To provide guidance to potential contractors in preparing a plan of work for exploration for polymetallic nodules in conformity with the provisions of the Convention, the 1994 Agreement relating to the implementation of Part XI of the United Nations Convention on the Law of the Sea, and the Regulations.

6. The Commission noted with interest the preliminary outcomes of the workshop on standardization of environmental data held from 25 to 29 June 2001. It welcomed in particular the list of critical community-wide scientific questions identified by the workshop and agreed with the recommendation that the Authority should facilitate additional research programmes to address these questions, using additional resources. As proposed by the workshop, such facilitation may take the form of bringing scientists and funding agency representatives together for discussions, providing support for the writing of research proposals and convening a workshop devoted to the formulation of coordinated scientific research plans. In particular, the Commission noted the benefits of collaborative work and cooperation between contractors.

7. The Commission reviewed a report on the final relinquishment of the pioneer area submitted by Interoceanmetal Joint Organization (IOM) pursuant to resolution II. It took note of the fact that IOM had completed its obligations to relinquish parts of its pioneer area in accordance with resolution II.

8. The Commission also took note of a periodic report on the activities of the Government of India for the period from 1 January to 31 December 2000. The Commission expressed particular interest in the environmental impact assessment programme carried out by the Government of India. In addition, the Commission suggested that it would be useful in future for contractors to attend meetings of the Commission in order to present their annual reports and discuss the contents of the report with the Commission.

9. The Commission noted that, in future, reports by contractors would need to comply with the provisions of the Regulations for Prospecting and Exploration for Polymetallic Nodules in the Area and should be far more detailed than had been the practice under resolution II.

10. As requested by the Commission at its meeting in 2000, the Secretariat presented a report on the status of training carried out by registered pioneer investors since 1990. The Commission took note of the report, which it considered to be a useful basis for the consideration of future training programmes.

11. The Commission reviewed the contracts for exploration that had been signed by the Authority and six contractors, namely:

(a) China Ocean Mineral Resources Research and Development Association;

(b) Deep Ocean Resources Development Co. Ltd.;

(c) Institut Français de Recherche pour l'Exploitation de la Mer;

(d) Interoceanmetal Organization;

(e) Republic of Korea;

(f) State Enterprise Yuzhmoregeologiya.

12. The Secretariat presented a report on the outcome of its efforts to produce a resource assessment of the metals of economic interest to be found in polymetallic nodule resources in the Authority's reserved areas. The areas reserved for the conduct of activities by the Authority are to be found in the Pacific Ocean (between longitudes 118° and 115° West and latitudes 7° and 16° North) and in the central Indian Ocean (between longitudes 73° and 79° East and latitudes 10° and 17° South).

13. Following a presentation on the subject that included the steps that the Secretariat had taken to merge the six data sets provided for the Pacific Ocean and a meeting with representatives of the pioneer investors to assist the Secretariat with explanations for the discrepancies found in the data sets, the Commission discussed the report and its findings.

14. The Commission took note of the report and suggested that the Secretariat should:

(a) Request from the concerned pioneer investors any additional data and information that they may have on the reserved areas;

(b) Try to obtain data and information on the reserved areas from potential applicants;

(c) Try to obtain more information on the bathymetry of the Clarion-Clipperton Fracture Zone in the Pacific Ocean;

(d) Develop a geological model of the Clarion-Clipperton Fracture Zone in order to better understand the distribution of resources in this important geological area for nodule occurrences.

15. Finally, the Commission took note of other international issues which might affect the work of the Authority currently under discussion in other forums, such as the United Nations Informal Consultative Process established by the General Assembly in its resolution 54/33 in order to facilitate the annual review by the Assembly of developments in ocean affairs. Such issues included better coordination of certain aspects of marine scientific research, the conservation and management of genetic resources in the seabed and the establishment of marine protected areas on the high seas. The Commission stressed the need to continue to monitor those developments insofar as they had the potential to impact upon the functions and responsibilities of the Authority, as well as the need for international cooperation between the Authority and other international organizations.

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