

International Seabed Authority

Press Release



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Council (PM)

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SEABED COUNCIL COMPLETES FIRST READING OF DRAFT REGULATIONS ON POLYMETALLIC SULPHIDES

The Council of the International Seabed Authority, convening its final meeting for this session this afternoon, concluded its first reading of the draft regulations on prospecting and exploration for polymetallic sulphides in the Area with some provisions still pending.

During this session, the Council reached consensus on thirty-five of the forty-three regulations contained in the draft. The remaining eight regulations, along with the four annexes to the document, will be taken up at the next session of the Authority, scheduled to take place from 26 May to 6 June 2008.

Discussions

At this afternoon's meeting, the Council approved a complete revision of **regulation 37**, drafted by the delegations of Kenya, South Africa, Uganda and the United Kingdom. The regulation with its new title reads:

Regulation 37

Human Remains, Objects and Sites of an Archaeological or Historical Nature

"The contractor shall immediately notify the Secretary-General in writing of any finding in the exploration area of any human remains of an archaeological or historical nature, or any object or a site of similar nature and its location, including the preservation and protection measures taken. The Secretary-General shall transmit such information to the Director-General of the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization and any other competent international organization. Following the finding of any such human remains, object or site in the exploration area, and in order to avoid disturbing such human remains, object or site, no further prospecting or exploration shall take place, within a reasonable radius, until such time as the Council decides otherwise after taking

account of the views of the Director-General of the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization or any other competent international organization”.

The Council returned to **Regulation 35**, on emergency orders. Most of the discussion on this regulation has centred on the duration of temporary measures that could be taken by the Authority to prevent, contain and minimize the threat of serious damage to the marine environment. Australia’s representative, suggested further changes to paragraph 3 of its proposal to amend this regulation, as follows: “Such temporary measures shall remain in effect for no longer than 180 days or until Council decides at a regular session or a special session for that purpose and within that time frame, what measures if any, to take....”

India repeated its objections to the extended periods recommended in the Australian proposal. That delegation said it could not accept a period longer than 90 days, reminding the Council of the significant investments which would be made by contractors in their seabed mining operations. India, an investor, recommended that the regulation be bracketed to allow more time for consultation with its capital.

France, supported by Honduras and Spain, suggested that, in the light inadequate scientific and technical knowledge relating to polymetallic sulphides, the regulations should contain a review clause to take account of improved knowledge. His proposal was welcomed by Senegal and Trinidad and Tobago. The secretariat was asked to provide a draft of such a provision, taking into account the discussions in the Council.

Before the adjournment of the meeting, the Secretary General announced that the Secretariat would prepare a revised draft text of the regulations in English in time for the Assembly meeting tomorrow.

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