



Council

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**Report of the Chair of the Legal and Technical Commission on
the work of the Commission at its twenty-eighth session**

Report on the relinquishment of 75 per cent of the area allocated to the Ministry of Natural Resources and Environment of the Russian Federation under the contract for exploration for polymetallic sulphides between the Ministry and the International Seabed Authority

Note by the Secretariat

1. The contract for exploration for polymetallic sulphides between the Ministry of Natural Resources and Environment of the Russian Federation (the contractor) and the International Seabed Authority was signed on 29 October 2012. The area under the contract covers 10,000 km².
2. Pursuant to the schedule for fulfilling relinquishment obligations, as set out 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 must have relinquished at least 50 per cent of the original area allocated to it, and, by the end of the tenth year from the date of the contract, the contractor must have relinquished at least 75 per cent of the original area allocated to it.
3. Accordingly, on 7 October 2020, the contractor submitted to the Secretary-General of the Authority a report on the relinquishment of 50 per cent of the area allocated to it under the exploration contract for polymetallic sulphides, including a list of relinquished cells and maps of the relinquished area. The Council of the Authority, acting on the recommendations of the Legal and Technical Commission, noted that the contractor had fulfilled the first part of the schedule of relinquishment obligations pursuant to regulation 27 (2) (a).¹ The relinquished area reverted to the Area.

* [ISBA/28/C/L.1](#).

¹ [ISBA/26/C/41](#) and [ISBA/26/C/13/Add.1](#).



4. Pursuant to regulation 27 (2) (b), the contractor was required to relinquish at least 75 per cent of the area allocated to it by 28 October 2022. By letter dated 10 October 2022, the contractor submitted to the Secretary-General a report on the relinquishment of 75 per cent of the area allocated to it under the original contract for exploration for polymetallic sulphides, with cartographic material that included shapefiles of relinquished and remaining cells and an overview map of the remaining exploration areas.
5. During the first part of its twenty-eighth session, held from 7 to 15 March 2023, on the basis of the technical review carried out by the secretariat, the Legal and Technical Commission noted that the contractor had complied with its relinquishment obligations pursuant to the applicable regulations 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). The Commission also noted that this was the final relinquishment obligation for the contractor.
6. The total original area, the maps of which are available at <https://bit.ly/3yx81mS>, consists of 100 blocks, with each block consisting of 100 cells and each cell measuring 1 km x 1 km. The number of blocks per cluster varies from 8 to 36. After the two relinquishments, a total of 7,500 cells, comprising an area of 7,500 km², were relinquished from 10,000 cells. The remaining area under exploration covers 2,500 km².
7. The relinquished area has reverted to the Area.
8. The Council is invited to take note of the present note.
