



# Legal and Technical Commission

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## Twenty-eighth session

Legal and Technical Commission session, part II  
Kingston, 28 June–7 July 2023  
Agenda item 8

### Relinquishment of areas under contracts for exploration for polymetallic sulphides and cobalt-rich ferromanganese crusts

## Request by the Government of India to defer relinquishment of part of its contract area

### Note by the secretariat

#### I. Background

1. The contract for exploration for polymetallic sulphides between the Government of India (the contractor) and the International Seabed Authority was signed on 26 September 2016.
2. Pursuant to regulation 27 of the regulations on prospecting and exploration for polymetallic sulphides in the Area, the contractor is required to submit a first relinquishment of at least 50 per cent of the original area allocated to it by 26 September 2024, being the end of the eighth year from the date of the contract.
3. By a letter dated 11 May 2023 addressed to the Secretary-General, the contractor requested a deferment of the schedule of relinquishment to 30 September 2026 for this relinquishment.

#### II. Justification of the contractor for the deferment of relinquishment

4. The contractor explained that the coronavirus disease (COVID-19) pandemic during the period 2020 to 2022, and the recent unavoidable geopolitical situation, have severely affected its exploration activities, in particular the component related to field survey of the approved plan of work. The contractor explained that the pending survey is essential for evaluating the mineral prospect of the contract area and hence for deciding the areas to be relinquished.
5. The contractor clarified that all efforts are being made to complete the outstanding survey work and exploration activities in order to fulfil the relinquishment requirements.



6. The request by the contractor is based on paragraph 6 of regulation 27, which provides that the Council may, at the request of the contractor, and on the recommendation of the Legal and Technical Commission, in exceptional circumstances, defer the schedule of relinquishment, and that such exceptional circumstances must be determined by the Council and must include, inter alia, consideration of prevailing economic circumstances or other unforeseen exceptional circumstances arising in connection with the operational activities of the contractor.

### **III. Review by the Legal and Technical Commission**

7. Pursuant to paragraph 6 of regulation 27, the Secretary-General notified the contractor that its request would be placed on the agenda of the upcoming meeting of the Legal and Technical Commission for consideration and recommendation to the Council.

8. The Commission is invited to consider the request by the Government of India for a deferment of its relinquishment, taking into consideration the justification provided by the contractor and the situation of the COVID-19 pandemic, and to make a recommendation to the Council, as provided for in paragraph 6 of regulation 27.

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