



Workshop on the Development of a Regional Environmental Management Plan for the Area of the Indian Ocean, with a focus on the Mid-Ocean Ridges and Central Indian Ocean Basin

27 April - 1 May 2025

Qingdao, China

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Terms of Reference

The International Seabed Authority (ISA), in collaboration with the China Deep Ocean Affairs Administration, will convene an expert workshop on the development of a regional environmental management plan (REMP) for the Area of the Indian Ocean, from 27 April to 1 May 2025, with support from the First Institute of Oceanography and Second Institute of Oceanography, Ministry of Natural Resources, People's Republic of China.

Background

In line with the mandate of ISA to ensure effective protection for the marine environment from harmful effects which may arise from activities undertaken in the international seabed area (the Area), the Council of ISA, during the 24th session, took note of a strategy for the development of REMPs for key provinces in the Area where exploration activities under contracts were being carried out (ISBA/24/C/3). The Council agreed with the priority areas that had been identified on a preliminary basis as the Mid-Atlantic Ridge, the Indian Ocean triple junction ridge and nodule-bearing province, as well as the North-west Pacific and South Atlantic for seamounts (ISBA/24/C/8).

As requested by the Council, the Legal and Technical Commission (LTC) is developing a standardized procedure for the development, establishment and review of REMPs, and has outlined the technical approaches to the development and review of REMPs in its recommendations (ISBA/29/LTC/8).

This workshop will build on the results of a previous workshop held in Chennai, India, in 2023¹, and aim to further develop the scientific methodologies and evidence base to support the establishment of a REMP

¹ The report of the Chennai workshop is available at [Workshop on the development of a REMP for the Area of the Indian Ocean, with a focus on the mid-ocean ridges and central Indian Ocean basin - International Seabed Authority \(isa.org.jm\)](https://www.isa.org.jm/workshop-on-the-development-of-a-rem-p-for-the-area-of-the-indian-ocean-with-a-focus-on-the-mid-ocean-ridges-and-central-indian-ocean-basin)

for this region.

Workshop Objectives

The specific objectives of the current workshop are to:

- define the appropriate regional environmental management plan area, drawing upon information on the geology, biogeography, and oceanography of the region;
- further review and analyze environmental data, including physio-chemical oceanographic, geological and biological data, based on the overview carried out in the Chennai workshop;
- synthesize environmental data, especially ecological characteristics and patterns including faunal distribution, faunal dispersal capabilities and distances, genetic connectivity, patterns of biodiversity, community structure, and ecosystem function;
- identify and synthesize ecological proxy variables where appropriate;
- develop understanding of pressures, impacts and environmental risks;
- determine appropriate region-specific ecological objectives to guide the formulation of management measures;
- identify and describe potential area-based management tools;
- provide descriptions of areas that could be considered for protection; and
- identify knowledge gaps and propose options to address them.

The draft data report and regional environmental assessment will be updated before the workshop to incorporate new data and information published since the previous workshop held in Chennai, India, in 2023². An annotated agenda for the workshop will be available on the ISA website in due course.

Expected Outputs

A workshop report will be prepared by the designated LTC co-chairs with assistance from the Secretariat. The draft report will be circulated to workshop participants for comments and inputs, before being finalized by the workshop co-chairs. The workshop report intends to address:

- 1) review of regional environmental characteristics and regional patterns of biodiversity and/or habitats distribution;
- 2) a scientific proposal for defining geographical scope of the REMP;
- 3) approaches and supporting evidence for the identification and description of area-based management tools, including the scientific criteria, and methodologies and data for evaluating potential areas that require protection or enhanced management;
- 4) description of any draft areas identified for management consideration, and the criteria used in their specification; and
- 5) proposed priorities for future monitoring and research at the regional scale.

² Background report prepared for the Chennai workshop is available at [Workshop on the development of a REMP for the Area of the Indian Ocean, with a focus on the mid-ocean ridges and central Indian Ocean basin - International Seabed Authority \(isa.org.jm\)](https://www.isa.org.jm/workshop-on-the-development-of-a-remf-for-the-area-of-the-indian-ocean-with-a-focus-on-the-mid-ocean-ridges-and-central-indian-ocean-basin-international-seabed-authority)

The workshop report, together with the updated data report and regional environmental assessment, will be submitted to the LTC for its consideration.

The results of this workshop will provide inputs to the next REMP workshop for this region, which may focus on the policy and management related aspects of the REMP development. The combined results from the expert workshops held for this region will inform the LTC in its development of a REMP for this region.