



Commission on the Limits of the Continental Shelf

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New York, 4 October–21 November 2023

Progress of work in the Commission on the Limits of the Continental Shelf

Statement by the Chair

Summary

The present statement provides information on the work carried out during the fifty-ninth session of the Commission on the Limits of the Continental Shelf. There were nine submissions on the plan of work of the Commission for the session, by: Mauritius, in respect of the region of Rodrigues Island (partial submission); Palau, in respect of the North Area (partial amended submission); Portugal; Spain, in respect of the area of Galicia (partial submission); Trinidad and Tobago; Namibia; Brazil, in respect of the Brazilian equatorial margin (partial revised submission); the Cook Islands, concerning the Manihiki Plateau (revised submission); and Iceland, in respect of the western, southern and south-eastern parts of the Reykjanes Ridge (partial revised submission). The statement also provides information on other issues addressed during the fifty-ninth session, namely, the working conditions and workload of the Commission and the resumption of training activities.



I. Introduction

1. The Commission on the Limits of the Continental Shelf held its fifty-ninth session at Headquarters from 4 October to 21 November 2023. The session was devoted to the scientific and technical examination of submissions by the various subcommissions at the geographic information system (GIS) laboratories of the Division for Ocean Affairs and the Law of the Sea, Office of Legal Affairs of the United Nations Secretariat. The Commission also held meetings of all of its members for the exchange of views on general and scientific topics, as well as other matters concerning specific submissions.

2. The following members of the Commission attended the session: Adnan Rashid Nasser Al-Azri, Lawrence Asangongo Apaalse, Harald Brekke, Efren Perez Carandang, Antonio Fernando Garcez Faria, Helena Inniss, Miloud Loukili, Estevão Stefane Mahanjane, Domingos de Carvalho Viana Moreira, David Cole Mosher, Simon Njuguna, Tolojanahary Randriamiantsoa, Rajan Sivaramakrishnan, Yong Tang, Ariel Hernán Troisi, Toshitsugu Yamazaki and Gonzalo Alejandro Yáñez Carrizo.¹

3. The Commission had before it the following documents:

(a) Statement by the Chair on the progress of work in the Commission at its fifty-eighth session ([CLCS/58/2](#));

(b) Submissions made by coastal States² pursuant to article 76, paragraph 8, of the United Nations Convention on the Law of the Sea, including related communications.

II. Consideration of the submission made by Mauritius in respect of the region of Rodrigues Island³

4. The subcommission, chaired by Mr. Yáñez, met from 4 to 18 October. During that period, it continued the main scientific and technical examination of the submission.

5. The subcommission held two meetings with the delegation, during which the delegation presented its response to the requests made by the subcommission at the fifty-eighth session, and presented preliminary observations thereon. At the end of the session, the subcommission transmitted a communication to the delegation setting out further observations and requests for additional data and information and inviting the delegation to meet with the subcommission at the sixtieth session.

6. The members of the subcommission will continue to work individually on the submission during the intersessional period.

7. The meetings of the subcommission during the sixtieth session will be held from 21 to 23 February and from 4 to 8 March 2024.

¹ Aldino Manuel dos Santos de Campos and Ivan F. Glumov did not attend the session. Mr. Al-Azri attended the session from 9 October to 17 November; Mr. Njuguna attended the session from 6 October; Mr. Tang attended the session from 6 to 31 October; Messrs. Brekke and Mosher attended the session from 9 October; and Mr. Moreira attended the session from 25 October.

² For a full list of submissions, see www.un.org/Depts/los/clcs_new/commission_submissions.htm.

³ Submission made on 6 May 2009. Available at www.un.org/Depts/los/clcs_new/submissions_files/submission_mus_36_2009.htm.

III. Consideration of the partial amended submission made by Palau in respect of the North Area⁴

8. The subcommission, chaired by Mr. Troisi, met from 4 to 18 October. During that period, it continued the main scientific and technical examination of the submission.

9. No meetings were held with the delegation. At the end of the session, the subcommission transmitted a communication to the delegation containing views and preliminary conclusions relating to the submission.

10. The subcommission decided that its members would continue to work individually on the submission during the intersessional period.

11. The meetings of the subcommission during the sixtieth session will be held from 21 to 23 February and from 4 to 8 March 2024.

IV. Consideration of the submission made by Portugal⁵

12. The subcommission, chaired by Ms. Inniss, met from 19 October to 2 November. During that period, it continued the main scientific and technical examination of the submission.

13. Three meetings were held with the delegation, during which the subcommission and the delegation presented their views on the submission. The delegation transmitted additional data and information during the session. At the end of the session, the subcommission transmitted a communication to the delegation conveying preliminary views of the subcommission on the data and information transmitted by the delegation during the session and inviting the delegation to meet with the subcommission at the sixtieth session.

14. The subcommission decided that its members would continue to work individually on the submission during the intersessional period.

15. The meetings of the subcommission during the sixtieth session will be held from 8 to 20 February 2024.

V. Consideration of the partial submission made by Spain in respect of the area of Galicia⁶

16. The subcommission, chaired by Mr. Mosher, met from 7 to 21 November 2023. During that period, it continued the main scientific and technical examination of the submission.

17. The subcommission held two meetings with the delegation, during which the delegation and the subcommission presented their views on the submission. At the end of the session, the subcommission transmitted a communication to the delegation containing further observations and requests for information and clarifications.

⁴ Submission made on 8 May 2009 and amended on 26 October 2017. Available at www.un.org/depts/los/clcs_new/submissions_files/submission_plw_41_2009.htm.

⁵ Submission made on 11 May 2009 and amended on 1 August 2017. Available at www.un.org/depts/los/clcs_new/submissions_files/submission_prt_44_2009.htm.

⁶ Submission made on 11 May 2009. Available at www.un.org/depts/los/clcs_new/submissions_files/submission_esp_47_2009.htm.

18. The subcommission decided that its members would continue to work on the submission during the intersessional period.

19. The meetings of the subcommission during the sixtieth session will be held from 22 to 26 January and from 5 to 7 February 2024.

VI. Consideration of the submission made by Trinidad and Tobago⁷

20. The subcommission, chaired by Mr. Brekke, met from 7 to 21 November 2023. During that period, it continued the main scientific and technical examination of the submission, focusing on the data and information submitted by the delegation in response to the requests made by the subcommission at the fifty-eighth session.

21. The subcommission held two meetings with the delegation, during which the subcommission and the delegation presented their views on the submission. The subcommission made additional requests for clarification and the delegation transmitted further data and information. At the end of the session, the subcommission transmitted a communication to the delegation conveying additional preliminary observations and requests for further clarification and inviting the delegation to meet with the subcommission at the sixtieth session.

22. The subcommission decided that its members would continue to work individually on the submission during the intersessional period.

23. The meetings of the subcommission during the sixtieth session will be held from 22 to 26 January and from 5 to 7 February 2024.

VII. Consideration of the submission made by Namibia⁸

24. The subcommission, chaired by Mr. Mahanjane, met from 19 October to 2 November. During that period, it continued the main scientific and technical examination of the submission.

25. The subcommission held three meetings with the delegation, during which the delegation and subcommission presented their views on the data and information submitted by the delegation in response to the requests made by the subcommission at the fifty-eighth and fifty-ninth sessions. At the end of the session, the subcommission transmitted a communication to the delegation containing some views and observations and requests for additional data and information and inviting the delegation to meet with the subcommission at the sixtieth session.

26. The subcommission decided that its members would continue to work individually on the submission during the intersessional period.

27. It was decided that the meetings of the subcommission during the sixtieth session would be held from 8 to 20 February 2024.

⁷ Submission made on 12 May 2009. Available at www.un.org/depts/los/clcs_new/submissions_files/submission_tto_49_2009.htm.

⁸ Submission made on 12 May 2009. Available at www.un.org/depts/los/clcs_new/submissions_files/submission_nam_50_2009.htm.

VIII. Consideration of revised submissions

A. Consideration of the partial revised submission made by Brazil in respect of the Brazilian equatorial margin⁹

28. The subcommission, chaired by Mr. Yamazaki, met from 19 October to 2 November. During that period, it continued the main scientific and technical examination of the submission.

29. The subcommission held two meetings with the delegation, during which the delegation presented additional data and information in response to requests from the subcommission and the subcommission presented further observations and requests for clarification. At the end of the session, the subcommission transmitted a communication to the delegation setting out further preliminary observations and requests for additional data and information and inviting the delegation to meet with the subcommission at the sixtieth session.

30. The subcommission decided that its members would continue to work individually on the submission during the intersessional period.

31. The meetings of the subcommission during the sixtieth session will be held from 8 to 20 February 2024.

B. Consideration of the revised submission made by the Cook Islands concerning the Manihiki Plateau¹⁰

32. The subcommission, chaired by Mr. Mosher, met from 4 to 18 October. During that period, it continued the main scientific and technical examination of the revised submission.

33. The subcommission held two meetings with the delegation, during which the subcommission presented its views and made requests for clarification and the delegation provided additional information in reply to the requests for clarification. At the end of the session, the subcommission transmitted a communication to the delegation summarizing the results of its analyses and interactions with the delegation, requesting additional data and information, and inviting the delegation to meet with the subcommission at the sixtieth session.

34. The subcommission decided that its members would continue to work individually on the submission during the intersessional period.

35. It was decided that the meetings of the subcommission during the sixtieth session would be held from 21 to 23 February and from 4 to 8 March 2024.

⁹ Submission made on 8 September 2017. Available at www.un.org/depts/los/clcs_new/submissions_files/submission_bra_rev2.htm.

¹⁰ Submission made on 3 December 2021. Available at www.un.org/depts/los/clcs_new/submissions_files/submission_cok_23_2021.htm.

C. Consideration of the partial revised submission made by Iceland in respect of the western, southern and south-eastern parts of the Reykjanes Ridge¹¹

36. The subcommission, chaired by Mr. Garcez, met from 7 to 21 November 2023. During that period, it continued the main scientific and technical examination of the submission.

37. The subcommission held two meetings with the delegation. Following a standard introductory presentation by the subcommission on the procedure and common practices for the consideration of a submission by a subcommission, the delegation presented its response to the requests made by the subcommission at the conclusion of the fifty-eighth session and the subcommission presented preliminary observations thereon. At the end of the session, the subcommission transmitted a communication to the delegation, containing further requests for clarification and inviting the delegation to meet with the subcommission at the sixtieth session.

38. The subcommission decided that its members would continue to work individually on the submission during the intersessional period.

39. The meetings of the subcommission during the sixtieth session will be held from 22 to 26 January and from 5 to 7 February 2024.

IX. Other matters

Trust funds

40. The secretariat informed the members of the Commission about the status of the voluntary trust fund for the purpose of defraying the cost of participation of the members of the Commission from developing States in its meetings. Since the fifty-eighth session, contributions had been received from Canada, China, Spain and the United States of America. As at 15 November 2023, the trust fund had an approximate balance of \$2,015,000. For the fifty-eighth session, financial assistance had been provided to nine members, for a total of some \$252,000, inclusive of programme support costs. For the current session, approximately the same amount, inclusive of programme support costs, was being provided to nine members.

Workshops

41. Three half-day meetings of all members of the Commission were held for the exchange of views on general scientific and procedural topics, as well as specific topics, namely geochemistry, residual bathymetry and seismic velocity analysis.

Working group on working methods and technical needs of the Commission

42. The open-ended working group on working methods and technical needs of the Commission discussed the working conditions and workload of the Commission as well as the need for a revision of the existing training materials.

43. In connection with the working conditions and workload of the Commission, members recalled the relevant requests by the Meeting of States Parties to the United Nations Convention on the Law of the Sea¹² and the General Assembly,¹³ as well as

¹¹ Submission made on 31 March 2021. Available at www.un.org/depts/los/clcs_new/submissions_files/submission_isl_rev2021.htm.

¹² See SPLOS/299; and SPLOS/303, para. 84.

¹³ General Assembly resolution 77/248, para. 99.

the previous decisions of the Commission concerning the duration and frequency of its sessions. In view of those requests, in 2012,¹⁴ the Commission had decided to increase the total number of annual workweeks from 12 to 21. In 2014,¹⁵ 2015,¹⁶ 2016,¹⁷ 2017¹⁸ and 2023¹⁹ the Commission confirmed that pattern of annual meetings, consisting of three sessions of seven weeks each, with no two sessions being sequential, and with these working arrangements to be kept under review.²⁰ Members also recalled the decision taken by the Commission at its fifty-eighth session to task the working group with conducting a comprehensive assessment of the efficiency of the current methods of work of the Commission, with a view to identifying proposals to improve it, including with regard to the total number of annual weeks allocated to its sessions.²¹ In that regard, the working group identified a variety of factors which it will bring to the attention of the Commission to facilitate its assessment of the sustainability of the existing pattern of meetings.

44. With regard to the technical needs of the Commission, members recalled that the Chair of the Commission had addressed requests for upgrades to the existing technical facilities of the Division in his letter to the President of the thirty-third Meeting of States Parties,²² which had received the support of a group of States and some delegations and had been taken note of by the Meeting.²³ The Secretariat updated the members of the Commission with regard to the progress in the acquisition of hardware. In an effort to continue improving the working conditions of the Commission, the working group addressed ergonomic issues that it will bring to the attention of the Commission together with a proposal to request new chairs for the GIS labs.

45. With regard to the updating of training materials, members recalled the extensive work that had led to the adoption in 2000 of an outline for a five-day training course for delineation of the outer limits of the continental shelf beyond 200 nautical miles and for preparation of a submission of a coastal State to the Commission on the Limits of the Continental Shelf (CLCS/24) and in 2004 of an outline of the training manual on the Preparation of a Submission to the Commission on the Limits of the Continental Shelf (CLCS/37), on the basis of which the Division, in 2007, published the *Training Manual for Delineation of the Outer Limits of the Continental Shelf Beyond 200 Nautical Miles and for Preparation of Submissions to the Commission on the Limits of the Continental Shelf*. In view of the significant technical and scientific advances achieved since the publication of those documents, as well as the development of a practice for the examination of submissions by the Commission, members agreed on the need to update the training manual and corresponding materials in order to facilitate a new cycle of regional trainings. The working group concluded that it would develop a proposal regarding the updating of training materials, which would be presented to the Commission at the sixtieth session.

¹⁴ CLCS/76, para. 11.

¹⁵ CLCS/85, para. 87.

¹⁶ CLCS/88, para. 13.

¹⁷ CLCS/95, para. 113.

¹⁸ CLCS/100, para. 14.

¹⁹ CLCS/58/2, para. 14.

²⁰ CLCS/76, para. 16; CLCS/85, para. 87; and CLCS/58/2, para. 14.

²¹ CLCS/58/2, para. 104.

²² SPLOS/33/10, annex.

²³ SPLOS/33/15, paras. 59 and 62.