



Commission on the Limits of the Continental Shelf

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New York, 6 October–23 November 2021

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-third session of the Commission on the Limits of the Continental Shelf. Ten submissions were on the plan of work of the Commission for the session. They were made by the Russian Federation in respect of the Arctic Ocean (partial revised submission); Brazil in respect of the Brazilian equatorial margin (partial revised submission); France and South Africa, jointly, in respect of the area of the Crozet Archipelago and the Prince Edward Islands; Kenya; Nigeria; Palau in respect of the North Area (partial amended submission); Sri Lanka; Portugal; Spain in respect of the area of Galicia (partial submission); and India (partial submission).



I. Introduction

1. The Commission on the Limits of the Continental Shelf held its fifty-third session at Headquarters from 6 October to 23 November 2021.¹ It was the first session of the Commission to be convened since the onset of the coronavirus disease (COVID-19) pandemic² and was held in observance of strict preventive and mitigation measures intended to prevent the spread of COVID-19. The session was devoted mostly to the technical examination of submissions at the geographic information systems laboratories located on the premises of the Division for Ocean Affairs and the Law of the Sea of the Office of Legal Affairs of the Secretariat.³

2. At the beginning of the session, members observed a minute of silence in honour of former member and former Vice-Chair, Jair Alberto Ribas Marques, following his untimely passing in Brazil on 18 July 2021.⁴ Subcommissions of which Mr. Marques had been a member also observed a minute of silence in tribute to him and in acknowledgement of his important contribution to their work. The subcommission established to consider the partial revised submission made by Brazil in respect of the Brazilian equatorial margin also observed a minute of silence.

3. During the session, the subcommissions resumed the work that had been suspended after the fifty-second session, in January-March 2020, reacquainting themselves, as necessary, with details of the submissions. From 6 to 8 October, members of the Commission held consultations to organize the work during the session, in view of the complex working arrangements imposed by the preventive measures. The subcommissions established to consider submissions met from 11 October to 19 November. On 22 and 23 November, members of the Commission held consultations concerning their future work, in particular the fifty-fourth session, especially in view of the uncertainties related to the pandemic.

4. Owing to the preventive measures and the resulting limited capacity of the laboratories and the conference room of the Division, no meetings were held between subcommissions and delegations. The following members of the Commission attended the session: Adnan Rashid Nasser Al-Azri, Lawrence Folajimi Awosika, Aldino Campos, Wanda-Lee De Landro-Clarke, Martin Vang Heinesen, Estevão Stefane Mahanjane, Marcin Mazurowski, Domingos de Carvalho Viana Moreira, David Cole Mosher, Simon Njuguna, Yong Ahn Park, Carlos Marcelo Paterlini, Clodette Raharimananirina, Toshitsugu Yamazaki and Gonzalo Alejandro Yáñez Carrizo.⁵

5. The Commission had before it the following documents:

(a) Statement by the Chair on the progress of work in the Commission at its fifty-second session (CLCS/52/2 and CLCS/52/2/Corr.1);

¹ See General Assembly resolution 75/239, para. 110. The sessions originally scheduled for January-March and July-August 2021 were not held owing to the impact of the pandemic.

² See also SPLOS/30/10/Add.1, SPLOS/30/10/Add.2, SPLOS/30/10/Add.3, SPLOS/30/10/Add.4, SPLOS/30/10/Add.5, SPLOS/30/10/Add.6, SPLOS/31/6, SPLOS/31/6/Add.1 and SPLOS/31/9, para. 44.

³ The mitigation measures, which were applied throughout the session, included physical distancing and the consequent reduction of occupancy limits in the laboratories (4 people) and in the conference room of the Division, which has less information technology equipment than the laboratories (8 people), and mandatory face coverings.

⁴ The resulting vacancy in the Commission was to be addressed at a by-election held at the resumed Meeting of States Parties, on 8 December 2021.

⁵ Mr. Mosher attended from 11 October; Mr. Njuguna from 12 October; Mr. Mahanjane from 18 October; Mr. Yamazaki from 15 October; Mr. Al-Azri from 20 October; Mr. Moreira from 4 November; Mr. Park until 19 November; and Mr. Campos until 22 November. Ivan F. Glumov, Emmanuel Kalngui, Mazlan bin Madon and Yong Tang did not attend.

(b) Submissions made by coastal States⁶ pursuant to article 76, paragraph 8, of the United Nations Convention on the Law of the Sea, including related communications.

II. Consideration of the partial revised submission made by the Russian Federation in respect of the Arctic Ocean⁷

6. The subcommission met from 11 to 15 October and from 1 to 5 November.

7. On the first day, following consultations, the subcommission elected Mr. Park to fill the Vice-Chair position formerly held by Mr. Marques and designated Mr. Awosika as Acting Chair.

8. The subcommission conducted the initial examination of the two addenda to the executive summary of the submission (concerning Gakkel Ridge and the Nansen and Amundsen basins; and Lomonosov Ridge, Alpha Ridge, Mendeleev Rise, the Amundsen and Makarov basins and the Canadian basin, respectively), which had been made to the Secretary-General on 31 March 2021. Subsequently, the subcommission transmitted to the submitting State its comments and requests for additional data and information resulting from the examination of the addenda and then resumed the main scientific and technical examination of the remainder of the submission. The subcommission further examined the additional data and information submitted during the session by the delegation in response to the comments and requests by the subcommission.

9. At the request of the delegation, a videoconference was held with the subcommission,⁸ during which the delegation made presentations concerning the addenda. At the end of the session, the subcommission transmitted its observations, comments and requests based on its examination of the data and information submitted during the session.

10. The subcommission decided that its members would continue to work individually on the submission during the intersessional period and to resume its consideration of the submission at the fifty-fourth session, which would include meetings with the delegation should the occupational safety and health protocols in place at that time so allow.

11. The meetings of the subcommission during the fifty-fourth session will be held from 24 to 28 January and from 7 to 11 February 2022.

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

12. The subcommission, chaired by Mr. Awosika, met from 25 to 29 October and from 15 to 19 and on 22 November, during which time it resumed the main scientific and technical examination of the submission.

⁶ For a full list of submissions, see www.un.org/Depts/los/clcs_new/commission_submissions.htm.

⁷ Submission made on 3 August 2015. Available at www.un.org/depts/los/clcs_new/submissions_files/submission_rus_rev1.htm.

⁸ The delegation indicated its willingness to meet with the subcommission virtually, acknowledging the limitations concerning the confidentiality of exchanges through means other than in-person meetings, which had been brought to the attention of the delegation by the secretariat and the subcommission.

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

13. In the context of the logistical restrictions resulting from the mitigation measures required, progress in the consideration of the submission was affected by the fact that it could take place only on the premises of the Division, given that the submitting State had classified the submission as confidential pursuant to annex II to the rules of procedure. At the end of the session, the subcommission transmitted a communication with its observations, comments and requests based on its examination of the data and information in the submission.

14. The subcommission decided to resume its consideration of the submission at the fifty-fourth session.

15. The meetings of the subcommission during the fifty-fourth session will be held from 21 to 25 February and from 7 to 11 March 2022.

IV. Consideration of the joint submission made by France and South Africa in respect of the area of the Crozet Archipelago and the Prince Edward Islands¹⁰

16. The subcommission, chaired by Mr. Njuguna, met from 25 to 29 October and from 15 to 19 November.

17. The subcommission resumed the main scientific and technical examination of the submission, focusing in particular on the data and information provided by the joint delegation in advance of the session, as well as on a possible way forward suggested by the joint delegation.

18. At the end of the session, the subcommission transmitted its comments and requests based on its examination of the data and information submitted by the joint delegation before the session. It also addressed the way forward suggested by the joint delegation.

19. The subcommission decided that its members would continue to work individually on the submission during the intersessional period and to resume its consideration of the submission at the fifty-fourth session.

20. The meetings of the subcommission during the fifty-fourth session will be held from 21 to 25 February and from 7 to 11 March 2022.

V. Consideration of the submission made by Kenya¹¹

21. The subcommission, chaired by Mr. Heinesen, met from 18 to 22 October and from 8 to 12 November.

22. The subcommission decided to defer the election to fill the Vice-Chair position formerly held by Mr. Marques to the fifty-fourth session.

23. The subcommission resumed the main scientific and technical examination of the submission, focusing in particular on requirements 2 and 3 of the statement of understanding.

24. In the context of the logistical restrictions resulting from the mitigation measures required, progress in the consideration of the submission was affected by the fact that it could take place only on the premises of the Division, given that the

¹⁰ Submission made on 6 May 2009. Available at www.un.org/Depts/los/clcs_new/submissions_files/submission_frazaf_34_2009.htm.

¹¹ Submission made on 6 May 2009. Available at www.un.org/Depts/los/clcs_new/submissions_files/submission_ken_35_2009.htm.

submitting State had classified the submission as confidential pursuant to annex II to the rules of procedure. At the end of the session, the subcommission transmitted a communication with its plans to continue its consideration of the submission at the fifty-fourth session.

25. The subcommission decided to resume its consideration of the submission at the fifty-fourth session.

26. The meetings of the subcommission during the fifty-fourth session will be held from 14 to 18 February 2022.

VI. Consideration of the submission made by Nigeria¹²

27. The subcommission met from 11 to 15 October and from 1 to 5 November. It was chaired by Mr. Heinesen from 12 to 15 October and by Mr. Mahanjane from 1 to 5 November. Owing to travel-related issues resulting from the pandemic, the subcommission did not have a quorum until 15 October.

28. The subcommission resumed the main scientific and technical examination of the submission, including by reviewing the data and information presented by the delegation at the fifty-second session.

29. In the context of the logistical restrictions resulting from the mitigation measures required, progress in the consideration of the submission was affected by the fact that it could take place only on the premises of the Division, given that the submitting State had classified the submission as confidential pursuant to annex II to the rules of procedure. At the end of the session, the subcommission transmitted a communication with its plans to continue its consideration of the submission at the fifty-fourth session.

30. The subcommission decided to resume its consideration of the submission at the fifty-fourth session.

31. The meetings of the subcommission during the fifty-fourth session will be held from 24 to 28 January and from 7 to 11 February 2022.

VII. Consideration of the partial amended submission made by Palau in respect of the North Area¹³

32. The subcommission, chaired by Mr. Paterlini, met from 18 to 22 October and from 8 to 12 and on 18 November, during which time it resumed the main scientific and technical examination of the submission, focusing in particular on the data and information provided by the delegation in response to the requests for clarification made by the subcommission during the fifty-second and fifty-third sessions.

33. At the end of the session, the subcommission transmitted its comments and requests based on its examination of the data and information submitted during the session.

34. The subcommission decided that its members would continue to work individually on the submission during the intersessional period and to resume its consideration of the submission at the fifty-fourth session.

¹² Submission made on 7 May 2009. Available at www.un.org/Depts/los/clcs_new/submissions_files/submission_nga_38_2009.htm.

¹³ 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.

35. The meetings of the subcommission during the fifty-fourth session will be held from 14 to 18 February 2022.

VIII. Consideration of the submission made by Sri Lanka¹⁴

36. The subcommission, chaired by Mr. Yáñez, met from 18 to 22 October and from 8 to 12 and on 22 November, during which time it resumed the main scientific and technical examination of the submission, focusing in particular on the data and information provided by the delegation in response to the requests for clarification made by the subcommission during the fifty-second and fifty-third sessions.

37. At the end of the session, the subcommission transmitted its comments and requests based on its examination of the data and information submitted during the session.

38. The subcommission decided that its members would continue to work individually on the submission during the intersessional period and to resume its consideration of the submission at the fifty-fourth session, which would include meetings with the delegation should the occupational safety and health protocols in place at that time so allow.

39. The meetings of the subcommission during the fifty-fourth session will be held from 14 to 18 February 2022.

IX. Consideration of the submission made by Portugal¹⁵

40. The subcommission, chaired by Ms. De Landro-Clarke, met from 25 to 29 October and from 15 to 19 November. Owing to travel-related issues resulting from the pandemic, the subcommission did not have a quorum during that period.

41. The subcommission resumed the main scientific and technical examination of the submission, including by reviewing the new data and information submitted by the delegation since the fifty-second session.

42. At the end of the session, the subcommission transmitted a communication with its plans to continue its consideration of the submission at the fifty-fourth session.

43. The subcommission decided that its members would continue to work individually on the submission during the intersessional period and to resume its consideration of the submission at the fifty-fourth session, which would include meetings with the delegation should the occupational safety and health protocols in place at that time so allow.

44. The meetings of the subcommission during the fifty-fourth session will be held from 21 to 25 February and from 7 to 11 March 2022.

¹⁴ Submission made on 8 May 2009. Available at www.un.org/depts/los/clcs_new/submissions_files/submission_lka_43_2009.htm.

¹⁵ 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.

X. Consideration of the submission made by Spain in respect of the area of Galicia¹⁶

45. The subcommission, chaired by Mr. Mosher, met from 11 to 15 October and from 1 to 5 November, during which time it resumed the main scientific and technical examination of the submission, focusing in particular on the new data and information received from the delegation in response to the requests made at the fifty-second and fifty-third sessions.

46. Owing to travel-related issues resulting from the pandemic, the lack of a quorum for the majority of the time allocated to the subcommission prevented the subcommission from making substantive decisions. The subcommission transmitted some observations and further requests for additional data and information, which, in view of the lack of a quorum at the time of their formulation, did not reflect decisions or conclusions reached by the subcommission as such, but were rather raised with a view to receiving data, information and clarifications aimed at facilitating and expediting the examination by the subcommission when the necessary quorum would be reached.

47. The subcommission decided that its members would continue to work individually on the submission during the intersessional period and to resume its consideration of the submission at the fifty-fourth session, which would include meetings with the delegation should the occupational safety and health protocols in place at that time so allow.

48. The meetings of the subcommission during the fifty-fourth session will be held from 24 to 28 January and from 7 to 11 February 2022.

XI. Consideration of the partial submission made by India¹⁷

49. The subcommission, chaired by Mr. Mahanjane, met on 25 and 29 October and on 15 and 18 November. It took note of two communications from Pakistan addressed to the Secretary-General dated 6 June 2020 and 14 January 2021 and two communications from India dated 17 November 2020 addressed to the Secretary-General and to the subcommission, respectively. Pending guidance from the Commission, the subcommission focused on reacquainting itself with the content of the submission.

XII. Other matters

Trust funds

50. The secretariat informed the members of the Commission about the status of the trust fund for the purpose of defraying the cost of participation in its meetings of those members from developing States. For the fifty-second session, financial assistance had been provided to six members, for a total of some \$120,000, inclusive of programme support costs. For the current session, approximately the same amount, inclusive of programme support costs, was being provided to six members.

¹⁶ Submission made on 11 May 2009. Available at www.un.org/depts/los/clcs_new/submissions_files/submission_esp_47_2009.htm.

¹⁷ Submission made on 11 May 2009. Available at www.un.org/depts/los/clcs_new/submissions_files/submission_ind_48_2009.htm.