



Commission on the Limits of the Continental Shelf

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New York, 7 October–22 November 2024

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 sixty-second session of the Commission on the Limits of the Continental Shelf. There were 12 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); Namibia; Cuba; Mozambique; Madagascar; Brazil, in respect of the Brazilian equatorial margin (partial revised submission); Cook Islands, concerning the Manihiki Plateau (revised submission); Iceland, in respect of the western, southern and south-eastern parts of the Reykjanes Ridge (partial revised submission); and Brazil in respect of the Brazilian oriental and meridional margin. The statement also provides information on other issues addressed during the sixty-second session, including the optimization of the intersessional work under the new working arrangements, and confidentiality under annex II to the rules of procedure.



I. Introduction

1. The Commission on the Limits of the Continental Shelf held its sixty-second session at United Nations Headquarters from 7 October to 22 November 2024. 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 of the Office of Legal Affairs of the Secretariat of the United Nations. The Commission also held meetings of its members to exchange 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, Aldino Manuel dos Santos de Campos, Efren Perez Carandang, Antonio Fernando Garcez Faria, Helena Inniss, Artem Kireev, Estevão Stefane Mahanjane, Domingos de Carvalho Viana Moreira, David Cole Mosher, Simon Njuguna, Tolojanahary Randriamiantsoa, Rajan Sivaramakrishnan, Yong Tang, Michał Tomczak, Ariel Hernán Troisi, Toshitsugu Yamazaki and Gonzalo Alejandro Yáñez Carrizo.

II. Organization of work for the sixty-second session

3. Subcommissions met according to the schedule agreed upon at the sixty-first session¹ and amended during the sixty-second session, addressing the following submissions:

(a) From 7 to 21 October: Mauritius, in respect of the region of Rodrigues Island; Palau, in respect of the North Area; and Cook Islands, concerning the Manihiki Plateau (revised submission);

(b) From 22 October to 5 November: Spain, in respect of the area of Galicia; Mozambique; and Iceland, in respect of the western, southern and south-eastern parts of the Reykjanes Ridge (partial revised submission);

(c) From 8 to 13 November: Brazil, in respect of the Brazilian equatorial margin (partial revised submission);

(d) From 14 to 22 November: Brazil, in respect of the Brazilian oriental and meridional margin (partial revised submission);

(e) From 8 to 15 November: Cuba, in respect of the eastern polygon in the Gulf of Mexico; and Portugal;

(f) From 18 to 22 November: Namibia and Madagascar.

III. Consideration of the submission made by Mauritius in respect of the region of Rodrigues Island²

4. The subcommission continued the main scientific and technical examination of the submission and held one meeting with the delegation, during which the delegation presented its response to requests made by the subcommission for additional data and information. At the same meeting, the subcommission shared the preliminary views on the submission conveyed by the Commission at the sixty-first session. In this

¹ See CLCS/61/2, para. 53.

² Submission made on 6 May 2009. Available at www.un.org/Depts/los/clcs_new/submissions_files/submission_mus_36_2009.htm.

context, the subcommission requested clarification from the delegation to address concerns of some members of the Commission. In addition, the subcommission requested clarification in relation to the combined bathymetric profiles employed by the delegation to define the base of the continental slope and the foot of the slope points. The subcommission transmitted a communication to the delegation conveying its current observations, requests for clarification and additional data and information, and an invitation to the delegation to meet with the subcommission during the sixty-third session.

IV. Consideration of the partial amended submission made by Palau in respect of the North Area³

5. The subcommission continued the main scientific and technical examination of the submission and agreed, by consensus, with the location of the pending foot of the slope point, thereby completing its examination of the foot of the slope points on the western flank of the Palau-Kyushu Ridge. While awaiting information from the delegation on the updated outer edge of the continental margin, the subcommission commenced the examination of the constraint lines. No meetings were held with the delegation. The subcommission transmitted a communication to the delegation conveying its views, preliminary conclusions, further requests for clarification, and an invitation to the delegation to meet with the subcommission during the sixty-third session.

V. Consideration of the submission made by Portugal⁴

6. The subcommission continued the main scientific and technical examination of the submission and held two meetings with the delegation, during which the delegation committed to addressing the issues in the Galicia Bank region and the Madeira region at the next session, and the subcommission made a presentation that included guidance on the way forward with regard to pending issues. The delegation also indicated that it would be conducting future surveys to address outstanding issues in other regions. The subcommission transmitted a communication to the delegation with an invitation to meet during the sixty-third session.

VI. Consideration of the partial submission made by Spain in respect of the area of Galicia⁵

7. The subcommission continued the main scientific and technical examination of the submission and held two meetings with the delegation, during which the subcommission and the delegation made presentations on the responses by the delegation to the observations and requests for additional information and clarification made by the subcommission at the sixty-first session. The subcommission noted that the response of the delegation amounted to a significant departure from the original limits and formulae lines to which the Secretary-General had given due publicity, in accordance with rule 50 of the rules of procedure of the Commission. Accordingly, the subcommission requested that the delegation submit an amended executive

³ 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.

⁴ 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.

⁵ Submission made on 11 May 2009. Available at www.un.org/depts/los/clcs_new/submissions_files/submission_esp_47_2009.htm.

summary, to be given due publicity by the Secretary-General. On 14 November 2024, Spain transmitted an amended executive summary, which superseded the executive summary that had been submitted on 11 May 2009. The amended executive summary was given due publicity on 14 November 2024.⁶ The subcommission transmitted communications containing some observations regarding the velocity analysis and the outer edge of the continental margin, and an invitation to the delegation to meet with the subcommission during the sixty-third session.

VII. Consideration of the submission made by Namibia⁷

8. The subcommission continued the main scientific and technical examination of the submission. No meetings were held with the delegation. The subcommission transmitted to the delegation a communication containing its views and requests related to the identification of the base of the slope in the area of the Smooth Margin.

VIII. Consideration of the amended submission made by Cuba in respect of the eastern polygon in the Gulf of Mexico⁸

9. The subcommission completed the main scientific and technical examination of the submission. Two meetings were held with the delegation, headed by the Deputy Foreign Minister, Carlos Fernández de Cossío Domínguez. The delegation and the subcommission each gave presentations, focusing on the delineation of the outer edge of the continental margin. Following the submission of additional information by the delegation, the subcommission made a comprehensive presentation of its views and general conclusions arising from the examination of the submission, pursuant to paragraph 10.3 of annex III to the rules of procedure. Subsequently, the delegation provided in writing its response pursuant to paragraph 10.4 of the same annex. The subcommission then proceeded with the preparation of its recommendations, in accordance with paragraph 10.5 of annex III to the rules of procedure. The subcommission adopted its recommendations on 15 November 2024 and transmitted them to the Chair of the Commission on the same date, pursuant to rule 51, paragraph 5, of the rules of procedure. The subcommission transmitted a communication to the delegation summarizing their conclusions at the sixty-second session.

IX. Consideration of the submission made by Mozambique⁹

10. The subcommission continued the main scientific and technical examination of the submission and held one remote meeting with the delegation, headed by the Minister of Sea, Inland Waters and Fisheries, Lúcia Cardoso, and the Deputy Minister of Mineral Resources and Energy, António Saíde, during which the delegation made an introductory presentation of its submission. The subcommission transmitted a communication to the delegation conveying its preliminary observations relating to the submitted data and information, and requests for clarification and additional data and information concerning the identification of the base of the slope, as well as an

⁶ www.un.org/Depts/los/clcs_new/submissions_files/submission_esp_47_2009.htm.

⁷ Submission made on 12 May 2009. Available at www.un.org/depts/los/clcs_new/submissions_files/submission_nam_50_2009.htm.

⁸ Submission made on 1 June 2009 and amended on 15 February 2024. Available at www.un.org/depts/los/clcs_new/submissions_files/submission_cub_51_2009.htm.

⁹ Submission made on 7 July 2010. Available at www.un.org/depts/los/clcs_new/submissions_files/submission_moz_52_2010.htm.

invitation to the delegation to meet with the subcommission during the sixty-third session.

X. Consideration of the submission made by Madagascar¹⁰

11. The subcommission completed the initial examination of the submission,¹¹ including verification of the format and completeness of the submission. On the basis of the preliminary analysis, the subcommission concluded that the test of appurtenance had been satisfied by the coastal State. The subcommission also commenced the main scientific and technical examination of the submission. Two meetings were held with the delegation, during which the delegation gave an introductory presentation of the submission and replied to the requests for clarification that had been transmitted by the subcommission at the sixty-first session. The subcommission provided the delegation with a standard presentation describing the procedure and common practice for the consideration of a submission, including regarding the recently updated rules of procedure. The subcommission transmitted a communication to the delegation with its preliminary observations and requests for clarification in the context of the main scientific and technical examination. The subcommission noted that the need for meetings at the next session would depend on the timely response by the delegation to the requests for clarification.

12. In the light of the decision by Mr. Al-Azri to resign as Chair of the subcommission, the subcommission elected Mr. Mosher as Chair.

XI. Consideration of revised submissions

A. Partial revised submission made by Brazil in respect of the Brazilian equatorial margin¹²

13. The subcommission prepared its recommendations, pursuant to paragraph 10.5 of annex III to the rules of procedure, and adopted them on 13 November 2024. On 19 November 2024, the subcommission transmitted the recommendations to the Chair of the Commission, in accordance with rule 51, paragraph 5, of the rules of procedure.

B. Revised submission made by the Cook Islands concerning the Manihiki Plateau¹³

14. The subcommission continued the main scientific and technical examination of the revised submission, focusing on the reply by the delegation to the requests for clarification from the subcommission at the sixty-first session. Two meetings were held with the delegation, during which the delegation presented the new data and provided its reply to the request by the subcommission for clarification concerning identification of the base of the continental slope in the western margin and in the north area of the High Plateau. The subcommission presented its initial views on the new data and its assessment of the revised base of the slope and the new and revised

¹⁰ Submission made on 29 April 2011. Available at www.un.org/depts/los/clcs_new/submissions_files/submission_mgd_56_2011.htm.

¹¹ See CLCS/61/2, para. 27.

¹² Submission made on 8 September 2017. Available at www.un.org/depts/los/clcs_new/submissions_files/submission_bra_rev2.htm.

¹³ Submission made on 3 December 2021. Available at www.un.org/depts/los/clcs_new/submissions_files/submission_cok_23_2021.htm.

foot of the slope points, as well as its views on aspects of natural components of the continental margin of the Manihiki Plateau. The subcommission transmitted a communication to the delegation summarizing its views and requests for clarification and noted that the need for meetings at the next session would depend on the timely response by the delegation to the requests for clarification.

C. Partial revised submission made by Iceland in respect of the western, southern and south-eastern parts of the Reykjanes Ridge¹⁴

15. The subcommission continued the main scientific and technical examination of the submission and held two meetings with the delegation, during which the delegation presented its response to the request for clarification made by the subcommission. Subsequently, the subcommission delivered a comprehensive presentation of its views and general conclusions arising from the examination of the partial revised submission, pursuant to paragraph 10.3 of annex III to the rules of procedure. Subsequently, the delegation provided in writing its response pursuant to paragraph 10.4 of the same annex. The subcommission then proceeded with the preparation of its draft recommendations, for consideration by the Commission at its next session. The subcommission adopted its draft recommendations on 5 November 2024 and transmitted them to the Chair of the Commission on 20 November 2024, pursuant to rule 51, paragraph 5, of the rules of procedure. At the end of the session, the subcommission transmitted a communication to the delegation summarizing their conclusions at the sixty-second session.

D. Partial revised submission made by Brazil in respect of the Brazilian oriental and meridional margin¹⁵

16. The subcommission commenced consideration of the submission¹⁶ and completed the initial examination of the submission, including the preliminary analysis, and verified the format and completeness of the submission. On the basis of a preliminary analysis, the subcommission concluded that the test of appurtenance had been satisfied by the coastal State. The subcommission decided that more time would be required to examine all the data and prepare recommendations for transmittal to the Commission. The subcommission concluded that the cooperation of relevant international organizations or the advice of specialists, as provided for, respectively, in rules 56 and 57 of the rules of procedure, was not required at the present time. No meetings were held with the delegation. The subcommission transmitted a communication to the delegation with its preliminary observations and requests for clarification, as well as an invitation to meet with the subcommission during the sixty-third session.

¹⁴ Submission made on 31 March 2021. Available at www.un.org/depts/los/clcs_new/submissions_files/submission_isl_rev2021.htm.

¹⁵ Submission made on 7 December 2018; available at www.un.org/depts/los/clcs_new/submissions_files/submission_bra_rev3.htm.

¹⁶ See CLCS/61/2, para. 49.

XII. Other matters

Optimization of the intersessional work under the new working arrangements

17. In view of the new working arrangements in 2025, which will rely on increased intersessional work,¹⁷ the timeliness of the responses by delegations to requests for clarification or additional information made by the respective subcommissions will be critical to the progress in the examination of submissions. To this effect, in their end-of-session communications, subcommissions requested delegations to authorize: (a) the secretariat to transmit to the members of subcommissions, by electronic means, written responses and any new data and information submitted during the intersessional period, bearing in mind the limitations concerning the confidentiality inherent in data exchanges conducted through electronic means; and (b) the members of the subcommission to exchange the results of their analysis of the newly submitted data and information by the same electronic means, during the intersessional period.

Confidentiality under annex II to the rules of procedure

18. Under the rules of procedure and the internal code of conduct, the members of the Commission¹⁸ are bound by confidentiality with regard to the examination of any submission. According to practice, the vast majority of submitting States have explicitly granted members of the Commission access to the data and information contained in their submissions on the understanding that the data and material will be used solely for the purposes of considering the submissions and will not be shared with persons who are not members of the Commission or the secretariat. The additional layer of confidentiality invoked by some submitting States under paragraph 2 of annex II to the rules of procedure, however, makes the above access impossible outside of the premises of the GIS laboratories at the Division for Ocean Affairs and the Law of the Sea.

19. For this reason, the attention of Governments with submissions under active consideration that were declared confidential under annex II to the rules of procedure was drawn to the fact that such classification would result in a significant delay with regard to the consideration of the submissions and the issuance of recommendations. While underscoring the importance of ensuring the integrity of the process of examination of submissions and the adherence to the rules of procedure and practice of the Commission concerning confidential submissions, those Governments were informed that delays would be occasioned, inter alia, by the inability of members of the Commission to access data and information outside of regular working hours or during intersessional periods. In general, any limitation to members' access to a submission and to new data and information received intersessionally, outside of the GIS laboratories, would delay the examination of that submission given the decision by the Commission to increase intersessional work as from 2025.

Organization of work for the sixty-third session

20. The subcommissions decided that their members would continue to work individually during the intersessional period on submission materials that were not classified as confidential pursuant to annex II to the rules of procedure. In addition, for those submissions, members may exchange the results of their analysis of data and information by electronic means if authorized by delegations (see para. 17).

21. The Commission adopted the following organization of work for the consideration of submissions during the sixty-third session, subject to adjustments

¹⁷ Ibid., para. 55.

¹⁸ CLCS/47.

that the Commission may make at the sixty-third session to ensure its efficiency, as needed:

(a) From 17 to 21 February: Portugal; Namibia; Madagascar; and Brazil in respect of the Brazilian oriental and meridional margin (partial revised submission);

(b) From 3 to 7 March: Mauritius, in respect of the region of Rodrigues Island (partial submission); Palau, in respect of the North Area (partial amended submission); and Cook Islands, concerning the Manihiki Plateau (revised submission);

(c) From 17 to 21 March: Spain, in respect of the area of Galicia; Mozambique; and Russian Federation in the area of the Gakkel Ridge in the Arctic Ocean (partial revised submission).

Trust funds

22. As at 20 November 2024, 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 had an approximate balance of \$674,995. For the sixty-first session, financial assistance had been provided to eight members, for a total of approximately \$220,000, inclusive of programme support costs. For the current session, approximately the same amount, inclusive of programme support costs, was being provided to eight members. Since the sixty-first session, a contribution to the trust fund had been received from France.

Workshops

23. Four half-day meetings of all members of the Commission were held for the exchange of views on general scientific and procedural topics, namely the Statement of Understanding adopted on 29 August 1980 by the Third United Nations Conference on the Law of the Sea; classification of seafloor highs pursuant to article 76 of the Convention; and the depth constraint envisaged by article 76, paragraph 5, of the Convention.

Technical bulletins

24. Addressing the preparation of technical bulletins, members resumed consideration of a proposal made at the sixty-first session¹⁹ and concluded that the possibility of holding week-long retreats would facilitate the drafting of the bulletins in view of the fact that it would be difficult to develop bulletin materials alongside regular business in New York.

Acknowledgment

25. The Chair noted with appreciation and gratitude the high standard of secretariat services rendered to the Commission by the Division for Ocean Affairs and the Law of the Sea.

¹⁹ See [CLCS/61/2](#), para. 41.