

COORDINATED, HARMONIZED OR JOINT SUBMISSIONS TO THE COMMISSION ON THE LIMITS OF THE CONTINENTAL SHELF

Alain MURPHY, IRELAND
GeoLimits Consulting
alain.murphy@gmail.com

Abstract

In many cases, the continental shelf of a coastal State beyond 200M overlaps with that of another or the boundaries between them are unresolved. As coastal States are obliged to comply with the 10 year deadline set out in Annex II of the United Nations Convention on the Law of the Sea (UNCLOS), which for all States who ratified prior to 1999 has been extended to 2009, the possibility of submissions to the Commission on the Limits of the Continental Shelf (CLCS) in areas of disputed extended continental shelf presents a real and urgent challenge. This paper will assess some of the various methods two or more States, in cases of unresolved or disputed continental shelf boundaries, may use to make a submission to the CLCS.

The range of submission options from single overlapping areas through to joint submissions are examined with respect to the technical exercise of analysing and assembling a submission, the working method for coastal States through to the presentation to the CLCS. These submission options are consistent with UNCLOS and in some cases have been prescribed in the Rules of Procedure of the CLCS. Each of these options presents specific challenges with respect to the application of Article 76 of UNCLOS and have advantages and disadvantages depending on the coastal States involved. The natural prolongation, foot of slope determination and the construction of the outer limit of the continental shelf among other technical aspects can be influenced by the format of a submission. Examples from recent submissions and potential scenarios are examined and may provide some guidance for future submissions.