

Towards the Development of Mineral Resources on the Continental Shelf of Japan

Tetsuro URABE

*Department of Earth & Planetary Science, The University of Tokyo
Member of the Commission on the Limits of the Continental Shelf*

Abstract

Regarding two partial submissions made recently by China (22 Dec 2012) and Korea (26 Dec 2012) both at East China Sea area, they claim an overlapping area in the northern Okinawa Trough within the 200 nautical mile EEZ of Japan. It is reminded that Article 83 of UNCLOS stipulates that the delimitation of the continental shelf between States with opposite or adjacent coasts shall be effected by agreement on the basis of international law.” In this regard, these submissions made by China and Korea in the area of East China Sea are signs of non-productive inter-national relations in East Asia.

With respect to resources around Japanese waters, Japan has vast unexplored seafloor (territorial sea + EEZ + extended Continental shelf = 451 km²) which is equivalent to India (330 km²) or Australia (770 km²) if it exists on land. We must continue (i) monitoring, (ii) mapping, (iii) sampling, and (iv) modeling of the ocean and its floor to meet societal (e.g. disaster, fishery), scientific (e.g. environmental, biodiversity) and management (e.g. maritime safety) purposes. Exploration and development of seafloor resources may take a lead to open this frontier area not only for Japan but also for global society. High resources potential around Japan may promote such activity. Japan should take a lead, in collaboration with ISA (International Seabed Authority), for the sustainable use of marine resources.

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