

**The mission and practice of  
the Commission on the Limits of the Continental Shelf (CLCS)**

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**Abstract**

The purpose of the Commission on the Limits of the Continental Shelf (CLCS) is to facilitate the implementation of the United Nations Convention on the Law of the Sea (Convention) in respect of the establishment of the outer limits of the continental shelf beyond 200 nautical miles (M) from the baselines from which the breadth of the territorial sea is measured. CLCS shall consist of 21 members who shall be experts in the field of geology, geophysics or hydrography, elected by States Parties to this Convention from among their nationals, having due regard to the need to ensure equitable geographical representation, who shall serve in their personal capacities (Article 2, Annex II of UNCLOS).

The size of CLCS's task is increasing rapidly: 60 primary submissions have been received by UN Secretary General to date - 35 during 2009, and another 9 since then. Besides, 45 sets of preliminary information are deposited in accordance with SPLOS/183 (3 have been converted to full submissions 42 remain). It is estimated that future potential for ~100 submissions to in spite of the original estimates of slightly more than 30 during 1990s. To date, the CLCS has adopted recommendations for 17 of the 60 submissions. Among them, 15 of these recommendations were adopted during the last 5 years.

The SPLOS made a decision (SPLOS/229; June 2011) requesting the CLCS to consider meeting in New York “...for up to 26 weeks but not less than intended minimum of 21 weeks a year for a period of five years ...”, and; the related matter of ensuring the necessary financial and other support for members of the CLCS, and appropriate resources for its Secretariat. Since

then, Three positions have been increased for its Secretariat mainly by the contribution of Japan and CLCS will increase the number of Subcommission from 3 to 4 in the next five year period. Financial and other support for the members of CLCS are necessary to solve the issue.

The CLCS is trying to be more transparent in several ways; maintaining CLCS's institutional memory and making recommendations consistent. Since 2008, the CLCS has made public summaries of its recommendations. The summaries document evolving approaches and views of the CLCS on a number of the scientific, technical and legal provisions of article 76, and its application to a variety of continental margin settings and submarine features throughout the World's oceans; sometimes beyond that in its Scientific and Technical Guidelines.

(Disclaimer)

The views expressed herein are solely those of the author and do not necessarily reflect the views of the Commission on the Limits of the Continental Shelf.

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