



**CONVENTION ON
MIGRATORY
SPECIES**

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15th MEETING OF THE CONFERENCE OF THE PARTIES
Campo Grande, Brazil, 23 – 29 March 2026
Agenda Item 25.2.3

DEEP-SEA MINING

(Prepared by the Secretariat)

Summary:

This document reports on progress to implement Decisions 14.51–14.53 *Deep-Seabed Mineral Exploitation Activities and Migratory Species*, presents a report, *Impacts of Deep-sea Mining on Migratory Species: Review and Knowledge Gaps*, and proposes Decisions for adoption.

The attached draft Decisions would support the achievement of Targets 2.1, 2.3, 3.3, 4.1, 5.3 and 6.4 of the Samarkand Strategic Plan for Migratory Species 2024–2032.

DEEP-SEA MINING

Background

1. COP14 (2024) adopted Resolution 14.6 *Deep-seabed mineral exploitation activities and migratory species*. The Resolution confirmed the need to better understand the impacts of such activities on migratory species, and, inter alia, urges Parties to refrain from engaging in or supporting deep-seabed mineral exploitation until robust scientific evidence has been obtained to ensure no harm to migratory species, their prey and their ecosystems.
2. COP14 adopted the following Decisions on this issue:

14.51 Directed to Parties

Parties are requested to:

- a) *inform the Secretariat by 30 June 2024 of any relevant scientific or other information, including any EIA guidance, that considers the impacts of deep-seabed mineral exploitation activities on migratory species, their prey and their ecosystems;*
- b) *prioritize research, including monitoring programmes as appropriate, into the impacts of deep-seabed mineral exploitation activities on migratory species, their prey and their ecosystems; and*
- c) *support the work of the Scientific Council, as directed in 14.52 (a) and (b).*

14.52 Directed to the Scientific Council

The Scientific Council is requested to, subject to the availability of external resources:

- a) *develop a report on the state of knowledge of the impacts of deep-seabed mineral exploitation activities on migratory species, their prey and their ecosystems, including identifying knowledge gaps that should be addressed;*
- b) *based on the results of the above report, collaborate with the International Seabed Authority to share expertise, and develop such specific EIA guidance as may be required, in addition to any other relevant guidance available, which considers the impacts of deep-seabed mineral exploitation activities on migratory species, their prey and their ecosystems; and*
- c) *report to the Conference of Parties at its 15th meeting on the progress in implementing this decision.*

14.53 Directed to the Secretariat

The Secretariat shall:

- a) *inform the ISA of this COP14 decision and facilitate collaboration with ISA and other relevant bodies, as appropriate, in order to increase awareness for migratory species, their prey and their ecosystems in relevant discussions on deep-seabed mineral exploitation activities; and*
- b) *facilitate the work of the Scientific Council as directed in 14.52 (a) and (b).*

3. This document summarizes a report on the impacts of deep-seabed mineral exploitation activities – henceforth referred to as deep-sea mining (DSM¹) – on migratory species and identifies knowledge gaps.

Activities

4. On 3 June 2024, the Secretariat issued [Notification 2024/013: Deep-Seabed Mineral Exploitation Activities and Migratory Species](#), calling for Parties to provide information requested in Decision 14.51 (a). The responses were compiled and submitted to the 7th Meeting of the Sessional Committee of the Scientific Council. Inputs were received from the Dominican Republic, the Netherlands, New Zealand and the Secretariat of the Pacific Regional Environment Programme (SPREP), and are available in [UNEP/CMS/COP15/Inf.25.2.3](#).
5. The submissions from Parties provided a range of scientific and policy inputs on the ecological risks of deep-seabed mining. The Dominican Republic submitted a document reiterating their call for a 15-year moratorium. The Netherlands provided scientific literature and referred to International Seabed Authority (ISA) data and the DeepData Database. New Zealand submitted an expert risk assessment, guidelines on the development of environmental impact assessments (EIAs) and a refusal of a marine consent application to mine phosphorite nodules in national waters. SPREP, providing input as an intergovernmental organization, outlined their EIA guidance for their Parties.
6. With funding provided by the Government of Australia and the Government of the Principality of Monaco under the Migratory Species Champion Programme, the Secretariat, in close cooperation with the CMS COP-appointed Councillor for Marine Pollution, hired a consultant to prepare the report called for in Decision 14.52 (a). The draft report was peer-reviewed by three external DSM experts and by the COP-appointed Councillor. The report is presented in Annex 1.
7. The report provides an assessment of the current state of knowledge regarding the potential impacts of deep-sea mining on migratory species. It notes that while impacts to seafloor ecosystems have been the primary focus of existing research, far less attention has been given to the broader ocean environment, particularly the pelagic realm through which migratory species travel. These species may interact with mining sites and adjacent areas, rely on prey and habitats associated with those sites, and depend on acoustic and chemical cues for migration that may be affected by DSM.
8. Decision 14.52 (b) calls on the Scientific Council to collaborate with the ISA and, as needed, develop specific EIA guidance for migratory species. Given the short intersessional period it has not been possible to undertake this activity yet. This Decision is proposed for renewal.
9. In accordance with Decision 14.53 (a), the Secretariat wrote to the Secretary-General of the International Seabed Authority on 13 February 2025 to convey relevant COP14 outcomes and to initiate collaboration. The ISA responded on 15 March 2025, welcoming cooperation, sharing information on the current status of exploration activities and associated Environmental Impact Statements (EIS), and outlining the formal procedure for CMS to apply for observer status. ISA noted that six EIS had been submitted in relation to testing of mining components and other exploration activities,

¹ The term 'DSM' is used throughout this document in alignment with the language adopted by the United Nations Secretary-General's Scientific Advisory Board (see: [Scientific Brief on Deep-Sea Mining, April 2025](#))

with impacts on migratory species referenced primarily through sight observations, and referred to its EIA guidance.²

10. The ISA has not granted any exploitation licences for deep-sea mining. Its mandate has so far been limited to issuing exploration contracts, currently around thirty, which permit the collection of environmental and resource data in the international seabed area. The ISA is presently engaged in negotiations to finalise the Mining Code, a comprehensive regulatory framework that would govern the commercial exploitation of deep-sea mineral resources.

Discussion and analysis

11. The report prepared in response to Decision 14.52 (a) finds that deep-sea mining would potentially have profound implications for CMS-listed species. Uncertainty persists regarding the scale and severity of impacts, including cumulative impacts, on migratory species and their prey. Many migratory species rely on deep-sea and pelagic habitats, traverse vast oceanic ranges, and depend on ecological processes that may be disrupted by mining operations.
12. The report concludes that while deep-sea mining will pose varied and direct threats to highly migratory species, the full extent of those impacts is poorly quantified. Among the threats, the report found that the production of sediments plumes, chronic noise pollution and direct removal of benthic habitat could have far-reaching impacts on the migration, feeding, reproduction and social behaviour of many marine animals. Increased vessel traffic in relatively untrafficked areas can result in increased risk of ship strikes of marine species. Stationary vessels operating for long durations can act as fish-aggregating devices that may attract migratory predators and result in alterations to feeding and migration. Much additional research is needed to better understand the impacts of DSM on CMS-listed and other migratory species. It also concluded that the precautionary approach is essential in the absence of comprehensive knowledge. The ISA and mining contractors are in a unique position to assist in broad and transparent data collection.

Recommended actions

13. The Conference of the Parties is recommended to:
 - a) endorse the Report contained in Annex 1 of this document;
 - b) adopt the summary of recommendations in Annex 2 of this document;
 - c) adopt the draft Decisions as contained in Annex 3 of this document; and
 - d) delete Decisions 14.51–14.53.

² [ISBA/25/LTC/6/Rev.3](#)

ANNEX 1

**IMPACTS OF DEEP-SEA MINING ON MIGRATORY SPECIES:
REVIEW AND KNOWLEDGE GAPS**

NB: The annex is presented in a separate file [here](#).

**IMPACTS OF DEEP-SEA MINING ON MIGRATORY SPECIES:
REVIEW AND KNOWLEDGE GAPS – SUMMARY OF RECOMMENDATIONS**

Research and collaboration

1. CMS Parties should encourage more independent observational research of marine mammals, seabirds, sea turtles, sharks and rays, bony fishes, and other migratory species, to better understand how the presence of mining vessels impacts animal migration and behaviour.
2. CMS Parties should encourage the ISA to ensure that deep-sea mining contractors and ISA-supported research expeditions conduct regular surface observations and report all incidents where marine mammals, seabirds, sea turtles, sharks and rays, and other migratory species are observed in the areas immediately around mining operations, at or near the surface, as well as when vessels are in transit, and support acoustic monitoring of the full water column. For marine mammals, a response plan should be established to deal with any adverse incidents should these occur.
3. CMS Parties should encourage the ISA to make available any extant data on migratory species occurrence from contractor reports that are not reflected in publicly available data.
4. CMS Parties should encourage the ISA to ensure that contractors are monitoring for the potential occurrence of migratory species within areas where active mining-related activities are taking place and are conducting regular surface and submerged acoustic observations.
5. CMS Parties should encourage the ISA to report incidents where seabirds are observed in the areas immediately around mining operations as well as when vessels are in transit.

Harm mitigation

6. CMS Parties should require deep-sea mining contractors to make all practicable efforts to minimize noise when marine mammals or other migratory species that rely upon healthy soundscapes are present. Consideration should be given to restricting mining activities during periods when marine mammals are known to migrate into the area, especially during periods of breeding or foraging.
7. CMS Parties should require deep-sea mining contractors to make every effort to avoid increasing ship traffic in areas where marine mammals, sea turtles or other migratory species that may be vulnerable to ship strikes are known to migrate, and to adopt rerouting and safe ship speed policies where such overlaps are unavoidable.
8. CMS Parties should require deep-sea mining contractors conducting exploration or exploitation on the Mid-Atlantic Ridge to remain cognizant of the potential impacts on European eels during their migration to spawning grounds in the Sargasso Sea, as well as on other migratory species.
9. CMS Parties should forbid deep-sea mining on seamounts critical for the foraging and reproduction of migratory species, and at polymetallic sulphides where chondrichthyan nurseries have been identified.

10. CMS Parties should require deep-sea mining contractors to limit the extent to which vessels remain stationary over long durations to minimize the fish-aggregating effect that disrupts the spatial and behavioural ecology of migratory species.

ANNEX 3

DRAFT DECISIONS

DEEP-SEA MINING AND MIGRATORY SPECIES**Directed to Parties**

15.AA Parties are encouraged to:

- a) apply the recommendations contained in *Impacts of Deep-sea Mining on Migratory Species: Review and Knowledge Gaps*, which are available in Annex 2 of UNEP/CMS/COP15/Doc.25.2.3;
- b) disseminate the *Impacts of Deep-sea Mining on Migratory Species: Review and Knowledge Gaps* to all national departments involved in deciding on deep-sea mining activities and encourage the application of the recommendations; and
- c) report to the Conference of Parties at its 16th meeting on the progress in implementing these Decisions.

Directed to the Scientific Council

15.BB The Scientific Council is requested to, subject to the availability of resources, develop such EIA guidance as may be required, which considers the impacts of deep-seabed mineral exploitation activities on migratory species, their prey and their ecosystems.

Directed to the Secretariat

15.CC The Secretariat shall, subject to the availability of resources:

- a) continue to collaborate with the ISA and other relevant bodies, as appropriate, to raise awareness of the relevance of migratory species in relevant discussions on deep-seabed mineral exploitation activities and to promote collaboration and data exchange; and
- b) facilitate the work of the Scientific Council as directed in 15.BB.