
**Marine environmental impact
assessment (MEIA) — Technical
specifications for marine biotic
surveys in the international seabed
area — General principles**

*Évaluation d'impact sur le milieu marin — Spécifications techniques
pour les relevés biotiques dans la zone internationale des fonds
marins — Principes généraux*



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ISO copyright office
CP 401 • Ch. de Blandonnet 8
CH-1214 Vernier, Geneva
Phone: +41 22 749 01 11
Email: copyright@iso.org
Website: www.iso.org

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Foreword

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Introduction

In accordance with the United Nations Convention on the Law of the Sea (UNCLOS)^[6] and the 1994 Agreement relating to the Implementation of Part XI of the UNCLOS, the International Seabed Authority (ISA) has developed regulations such as those contained in References ^[7], ^[8] and ^[9]. These regulations include provisions for contractors working in mineral exploration in the area to gather oceanographic and environmental baseline data and to establish baselines. These data and baselines are then used to assess the likely effects of the programme of activities under the plan of work for exploration on the marine environment.

Since high-quality environmental baseline data are a prerequisite for the correct assessment of the environmental impacts from deep-sea mining, the ISA Legal and Technical Commission issued *Recommendations for the guidance of the contractors for the assessment of the possible environmental impacts arising from exploration for polymetallic nodules in the Area*^[10] in 2001, one year after the approval of the *Regulations on Prospecting and Exploration for Polymetallic Nodules in the Area*.^[7] With the publication of two additional regulations on exploration^[8,9] in 2010 and 2012, it was deemed necessary to develop an environmental guideline applicable to the exploration for various deep-sea resources.

Therefore, in 2013, ISA published *Recommendations for the guidance of contractors for the assessment of the possible environmental impacts arising from exploration for marine minerals in the Area*.^[11] This guidance was updated in 2020^[12] and 2022.^[13] However, the technical specifications and recommendations for environmental baseline surveys remain unclear, especially for marine biotic surveys.

In the context described above, this document provides general provisions and technical recommendations for conducting marine biological surveys, mainly for marine biological baseline surveys in the exploration of deep-sea solid mineral resources in the international seabed area.

