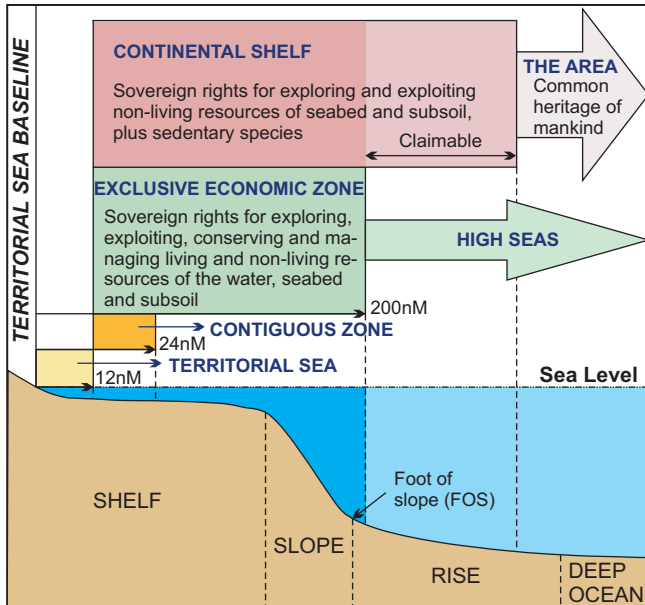


The situation

Under the United Nations Convention on the Law of the Sea (UNCLOS), coastal states can extend their juridical continental shelf and thus, gain marine sovereignty rights beyond the 200-nautical-mile Exclusive Economic Zone (EEZ). They will be allowed to explore the "extended continental shelf" (seabed and subsoil) and to exploit its natural resources (however, sovereign fishing rights remain limited to the EEZ).



The UN has set May 2009 as a deadline for early signatories to UNCLOS (this includes many developing states). Without a submission in due time, countries lose their right to resources they are entitled to. Under Article 76 of UNCLOS, submissions must be backed up by rigorous scientific data delineating the outer limits of the continental shelf. Thus, there is an urgent need for gathering detailed marine geoscientific information on the continental shelf and its professional evaluation, as well as promoting the submission to the Commission on the Limits of the Continental Shelf (CLCS).

Contacts

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Cooperation partners

- ▶ Division for Ocean Affairs and the Law of the Sea (DOALOS), United Nations Office of Legal Affairs
- ▶ UNEP Shelf Programme, UNEP/GRID-Arendal, United Nations Environment Programme

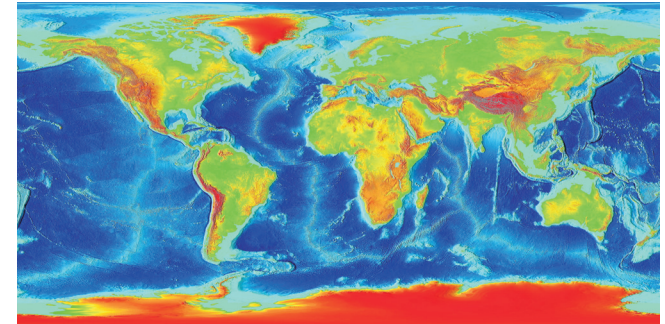


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und Rohstoffe

GEOZENTRUM HANNOVER



Implementing the United Nations Convention on the Law of the Sea (UNCLOS)

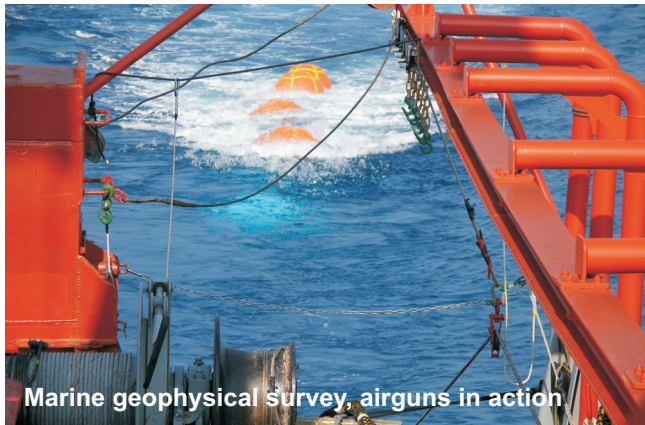


Programme description

The Federal Institute for Geosciences and Natural Resources (BGR) is offering coastal developing states or groups thereof support in delineating the outer limits of their continental shelf and preparing their submission to the CLCS in order to secure their marine sovereignty rights according to Article 76 of UNCLOS.

In detail, the programme offers

- ▶ awareness raising and information of decision makers and experts from relevant institutions
- ▶ assessment of potential benefit, feasibility and costs to realise a successful submission
- ▶ advisory services and support in planning and coordination of data acquisition and in data analysis as well as in the elaboration of the submission to CLCS
- ▶ training courses in marine geoscientific issues
- ▶ support in access to relevant geoscientific data upon request via the One Stop Data Shop of the UNEP Shelf Programme



Marine geophysical survey, airguns in action

Advantages



Drilling platform

For many developing countries the delineation of the outer limits of their continental shelf bears a high economic potential. In the extended zones countries are exclusively entitled to

- ▶ explore and exploit non-living resources of the seabed and subsoil (e. g. oil and natural gas, gas hydrates, ore and other mineral resources), plus sedentary species
- ▶ conduct and coordinate research
- ▶ install marine-technical systems (e. g. pipelines)
- ▶ impose environmental restraints and supervise their fulfilment according to UNCLOS.

Future advances in extraction methods are expected to put many of the seabed resources, now inaccessible, within reach. Thus, states will be able to derive optimal benefits from the new ocean order in the future.



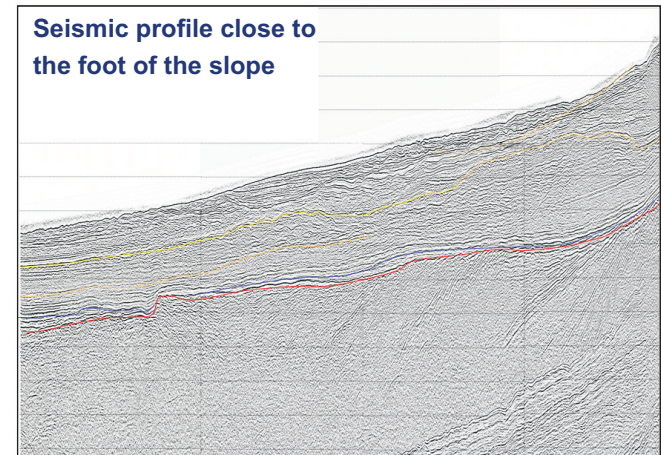
German research vessel RV METEOR

Background UNCLOS

The United Nations Convention on the Law of the Sea (UNCLOS) defines the different maritime zones and regulates marine sovereignty rights and rights of use, among others.

According to the Convention, the continental shelf of a coastal state comprises the submerged natural prolongation of its land territory, and consists of the seabed and subsoil of the shelf, the slope and the rise. According to Article 76, the juridical continental shelf can - under certain geological conditions - be delineated up to a maximum of approximately 350 nautical miles measured from the territorial sea baseline. For this purpose, states must submit large volumes of geophysical data describing the shape of the continental margin, the sediment thickness and the location of the "foot of slope" of the continental shelf.

In many cases, the option of a joint submission to the CLCS helps to significantly reduce costs, and to postpone or even settle unsolved disputes on maritime borders between neighbouring states.



Seismic profile close to the foot of the slope