

Decree of the Presidium of 6 February 1968 on the Continental Shelf

1. The USSR exercises sovereign rights over the continental shelf adjacent to the outer limit of the territorial sea of the USSR, for the purpose of exploring it and exploiting its natural resources.

The continental shelf of the USSR consists of the sea-bed and the subsoil of the submarine areas adjacent to the coast or to the islands of the USSR but outside the area of the territorial sea, to a depth of 200 metres or, beyond that limit, to where the depth of the superjacent waters admits of the exploitation of the natural resources of the said areas.

The sea-bed and the subsoil of depressions entirely surrounded by the continental shelf of the USSR, irrespective of their depth, are part of the continental shelf of the USSR.

2. Where the boundary of the continental shelf of the USSR is adjacent to those of other States, that boundary shall be determined by agreements with those States. In the absence of such agreements, and unless another boundary line is justified by special circumstances:

(a) The boundary of the continental shelf of the USSR with a State whose coasts are opposite those of the USSR shall be the median line, every point of which is equidistant from the nearest points of the baselines from which the breadth of the territorial sea of the USSR and of the other State is measured;

(b) The boundary of the continental shelf of the USSR with a State whose shelf is contiguous to that of the USSR shall be determined by application of the principle of equidistance from the nearest points of the baselines from which the breadth of the territorial sea of the USSR and of the other State is measured.

3. The natural resources of the continental shelf are the State property of the USSR. The exploration and exploitation of those resources and any research on the continental shelf shall be carried out in accordance with the current legislation of the Union of Soviet Socialist Republics and the union republics.

The natural resources of the continental shelf mean the mineral and other non-living resources of the sea-bed and the subsoil, together with living organisms belonging to sedentary species, that is to say, organisms which, at the harvestable stage, either are immobile on or under the sea-bed or are unable to move except in constant physical contact with the sea-bed or the subsoil. A list of the species of living organisms which are natural resources of the continental shelf of the USSR shall be drawn up by the Ministry of Fishing of the USSR and published for purposes of general information.

4. For the purpose of the exploration and exploitation of the natural resources of the continental shelf, the competent authorities of the USSR shall authorize the construction of installations and other devices and the establishment around such installations and devices of safety zones which may extend to a distance of 500 metres from the installations and devices, measured from any point on their outer edge. The construction of any such installations and devices and of the establishment of safety zones shall be announced in the "Notices to Navigators" of the Hydrographic Department of the Ministry of Defence of the USSR.

These installations or devices and the safety zones around them shall not be established where interference may be caused to the use of recognized sea lanes essential to international navigation.

Such installations and devices and the safety zones around them shall be under the jurisdiction of the Union of

Soviet Socialist Republics.

Foreign ships may enter the safety zones only with the special permission of the competent Soviet authorities.

The organization responsible for the maintenance and operation of such installations and devices shall be obliged to protect them, to maintain permanent means for giving warning of their presence and to undertake, in the safety zones, measures for the protection of the living resources of the sea from harmful agents. Any installations or devices which are permanently disused must be entirely removed.

5. Foreign physical and juridical persons shall be prohibited from surveying, exploring or exploiting the natural resources or carrying on any other activity on the continental shelf of the USSR unless such activity is specifically provided for by an agreement between the USSR and the foreign State concerned or by special permission granted by the competent authorities of the USSR.

6. Persons guilty of violating this Decree may be sentenced by a court to a fine of up to 10,000 roubles or imprisonment for up to one year or both, unless the legislation of the Union of Soviet Socialist Republics and the union republics provides a stricter punishment for the violation in question.

7. If article 5 of this Decree is violated, the vessel and all the instruments and tools used by the person committing the violation and anything which has been obtained illegally shall be liable to confiscation.

8. The task of protecting the natural resources of the continental shelf of the USSR shall be the responsibility of the fisheries supervision bodies which, in performing their duties, shall be guided by the current legislation of the Union of Soviet Socialist Republics and the union republics, and by agreements of the Union of Soviet Socialist Republics and the union republics with other States.

Where necessary, border guards shall assist the above-mentioned bodies in taking action to protect the natural resources of the continental shelf of the USSR.

9. The task of checking that the mineral and other non-living resources of the continental shelf of the USSR are being properly exploited shall be the responsibility of the organs of the State Inspectorate of Mine Engineering of the USSR, which shall be guided by the current regulations, instructions and other regulatory enactments designed to protect the country's mineral wealth.