

Updated Paper for Reporting Updates by SCUFN-37

Follow-up SCUFN36/04.6/01: Status Updates on Joint Proposals on the Way Forward in the South China Sea

Submitted by:	Malaysia
Objective:	To update the SCUFN Members on the progress achieved by all interested parties on the way forward for SCUFN to deal with proposals for naming undersea features in the South China Sea

Background

At SCUFN-36, several statements were made by the Member States (Observer Status) arguing the impossibility for SCUFN Members to review all proposals for naming features located in the South China Sea based on the “politically sensitive” issue. A few interested parties (Coastal States of the South China Sea) requested to temporarily “freeze” the undersea feature naming proposals in the South China Sea.

During the meeting, SCUFN Members noted the request from the Observers and agreed to go for a vote (secret ballot) on the following question: “In application of ROP 2.10, do SCUFN Members consider that all proposals located in the South China Sea should be frozen until a joint proposal on the way forward is made to SCUFN by the interested parties?”. With the outcome of the voting procedure, SCUFN agreed “to freeze” the undersea features naming proposals in the South China Sea until a Joint Proposal on the way forward is submitted by all interested parties (Decision SCUFN36/04.6/01 refers).

Discussion

This paper is a brief update on the progress made by all interested parties in discussing the Joint Proposal for the way forward of the undersea features naming proposals in the South China Sea.

Pursuant to the decision made at SCUFN-36, Malaysia had taken the initiative to convene the engagement session with all interested parties namely the Philippines, Viet Nam and China. The planned engagement session was scheduled from 23rd to 24th May 2024 in Kuala Lumpur, Malaysia. The two-day engagement session planned to commence in the traditional ASEAN spirit involving Malaysia, the Philippines and Viet Nam and followed by a session with China on the second day.

As Viet Nam and the Philippines had not received mandate by their respective governments to engage in a discussion with China, Malaysia hosted two separate engagement sessions namely the Trilateral Engagement Meeting between Malaysia, the Philippines and Viet Nam on 23rd May 2024 and Bilateral Consultation between Malaysia and the People’s Republic of China on 24th May 2024.

The outcomes of the engagement sessions are as follows:

- To explore the mechanism and possible options for the submissions of proposals on the way forward for the naming of undersea features in the South China Sea.
- To ensure future engagement sessions are well-structured, Malaysia will prepare a timeline for the submission of the mechanism and possible options to be made at SCUFN in the form of a draft Framework of Engagement Session of All Interested Parties and Acceptable Timelines, Details of Programme for a Joint Proposal for consideration and consensus of all interested parties.

Conclusion

All interested parties should continue their commitments to engage and explore a Joint Proposal on the way forward for undersea features naming in the South China Sea, which will require several engagement sessions.

Action required of SCUFN

SCUFN is invited to take note of this updated report to be presented at SCUFN-37.