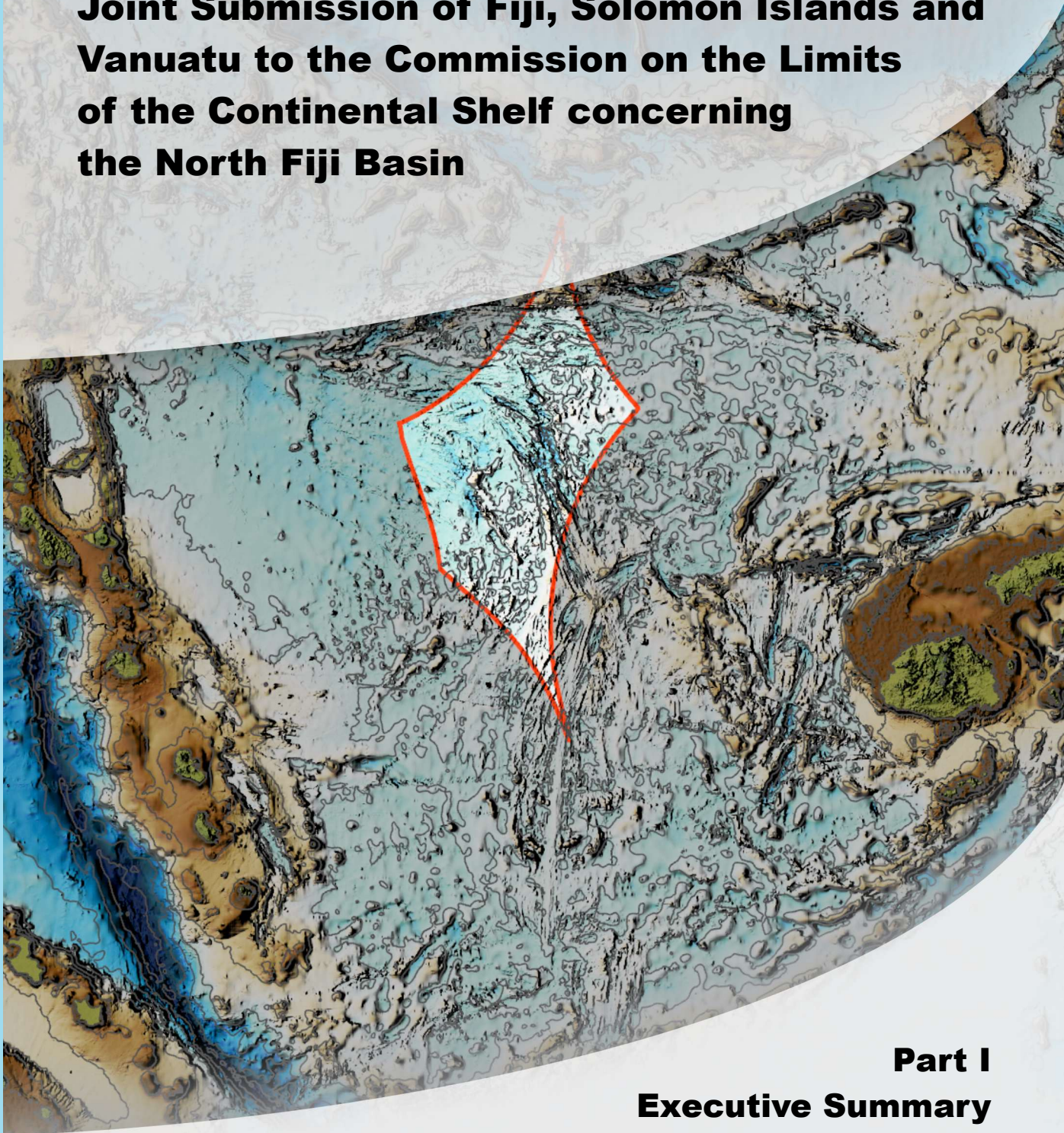




# **Joint Submission of Fiji, Solomon Islands and Vanuatu to the Commission on the Limits of the Continental Shelf concerning the North Fiji Basin**



**Part I**  
**Executive Summary**  
**NFB-ES-DOC**

## Contents

1. Introduction .....	1
2. Joint Submission.....	1
3. Partial Submissions and Preliminary Information.....	2
4. Absence of Disputes .....	3
5. Form of Submission, Maps and Tables .....	3
6. Provisions of Article 76 Invoked.....	3
7. Geographic, Morphological and Geological Overview .....	4
8. Extent of the Continental Shelf beyond 200 M.....	4

The Governments of Fiji, Solomon Islands and Vanuatu acknowledge the assistance and support of the following organisations:

- Geoscience, Energy and Maritime (GEM) Division, Pacific Community (SPC)
- GeoLimits Consulting, Canada
- The Government of the United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland
- United Nations Environment Program/GRID-Arendal
- GeoScience Australia
- Australian Attorney General's Department



## 1. Introduction

This Executive Summary forms part of the Submission made jointly by the Republic of the Fiji Islands, Solomon Islands and the Republic of Vanuatu (hereinafter referred to collectively as 'the three coastal States'), pursuant to paragraph 8 of Article 76 of the United Nations Convention on the Law of the Sea, 1982 ('the Convention'), in support of the establishment by the three coastal States of continental shelf that lies beyond 200 nautical miles ('M') from the baselines from which the breadth of the territorial sea is measured ('territorial sea baselines ') in the North Fiji Basin (NFB) region.

Where the continental shelf extends beyond 200 M from the territorial sea baselines (the 200 M limit), a coastal State seeking to establish the outer limits of its continental shelf beyond 200 M consistent with the Convention, is required under paragraph 8 of Article 76 to submit information on such outer limits to the Commission on the Limits of the Continental Shelf (hereinafter referred to as 'the Commission'). The Commission makes recommendations to the coastal State on matters related to the establishment of the outer limits of the continental shelf consistent with the relevant provisions of Article 76 of the Convention.

As provided for under paragraph 1 of Article 76, the three coastal States have a continental shelf comprising the seabed and subsoil of the submarine areas that extend beyond the territorial sea throughout the natural prolongation of the relevant land territory to the outer edge of the continental margin, up to the limits provided for in paragraphs 4 to 6 of Article 76.

The three coastal States are each Contracting Parties to the Convention and have, for the purposes of preparing this Submission, applied the relevant provisions of Article 76 of the Convention, the Rules of Procedure of the Commission on the Limits of the Continental Shelf (CLCS/40/Rev. 1) adopted by the Commission on 17 April 2008 ('Rules of Procedure') and the Scientific and Technical Guidelines of the Commission on the Limits of the Continental Shelf (CLCS/11) adopted by the Commission on 13 May 1999 ('the Guidelines').

The three coastal States have, for the purposes of this Submission, interpreted all references in Article 76 of the Convention to 'a coastal State', 'the coastal State', 'its territorial sea', 'the territorial sea', and 'its land territory' as applicable to 'the coastal States', 'their territorial seas' and 'their land territories' respectively, as the circumstances require.

## 2. Joint Submission

In accordance with paragraph 4 of Annex I to the Rules of Procedure, the three coastal States have agreed to make a joint submission to the Commission in support of the

establishment by them of their continental shelf in the region of the NFB that lies beyond 200 M from the territorial sea baselines of the three coastal States.

This Submission is therefore of a joint nature, and comprises a single document prepared collaboratively by the three coastal States.

For the purpose of paragraph 9.1.4(c) of the Guidelines, no member of the Commission gave advice in the preparation of the Submission.

### 3. Partial Submissions and Preliminary Information

This Submission also represents a partial submission in respect of a portion only of the continental shelf beyond the 200 M limit of the three coastal States. In this regard, Fiji has previously submitted a partial submission, on 20 April 2009 (as revised on 30 April 2012), for which the Executive Summary has been duly publicised ('Partial Submission to the Commission on the Limits of the Continental Shelf pursuant to Article 76, paragraph 8 of the United Nations Convention on the Law of the Sea 1982 in the Region of the Lau-Colville and Tonga-Kermadec Complex').

The lodgment of this partial joint submission also follows the lodgment of a Joint Submission by the Papua New Guinea, Solomon Islands and Federated States of Micronesia concerning the Ontong Java Plateau on 9 May 2009 pursuant to paragraph 8 of Article 76 of the Convention in support of the establishment by those three coastal States of the outer limits of the extended continental shelf that lies beyond 200 M from the baselines from which the breadth of their respective territorial seas is measured in the region of the Ontong Java Plateau.

On 21 April 2009, the three coastal States submitted to the Secretary-General preliminary information indicative of the area of continental shelf beyond the 200 M limit for NFB region pursuant to the *Decision regarding the workload of the Commission on the Limits of the Continental Shelf and the ability of States, particularly developing States, to fulfil the requirements of article 4 of annex II to the United Nations Convention on the Law of the Sea, as well as the decision contained in SPLOS/72, paragraph (a)* (SPLOS/183), particularly developing States, to fulfil the requirements of Article 4 of Annex II to the Convention, as well as the *Decision regarding the date of commencement of the ten-year period for making submissions to the Commission on the Limits of the Continental Shelf set out in article 4 of Annex II to the United Nations Convention on the Law of the Sea* (SPLOS/72), paragraph (a).

This partial joint submission for the NFB Region defines the extent of the continental shelf beyond the 200 M limit and replaces the previously submitted preliminary information indicative of the area beyond those limits.

Furthermore, in accordance also with paragraph 3 of Annex I to the Rules of Procedure, submissions for other areas of continental shelf beyond the 200 M limit for

each of the three coastal State have already been made, or shall be made, at a later date.

#### 4. Absence of Disputes

In accordance with paragraph 2 (a) of Annex I of the Rules of Procedure, the three coastal States confirm that the area of continental shelf that forms the basis of this Joint Submission is not the subject of any dispute between the three coastal States, or with regard to any other State.

The three coastal States have agreed further, pursuant to paragraph 4(a) of Annex I to the Rules of Procedure, to make this Submission in respect of the establishment of the extended continental shelf in the NFB region without prejudice to the delimitation of the extended continental shelf between them. Therefore, the delimitation of the area that is the subject of this Joint Submission shall be agreed once the Commission has concluded its consideration of the Joint Submission and after the outer limits of the area concerned have been duly established.

#### 5. Form of Submission, Maps and Tables

In accordance with Article 1 of Annex III to the Rules of Procedure and paragraphs 9.1.3 to 9.1.6 of the Guidelines, this Joint Submission consists of three parts comprising:

- this Executive Summary (NFB-SUB-ES-DOC);
- the Main Body (NFB-SUB-MB-DOC); and,
- Supporting scientific and technical data (NFB-SUB-SD).

A separate section of this Executive Summary provides a brief outline of the region of continental shelf beyond the 200 M limit, including a depiction of the extent of the continental shelf determined by the three coastal States.

A map at an appropriate scale is included in this Executive Summary and has been duly supplied as separate A0-size maps. Map 1 (Figure 1: NFB-ES-MAP 1) depicts the outer limits of the continental shelf showing the outer limit line and area of continental shelf extending beyond the 200 M limit.

#### 6. Provisions of Article 76 Invoked

The three coastal States invoke paragraphs 3, 4(a)(ii) and 5 of Article 76 of the Convention in support of the determination of the extent of the continental shelf beyond the 200 M limit included in the Joint Submission. The continental shelf beyond the 200 M limit of the three coastal States that is the subject of this Joint Submission lies in the

centre of the NFB continental margin and is bounded on all sides by the 200 M limit of all three coastal States (hereinafter referred to as “the Enclave”).

In accordance with the Guidelines, the three coastal States have delineated the extent of the continental shelf beyond the 200 M limit by means of the application of the rules set out in paragraphs 3 to 10 of Article 76 of the Convention. In this regard, the three coastal States are able to demonstrate, in accordance with paragraph 2.2.3 of the Guidelines, that the submerged prolongation of the landmass to the outer edge of the continental margin extends through the Enclave and beyond the 200 M distance criterion in respect of the area included in this Joint Submission.

## 7. Geographic, Morphological and Geological Overview

This Joint Submission relates to the NFB region of the Southwest Pacific within the continental margin of Fiji, Solomon Islands and Vanuatu, which is characterised by a series of seamounts, plateaus, bathymetric elevations, trenches and basins. In this region, the three coastal States share an area of common continental shelf located in the central part of the NFB.

The NFB is a high-standing structure with respect to the surrounding Pacific seafloor. The floor of the NFB lies at a depth of approximately 3000 m. Within it, there are numerous seamounts, ridges and other elevations that account for a highly irregular topography. The NFB is surrounded by deeper basins of the Pacific, namely the Pacific Basin, which lies to the east, Ellice Basin which lies to the north, the South Fiji Basin, which lies to the south and the North Loyalty and D’Entrecasteaux basins that lie to the west. All of these basins occur at depths significantly deeper than the NFB.

The NFB is surrounded by volcanic arc ridges – the Solomon Islands Arc, Vanuatu Arc, Fiji Platform – upon which the islands of the three coastal States are located. The NFB also comprises a series of smaller volcanic edifices such as Rotuma Ridge, Pandora Bank and others. These ridge systems are morphologically continuous with the NFB. The NFB is bounded by deep trench systems – The New Hebrides Trench and the Hunter Trench – on its western and southern flanks. The NFB is morphologically continuous with the Fiji Platform and Lau Basin.

A detailed examination of the geology of the region is presented in the Main Body of the Joint Submission, which includes a discussion that demonstrates clearly the natural prolongation from the relevant landmasses.

## 8. Extent of the Continental Shelf beyond 200 M

The three coastal States have defined their collective continental shelf within the NFB in the Enclave beyond the 200 M limit. The Enclave constitutes the continental shelf, which comprises the seabed and subsoil of the submarine areas that extend beyond



their respective territorial seas throughout the natural prolongation of each of their land territories to the outer edge of the continental margin, which has been shown in this chapter to circumscribe the NFB Region (Figure 1).

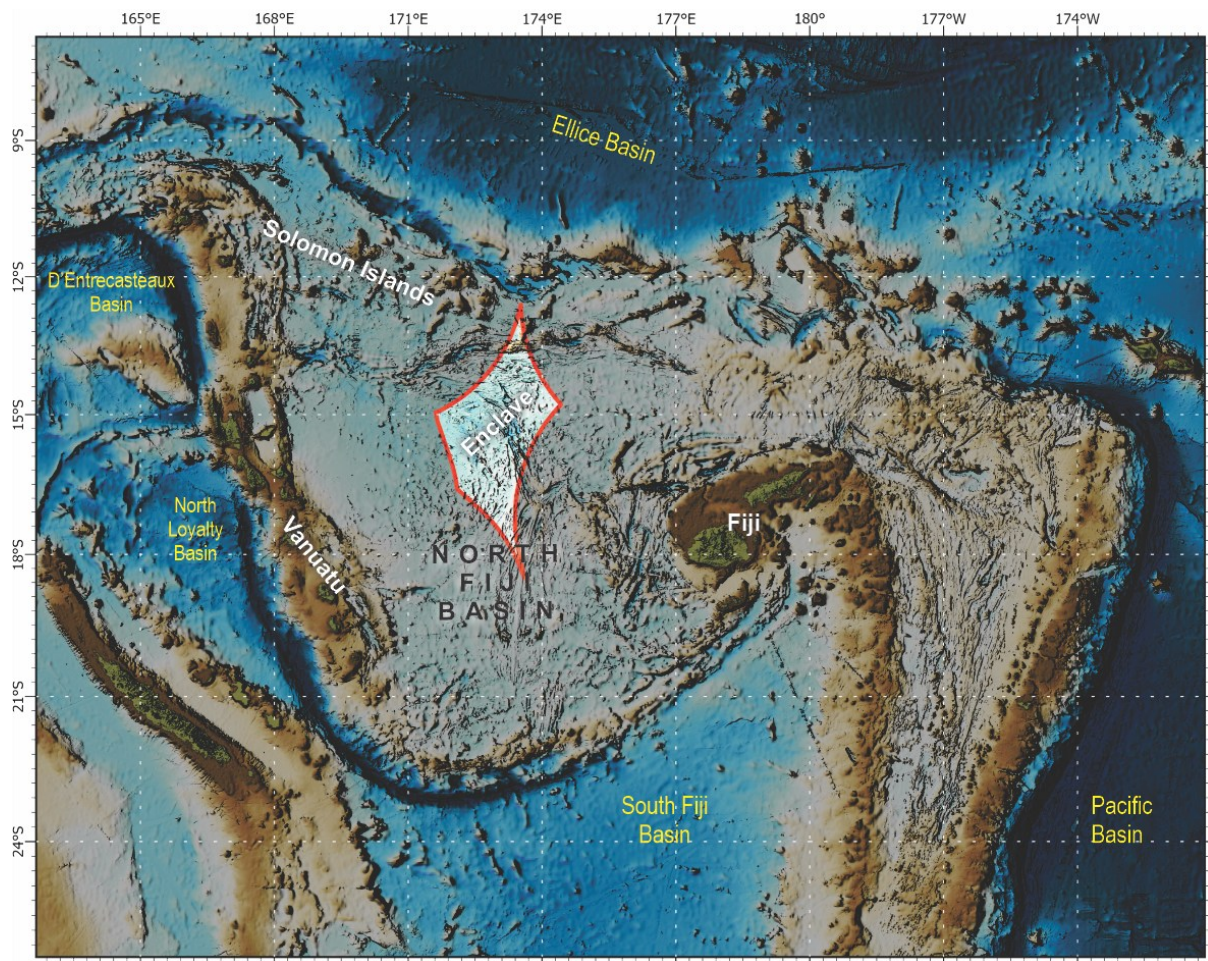


Figure 1: Map illustrating the continental shelf beyond 200 M (Enclave) for the three coastal States in the North Fiji Basin Region. 200 M limit shown in red. Bathymetry: GEBCO 2023

