



## mineral resources & energy

Department:  
Mineral Resources and Energy  
REPUBLIC OF SOUTH AFRICA

Enquiries: Ms Sinazo Mnyaka

EAP Reg No.: 2022/5486

Email Address: [mnyakas@petroleumagencysa.com](mailto:mnyakas@petroleumagencysa.com)

---

By E-MAIL

**Africa Oil SA Corp, Ricocure (Pty) Limited and Azinam Limited**

Unit 7, The Pavilion

Central Park

Esplanade Road

Century City

Cape Town

7441

Attention : Mr Jan Maier

Email : [jan.maier@africaenergycorp.com](mailto:jan.maier@africaenergycorp.com)

**ENVIRONMENTAL AUTHORISATION IN TERMS OF SECTION 24 OF THE NATIONAL ENVIRONMENTAL MANAGEMENT ACT, 1998 (ACT 107 OF 1998) AS AMENDED, READ WITH REGULATION 23 OF ENVIRONMENTAL IMPACT ASSESSMENT REGULATIONS, 2014 AS AMENDED, FOR THE PROPOSED EXPLORATION WELL DRILLING IN BLOCK 3B/4B OFF THE WEST COAST OF SOUTH AFRICA**

I, Mr Jacob Mbele, in terms of the powers delegated to me, in terms of regulation 24 of the National Environmental Management Act, 1998 (Act 107 of 1998): Environmental Impact Assessment Regulations, 2014 as amended (hereinafter referred to as the 'EIA Regulations') decided to grant an environmental

authorisation (EA) in respect of the application lodged on 18 July 2023. Herewith attached is a copy of the EA and the reasons for the decision to grant.

You are instructed in terms of regulation 4(2) of the EIA Regulations to notify all interested and affected parties (I&APs), in writing, within fourteen (14) days of the date of the decision, of the outcomes of your EA application. You are also required to inform I&APs of the procedure to submit appeals against the decision as contained in the National Environmental Management Act, 1998 (Act 107 of 1998): National Appeals Regulations, 2014 (hereinafter referred to as the 'Appeals Regulations').

Should you wish to appeal against the decision or any aspect thereof, you must submit an appeal in the prescribed form and in accordance with Chapter 2 of the Appeals Regulations, within twenty (20) days from the date of notification of this decision. The said appeal must be submitted to the Minister of Forestry, Fisheries and the Environment, and copies must be sent to the Minister of Mineral Resources and Energy (Head Office) and the Petroleum Agency SA by one (1) of the following means:

**1) Department of Forestry, Fisheries, and the Environment**

Appeals and Legal Review Directorate

Attention : Director: Appeals and Legal Review

Email : [appeals@dffe.gov.za](mailto:appeals@dffe.gov.za)

Post : Private Bag x 447, Pretoria, 0001

By Hand : Environmental House, Corner Steve Biko and Soutspansberg Street, Acardia, Pretoria, 0083

**2) Copy(s) of the lodged appeal(s) to the Petroleum Agency SA**

Attention : The Chief Executive Officer

Email : [EAappeals@petroleumagencyrsa.com](mailto:EAappeals@petroleumagencyrsa.com)

Post : Private Bag x 5111, Tygervalley, 7536

By Hand : Heron Place, Second Floor, Heron Close, Century City, Cape Town, 7441

**3) Copy(s) of the lodged appeal(s) to the Department of Mineral Resources and Energy**

Legal Services Directorate

Attention : Director: Legal Services

Email : [Pieter.Alberts@dmre.gov.za](mailto:Pieter.Alberts@dmre.gov.za)

Facsimile : 086 710 0877

Africa Oil SA Corp, Ricocure (Pty) Ltd & Azinam Ltd 12-3-339

Post : Private Bag x 59, Arcadia, 0007

By Hand : Trevenna Campus, Building 2C, c/o Meintjes and Francis Baard Street, Sunnyside

The authorised activities shall not commence within twenty (20) days from the date that the notification of this EA decision was sent to I&APs. Please note, should the Minister of Forestry, Fisheries and the Environment receive appeals against this EA or conditions thereof, this EA will be suspended in accordance with section 43(7) of the National Environmental Management Act, 1998 (Act 107 of 1998) as amended pending the decision on such appeals.

Yours sincerely,



.....  
MR JACOB MBELE

DIRECTOR-GENERAL

DATE: 16/09/2024



## mineral resources & energy

Department:  
Mineral Resources and Energy  
REPUBLIC OF SOUTH AFRICA

Enquiries: Ms Sinazo Mnyaka

EAP Reg No.: 2022/5486

Email Address: [mnyakas@petroleumagencyrsa.com](mailto:mnyakas@petroleumagencyrsa.com)

---

ENVIRONMENTAL AUTHORISATION IN TERMS OF THE NATIONAL ENVIRONMENTAL  
MANAGEMENT ACT, 1998 (ACT 107 OF 1998) AS AMENDED AND THE ENVIRONMENTAL IMPACT  
ASSESSMENT REGULATIONS, 2014 AS AMENDED

IN RESPECT OF

THE PROPOSED EXPLORATION WELL DRILLING IN OFFSHORE BLOCK 3B/4B, OFF THE WEST  
COAST OF SOUTH AFRICA

### APPLICATION DETAILS

Application Reference Number	12/3/339
Holder of the Environmental Authorisation	Africa Oil SA Corp, Ricocure (Pty) Limited and Azinam Limited
Location of the Activity	Block 3B/4B, off the west coast of South Africa
Size of the Environmental Authorisation Application Area	Block 3B/4B: ~ 17 581 km <sup>2</sup> Northern Area of Interest: ~1 637 km <sup>2</sup> Central Area of Interest: ~3 069 km <sup>2</sup>

This environmental authorisation (hereinafter referred to as the “authorisation”) does not negate the holder of the authorisation of the responsibility to comply with any other statutory requirements that may be applicable to the undertaking of the proposed activity(s).



## DECISION ON THE AUTHORISATION

---

### ACRONYMS

AGENCY	: Petroleum Agency SA
DEPARTMENT	: Department of Mineral Resources and Energy
ECO	: Environmental Control Officer
EIAR	: Environmental Impact Assessment Report
EIA REGULATIONS	: Environmental Impact Assessment Regulations, 2014, as amended
EMPr	: Environmental Management Programme
I&APs	: Interested and Affected Parties
MPRDA	: Mineral and Petroleum Resources Development Act, 2002 (Act 28 of 2002), as amended
NEMA	: National Environmental Management Act, 1998 (Act 107 of 1998), as amended

The Department is satisfied with the information made available to it, and subject to compliance with the conditions of this authorisation, Africa Oil SA Corp, Ricocure (Pty) Limited and Azinam Limited, should be authorised to undertake the activities listed under the EIA Regulations, as specified below. Details regarding the basis on which the Department reached this decision are set out in Annexure 1 of this authorisation.

### ACTIVITY (S) AUTHORISED

By virtue of the powers conferred on it by the NEMA and the EIA Regulations, the Department hereby **grants** the authorisation to **Africa Oil SA Corp, Ricocure (Pty) Limited and Azinam Limited** to undertake NEMA EIA listed activities specified in section 3 below and as described in the EIAR submitted on **20 May 2024**. The granting of this authorisation is subject to compliance with conditions specified under section 5 below.

#### 1. DETAILS OF THE HOLDER OF THIS ENVIRONMENTAL AUTHORISATION

Africa Oil SA Corp, Ricocure (Pty) Limited and Azinam Limited  
Unit 7, The Pavilion  
Central Park  
Esplanade Road  
Century City  
7441

Contact Person : Mr Jan Maier  
 Email : [jan.maier@africaenergycorp.com](mailto:jan.maier@africaenergycorp.com)

## 2. DETAILS OF THE ENVIRONMENTAL ASSESSMENT PRACTITIONER

Environmental Impact Management Services (Pty) Limited  
 8 Dalmeny Road  
 Pine Park  
 Randburg  
 2194

Contact Person : Mr Liam Whitlow  
 Email : [block3b4b@eims.co.za](mailto:block3b4b@eims.co.za)

## 3. LIST OF ACTIVITIES AUTHORISED

Table 1 below tabulates the listed activity(s) authorised under the EIA Regulations: Listing Notice 2 (Government Notice No. R 984) of 04 December 2014.

Table 1: Authorised Listed Activity

Activity No.	Activity Description	Applicability
18	<p><i>“Any activity including the operation of that activity which requires an exploration right in terms of section 79 of the Mineral and Petroleum Resources Development Act, a swell as any other applicable activity as contained in this Listing Notice, in Listing Notice 1 of 2014 or in Listing Notice 3 of 2014, required to exercise the exploration right, excluding (a) any desktop study; (b) any arial survey; (c) any onshore seismic survey which is included in activity 21C in Listing Notice 1 of 2014, in which case that activity applies; (d) a hydraulic fracturing activity which is included in activity 20A, in which case activity 20A of this Notice applies; and (e) the processing of a petroleum resource, including the beneficiation or refining of gas, oil or petroleum products, in which case activity 5 of this Notice applies.”</i></p>	<p>The undertaking of exploration activities within the Block 3B/4B offshore area, requires an Exploration Right in terms of the Mineral and Petroleum Resources Development Act, 2002 (Act 28 of 2002), as amended.</p>

The holder of this authorisation is authorised to conduct the following activities within the area described under section 4 below:

- The drilling of up to five (5) exploration wells within the two (2) identified areas of interest (AOI), i.e., the northern AOI and the central AOI, located within Block 3B/4B. It is proposed that one (1) well will be drilled in the central AOI and four (4) wells will be drilled in the northern AOI.
- The scheduled drilling, though not yet confirmed, may commence between the first quarter of 2025 and the second quarter of 2025. Each well's physical drilling and testing process is expected to take approximately three (3) to four (4) months.
- The use of a semi-submersible drilling unit or a drill-ship, both of which are equipped with a dynamic positioning system suitable for the deep-water marine environment at the well site(s). The semi-submersible drilling unit or drill-ship will be serviced by up to three (3) support vessels. Additionally, a helicopter will be used for personnel transfers and reprovisioning between the drilling unit or drill-ship and the Springbok Airport. The onshore logistics base will be located at the Port of Cape Town or the Port of Saldanha.
- Pre-drilling surveys to provide information, in addition to the further analysis of existing three-dimensional (3D) seismic data, to facilitate the selection of the specific well location(s). Remote Operated Vehicle (ROV) will be used to determine the final specific well positions based on among others, the presence of identified seafloor obstacles and sensitive features.
- Executing the drilling in two (2) stages namely, the riserless drilling stage and the risered drilling stage. The two stages are as follows:
  - The riserless stage is the initial stage, where a 36 inch diameter hole will be drilled. A conductor pipe will be run into the hole and cemented into place, after which a low-pressure wellhead will be placed on top of the conductor. Below the conductor pipe, a hole of approximately 26 inches in diameter will be drilled (to a planned depth) after which the bit and drill string will be pulled out of the hole. A surface casing of 20 inches in diameter will be placed into the hole and secured using cement. This casing will have a high-pressure wellhead on top, which will serve as the connection point for the Blow-Out Preventer (BOP). All cuttings and Water Based Muds (WBMs) from this stage will be discharged directly onto the seafloor.
  - The next drilling stage, the risered drilling stage, involves the lowering and installation of the BOP on the wellhead. The function of the BOP is to seal the well and prevent any uncontrolled release of fluids from the well, i.e., to prevent a "well blow-out" incident. A lower marine riser package is installed on top of the BOP and the entire unit is lowered on riser joints. The riser isolates the drilling fluid and cuttings from the external environment



therefore creating a closed-loop system. Drilling is continued by lowering the drill string through the riser, BOP, and casing and by rotating the drill string. If the WBMs cannot provide the necessary characteristics, a lower toxicity non-aqueous drilling fluid (NADF) will be used, and the resultant cuttings will be treated to reduce the oil content before discharge overboard. The precise drilling target depth is anticipated at a notional well depth of approximately 3 750 m below the seafloor, with a final hole diameter ranging between 8.5 and 12.25 inch and a casing diameter ranging between 7 and 9.6 inch.

- The logging and possible testing (depending on drilling results) of the well(s) once the target depth (~3 750 m below seafloor) is achieved. The two (2) processes are as follows:
  - Well logging involves the evaluation of the physical and chemical properties of sub-surface rocks, and mineral components, including water, oil, and gas. The well logging process aims to confirm the presence of petroleum and the petrophysical characteristics of rocks.
  - The use of vertical seismic profiling (VSP) to generate high-resolution seismic images of the geology in the well's immediate vicinity. The VSP enables the determination of the formation velocity, and correlations with surface seismic images and assists in the planning of the drill bit's path during the drilling process.
- Well sealing and plugging of the exploration wells, including integrity testing will be executed in accordance with best industry practices once exploration activities are completed.

Leaving wellheads in place for abandoned exploration wells, after being plugged and tested for integrity, on the seabed will be executed in accordance with worldwide industry practices. The wellhead will be covered by suitable over-trawlable equipment. Monitoring equipment will be placed on wellheads to collect data for future use.
- The demobilisation of the drilling unit or drill-ship and support vessels from the drilling location.

#### 4. LOCATION OF THE APPLICATION AREA

The authorisation application area is located within Block 3B/4B, which is approximately 120 km west of St Helena Bay and approximately 145 km south-west of Hondeklip Bay off the West Coast of South Africa. The application area covers approximately 17 581 km<sup>2</sup> in extent, in water depths ranging from 300 m to 2 600 m. Two (2) AOIs, a northern AOI and a central AOI, were identified within Block 3B/4B for the proposed exploration well drilling. The northern AOI covers an area of approximately 1 637 km<sup>2</sup>, while the central AOI covers an area of approximately 3 069 km<sup>2</sup>. The water depths in these AOIs range



between 1000 m and 2 600 m. The coordinates of the authorisation application area and the AOIs are presented in Table 2, below.

Table 2: Block 3B/4B and the Northern and Central AOI Coordinates

Point	Latitude	Longitude	Point	Latitude	Longitude
<b>Block 3B/4B</b>					
1	-31.00030518	14.74908447	12	-32.70800781	16.60467529
2	-31.00030518	15.94488525	13	-33.00018311	16.60467529
3	-31.45031738	15.94488525	14	-33.00030518	16.24932861
4	-31.45031738	15.96588135	15	-32.75030518	16.24932861
5	-31.88360596	15.96588135	16	-32.75030518	15.74908447
6	-31.88360596	16.2824707	17	-32.25030518	15.74908447
7	-32.41699219	16.2824707	18	-32.25030518	15.49908447
8	-32.41699219	16.41589356	19	-32.00030518	15.49908447
9	-32.60028076	16.41589356	20	-32.00030518	14.99908447
10	-32.60028076	16.54931641	21	-31.25030518	14.99908447
11	-32.70800781	16.54931641	22	-31.25030518	14.74908447
<b>Area of Interest (AOI)</b>					
<b>Central AOI</b>			<b>Northern AOI</b>		
AI1	-30.998129	14.850858	AI10	-31.830504	15.177592
AI2	-31.04414	14.792213	AI11	-31562805	15.634182
AI3	-31.253279	14.959769	AI12	-32.018729	16.002804
AI4	-31.253279	15.001658	AI13	-32.2446	15.629993
AI5	-31.307655	14.997469	AI14	-32.248783	15.495948
AI6	-31.44987	15.114758	AI15	-31.997815	15.500137
AI7	-31.282559	15.41217	AI16	-32.001998	15.311637
AI8	-31.023226	15.206914	-	-	-
AI9	-31.002312	15.219481	-	-	-

## 5. CONDITIONS OF THE AUTHORISATION

### 5.1 SCOPE OF AUTHORISATION

- 5.1.1 The holder is authorised to undertake activities specified in section 3 above.
- 5.1.2 The authorised activities must only be carried out within the authorisation application area specified in section 4 and Table 2 above.
- 5.1.3 The holder of this authorisation is responsible for ensuring compliance with the conditions of this authorisation.
- 5.1.4 Any person(s) acting on behalf of the holder, inclusive of contractor(s), subcontractor(s), consultant(s), and employees are also subject to the conditions of this authorisation. This condition, however, does not exonerate the holder from its accountability and responsibility to ensure compliance with the conditions of this authorisation.
- 5.1.5 Any changes to, or deviations from, and amendments to the proposed activities and conditions of this authorisation must be approved in writing by this Department before such changes, deviations or amendments are effected. The Department reserves the right to request the submission of information deemed necessary to assess and evaluate the significance and impacts of such changes, deviations, and amendments. Any changes, deviations and amendments may be subject to the provisions of Chapter 5 of the EIA Regulations.

### 5.2 NOTIFICATION AND APPEAL OF THE AUTHORISATION

- 5.2.1 The holder must, in writing, within fourteen (14) days of the date of this authorisation, notify all registered I&APs of the outcome of the authorisation application.
- 5.2.2 The notification contemplated above must, amongst other issues:
  - 5.2.2.1 Stipulate the date of the decision and the date of issue of this authorisation.
  - 5.2.2.2 Provide reasons for the decision.
  - 5.2.2.3 Inform I&APs of the appeals procedure in terms of the National Environmental Management Act, 1998: National Appeals Regulations (GN R 993 of 08 December 2014).

- 5.2.2.4 Draw the attention of the registered I&APs to the manner in which they may access the decision, including obtaining the copy of this authorisation.

### 5.3 COMMENCEMENT OF THE ACTIVITY(S)

- 5.3.1 The authorised activities shall not commence within twenty (20) days from the date that the notification of the decision of this authorisation was sent to I&APs, pending potential lodgement of appeal(s).
- 5.3.2 Where an appeal is lodged against the decision by any party, this authorisation or any provision or condition thereof will be suspended in accordance with section 43(7) of the NEMA; and as such you may not commence with any activity, until a decision on the appeal(s) is taken.
- 5.3.3 This authorisation is granted for two (2) years from the date of commencement of the authorised activities contained in section 3. The granted period may not be exceeded unless the process to amend the authorisation contemplated in the EIA Regulations is followed.

### 5.4 MANAGEMENT, MONITORING AND AUDITING OF OPERATIONS INCLUDING REPORTING REQUIREMENTS

- 5.4.1 The EMPr submitted with the EIAR is hereby approved. It is hence mandatory for the holder to implement all the recommendations and management measures stipulated in the EMPr throughout all phases of the proposed activities.
- 5.4.2 Any non-compliance with the EMPr constitutes non-compliance with this authorisation, and any non-compliance with this authorisation may result in its suspension and may render the holder guilty of an offence in terms of section 49A of the NEMA and may, if convicted, be liable for penalty as contemplated in terms of section 49B(1) of the NEMA.
- 5.4.3 Should there be changes in the operation and management of the authorised activities, the EMPr must be amended to accommodate those changes in accordance with the EIA Regulations.
- 5.4.4 The holder of this authorisation must implement the necessary measures, to ensure that operators, contractors, subcontractors, and any person(s) acting on behalf of the holder, has full awareness of the recommendations of the EMPr before commencing with any authorised activity.
- 5.4.5 The EMPr must be built into all contractors' contractual agreements.



- 5.4.6 A copy of the EMPr must always be kept onboard the drilling unit or drill-ship.
- 5.4.7 Before the commencement of the authorised activity, the holder must appoint a qualified, competent independent ECO who will undertake compliance monitoring of drilling operations. Thus, ensuring that the conditions of this authorisation and recommended mitigation measures of the EMPr are implemented and adhered to.
- 5.4.8 The holder should appoint at least two (2) independent, qualified, and experienced Marine Mammal Observers (MMOs), one (1) of whom should have Passive Acoustic Monitoring (PAM) training. The MMOs must ensure compliance with the recommended mitigation measures when pre-drilling surveys and VSP are conducted. One (1) independent PAM Operator must be appointed and perform duties when pre-drilling surveys and VSP are conducted. As a minimum, at least (1) PAM Operator must be on watch at all times while acoustic sources are active.
- 5.4.9 A Fisheries and/or Community Liaison Officer must be appointed to facilitate communications between the drilling unit or drill-ship, the support vessel(s) and fishing vessels for the duration of the drilling activities.
- 5.4.10 The holder must keep a daily environmental diary and submit monthly environmental monitoring compliance reports to the competent authority during the drilling operations.
- 5.4.11 The holder of this authorisation must submit an audit report, compiled by an independent consultant, to the competent authority within ninety (90) days from the completion of the drilling campaign.

## 5.5 SPECIFIC CONDITIONS

- 5.5.1 The holder or appointed ECO must, within thirty (30) days prior to the commencement of drilling operations, distribute notifications to all I&APs including the Agency informing them of the operational plans. The said notifications must include amongst other issues the following:
  - 5.5.1.1 The commencement date, including the drilling unit or drill-ship and support vessel(s) mobilisation date(s) and the anticipated duration of the drilling operations.
  - 5.5.1.2 The details of the drilling unit or drill-ship, the helicopter, and the support vessel(s).
  - 5.5.1.3 The sketch plans showing the AOIs, including the co-ordinates of the licenced block, and the northern and central AOIs.
  - 5.5.1.4 The dimensions of the safety zone around the drilling unit or drill ship.



- 5.5.1.5 The details of the appointed ECO, MMOs, PAM and Fisheries/Community Liaison Officer.
- 5.5.1.6 The functional grievance mechanism that allows stakeholders to lodge complaints and any environmental issues arising from the authorised activities.
- 5.5.2 The holder must undertake pre-drilling site surveys to ensure sufficient information on seabed habitats (baseline conditions), including the mapping of any potentially vulnerable habitats within 1 000 m of the proposed well site. The ROV footage must be reviewed by an independent marine ecologist to ensure drilling locations are not located within a 1 000 m radius of any sensitive and potentially vulnerable habitats (e.g., hard grounds), species (e.g., cold corals, sponges) or sensitive structural features (e.g., rocky outcrops).
- 5.5.3 A 500 m safety zone must be enforced around the drilling unit or drill ship within which fishing and other vessels must be excluded.
- 5.5.4 The holder must avoid scheduling drilling operations during the periods when weather and metocean conditions may render drilling operations unsafe.
- 5.5.5 The holder must adhere to all safety protocols, as per the provisions in MARPOL 73/78 Annexes I (oily water), V (biodegradable food waste) and VI (sewage and grey water), to ensure the significant minimisation of pollution.
- 5.5.6 The holder must, within sixty (60) days before the commencement of the proposed drilling operations, submit all specific management plans identified in the EIAR and EMPr i.e., Shipboard Oil Pollution Emergency Plan (SOPEP); Oil Spill Contingency Plan (OSCP); Oiled Wildlife Contingency Plan (OWCP); Emergency Response Plan (ERP); Waste and Discharge Management Plan; Chemical Management Plan; Ballast Water Management Plan; Well Control Contingency Plan; Vessel Maintenance Plan; Stakeholder Engagement Strategy/Plan; and the Operational Plan to the Agency.
- 5.5.7 No exploration activities may occur within the Marine Protected Areas.
- 5.5.8 The holder must immediately notify the South African Heritage Resources Agency and the Agency if any shipwreck or archaeological objects or materials are discovered during the pre-drilling survey. Furthermore, these discoveries must be excluded from areas subject to seabed sampling or well drilling by the implementation of a buffer of at least 50 m around the site or material.
- 5.5.9 In the event of loss of any equipment that presents a risk to navigational activities, other marine users and the environment, measures to retrieve lost equipment must be undertaken. Drop object incidents must be reported to the Agency and South African Navy Hydrography Office.

5.5.10 During the demobilisation process, the holder must ensure that the drilling area is left safe for other activities to take place and must ensure that all I&APs are informed of the completion of drilling operations. The holder remains accountable and liable for any residual or latent risks that may occur or are identified during the completion of drilling operations. In this regard, the necessary measures to address such risks are mandatory.

5.5.11 All recommended mitigation measures included in the EIAR and EMPr dated 20 May 2024 are deemed to be the conditions of this authorisation and must therefore be adhered to.

## 6. DISCLAIMER

The Department shall not be responsible for any damages or losses suffered by the holder in an instance where the operation is temporarily or permanently stopped for reasons of non-compliance with the conditions as set out herein or any other subsequent document or legal action emanating from this decision.

## 7. RECOMMENDATION

In view of the above, and having taken into consideration the environmental management principles as set out in section 2 of the NEMA, and information presented in the authorisation application and EIAR, and subject to compliance with the conditions of this authorisation, this Department is satisfied that the proposed activities will not be in conflict with the objectives of the integrated environmental management set out in Chapter 5 of the NEMA and will not result to any detrimental risks to the environment and the public. **The authorisation is accordingly granted.**



.....  
MR JACOB MBELE

DIRECTOR-GENERAL

DATE OF THE EA: 16/08/2024

## APPENDIX 1: REASONS FOR DECISION

---

### 1. Information Considered in Making the Decision

All the information presented to the Department was considered in making this decision. The said information includes amongst others:

- 1.1 The provisions of Chapter 5 of the National Environmental Management Act, 1998 (Act 107 of 1998) (NEMA), which relates to the integrated environmental management and section 2 of the NEMA principles; the Environmental Impact Assessment Regulations, 2014 (EIA Regulations) as amended and other relevant NEMA regulations and guidelines.
- 1.2 The authorisation application dated 18 July 2023.
- 1.3 The final scoping report submitted, reviewed, and accepted by the competent authority in line with regulations 21 and 22, and Appendix 2 of the EIA Regulations on 16 November 2023.
- 1.4 The information contained in the final EIAR report and the environmental management programme (EMPr), compiled by an independent environmental assessment practitioner (EAP) from Environmental Impact Management Services (Pty) Limited (EIMS), submitted to the Department on 20 May 2024.
- 1.5 The information contained in the following technical and specialist reports submitted with the EIAR on 20 May 2024:
  - 1.5.1 Underwater Sound Transmission Loss Modelling prepared by SLR Consulting (Canada) Limited.
  - 1.5.2 Drilling Discharge Modelling Technical Report prepared by H-Expertise Services S.A.S.
  - 1.5.3 Maritime Heritage Impact Assessment prepared by EIMS.
  - 1.5.4 Climate Change Impact Assessment Report prepared by Airshed Planning Professionals (Pty) Limited.
  - 1.5.5 Air Quality Impact Assessment Report prepared by Airshed Planning Professionals (Pty) Limited.
  - 1.5.6 Social Impact Assessment prepared by Equispectives Research and Consulting Services.
  - 1.5.7 Cultural Heritage Impact Assessment Report prepared by Nelson Mandela University, South Africa.



- 1.5.8 Marine Biodiversity Specialist Assessment prepared by Pisces Environmental Services (Pty) Limited.
  - 1.5.9 Fisheries Specialist Assessment prepared by Capricorn Marine Environmental (Pty) Limited.
  - 1.5.10 Economic Impact Assessment prepared by DEMACON Market Studies.
  - 1.5.11 Oil Spill Drift Modelling (Condensate and Crude Oil) prepared by H-Expertise Services S.A.S.
- 1.6 The results of the Public Participation Process (PPP) submitted with the EIAR, dated 20 May 2024, incorporating issues, objections, concerns, and comments raised by various I&APs and key stakeholders, and responses by the EAP.

## **2. Submission and Consideration of the EIAR and Supporting Documents to the Competent Authority**

2.1 Regulation 23(1)(a) and 23(1)(b) of the EIA Regulations requires Africa Oil SA Corp, Ricocure (Pty) Limited and Azinam Limited, to submit within 106 days of the acceptance of the scoping report or where regulation 21(2) applies within 106 days of the date of receipt of the authorisation application, to submit to the competent authority:

(a) an EIAR inclusive of any specialist reports, and an EMPr, a closure plan in the case of closure activities and where the application is a mining application, the plans, reports and calculations contemplated in the Financial Provisioning Regulations, which must have been subjected to a PPP of at least 30 days and which reflects the incorporation of comments received, including any comments of the competent authority: or

(b) a notification in writing that the documents contemplated in subregulation 1(a), will be submitted within 156 days of acceptance of the scoping report or where regulation 21(2) applies, within 156 days of receipt of the application by the competent authority, as significant changes have been made or significant new information has been added to the documents, which changes or information was not contained in the original documents consulted on during the initial PPP contemplated in subregulation (1)(a), and that the revised documents contemplated in subregulation 1(a) will be subjected to another PPP of at least 30 days.



2.2 Following the commencement of the PPP for the EIAR and supporting documents in accordance with regulation 23(1)(a), the applicant acquired significant new information that required inclusion in the revised EIAR and its supporting documentation. Therefore, on 12 March 2024, the EAP submitted a notification in accordance with regulation 23(1)(b) of the EIA Regulations. The significant new information which was incorporated into the EIAR and supporting documents were as follows:

2.2.1 The inclusion of the modelling of a crude oil blow-out scenario as a worst-case scenario. Therefore, the Oil Spill Drift Modelling Report was revised to model both a condensate blow-out scenario as well as a crude oil blow-out scenario. The outcome of the revised Oil Spill Drift Modelling Report was incorporated in the Social Impact Assessment Report, Cultural Heritage Impact Assessment Report, Marine Biodiversity Specialist Assessment Report, Fisheries Specialist Assessment Report, and the Economic Impact Assessment Report.

2.2.2 The inclusion of the use of non-aqueous drilling fluid (NADF) in the modelling of the drilling discharges and the inclusion of two (2) discharge points [instead of only one (1)] which represents the worst-case locations of five (5) potential well locations. The two (2) discharge points selected for the modelling were determined based on the distance from coast, the proximity to sensitive areas, wind, and current directions. The revised drilling discharge model was used in the Marine Biodiversity Specialist Assessment Report and Fisheries Specialist Assessment Report.

2.2.3 The inclusion of the impact of an unlikely well blow-out incident on climate change was included in the Climate Change Assessment Report and the Air Quality Impact Assessment Report.

2.3 The updated and revised EIAR and supporting documents were subjected to another PPP of at least 30 days and were submitted within the prescribed compliance timeframe i.e., on 20 May 2024.

### 3. Key Findings

The careful consideration of the information submitted to the Department, resulted in the following conclusions:

3.1 All fundamental and procedural requirements prescribed in the applicable legislation are satisfied.

- 3.2 The majority of the potential negative impacts associated with drilling operations were assessed to have low significance with mitigation. The negative impact of an unplanned event, such as a well blow-out, ranges from low to medium significance with mitigation. However, the occurrence of such an event is unlikely and the holder has strategies in place to manage such an event(s), should it occur. The positive impacts were assessed to have low significance.
- 3.3 The identification and assessment of the potential impacts of the activity, including cumulative impacts, was adequately undertaken, and the proposed mitigation and management measures are aligned with potential impacts.
- 3.4 The motivation for the need and desirability of the proposed drilling operations is in line with the requirements of Appendix 3 of the EIA Regulations, and it addresses key issues in the Guideline on the Need and Desirability (2017) published by the then Department of Environmental Affairs. The EIAR emphasises the necessity and desirability of exploration activities due to the potential role of natural gas as a transition fuel. This transitional role is crucial while greener technologies continue to develop and mature. Moreover, these exploration activities aim to ascertain the presence of viable gas and/or oil resources. The results from the exploration could offer valuable insights into potential alternative energy supply options, which would be instrumental in shaping South Africa's future energy planning and policy.
- 3.5 The environmental impact assessment process as prescribed by the EIA Regulations was adhered to by the EAP and this includes identification and assessment of the applicability of relevant legislation, guidelines, and policies. The relevant factors prescribed in section 63 of the National Environmental Management: Integrated Coastal Management Act, 2008 (NEM: ICM Act) that was considered throughout the impact assessment process are as follows:
- 3.5.1 The comprehensive PPP conducted in accordance with Chapter 6, Part 5 of the NEM: ICM Act.
- 3.5.2 The potential positive and negative impacts of the proposed activities (pre-drilling surveys and drilling), including the cumulative impacts identified and assessed during impact assessment process on the coastal public property, the coastal protection zone or coastal access land and coastal environment, including the extent to which the proposed development or activity is consistent with the purpose for establishing and protecting those areas.
- 3.5.3 The impact of the coastal environmental processes on the project was assessed during the environmental impact assessment process.



3.6 Project alternatives with regards to the project location, layout, scheduling, technologies, and no-go were identified and assessed in line with Appendix 3 of the EIA Regulations.

3.6.1 In terms of project location, the applicant was granted an exploration right over the acreage of Block 3B/4B, location alternatives were therefore limited. AOIs located in the northern and central sections of Block 3B/4B are the preferred locations for the drilling based on prospects and leads.

3.6.2 In terms of project layout alternatives, Block 3B/4B does not overlap with any marine protected areas but does to some extent overlap with the Child's Bank Ecologically and Biologically Significant Area. The AOIs avoid the said EBSA and any other environmental sensitive areas with the exception of the Ecological Support Areas and Critical Biodiversity Areas (CBA1 and CBA2). It is recommended that the final placement of the wells within the AOIs will be carefully determined to avoid any CBAs. Given this strategy, no additional layout alternatives were considered feasible.

3.6.3 In terms of project scheduling, cetacean migration and abundance were considered and a precautionary approach is recommended to avoid impacts throughout the year.

3.6.4 In terms of technologies employed by the project, various drilling technologies exist, and the choice of technology is dependent on a number of factors such as water depth and marine operating conditions at the well site. Therefore, based on the anticipated weather conditions and water depths the applicant proposes either the use of a submersible drilling unit or a drill-ship both equipped with a dynamic positioning system. The environmental impact assessment indicates that whether a drill-ship or a submersible drilling unit will be used, the impact difference is not significant. The final decision will be based on the availability and the final design specifications.

3.6.5 In terms of the no-go alternative, the outcome of the assessment indicates that if no exploration takes place, then the negative and positive impacts associated with this project will be avoided. The no-go alternative was not preferred because of the positive impacts, i.e., the opportunity to identify potential oil and gas resources, conduct independent research on the deep-water environments, and the economic benefits, that might be derived from undertaking the planned project.

3.7 The PPP was complied with, in line with Chapter 6 of the EIA Regulations and the related guidelines. The PPP included the following:

- 3.7.1 The initial draft EIAR and associated appendices were made available for public review and comment between 8 January 2024 and 8 February 2024.
- 3.7.2 The public meetings were held in Port Nolloth, Hondeklip Bay, Doringbaai, Ebenhaeser, Lamberts Bay, Elands Bay, St Helena Bay, Saldanha Bay, Yzerfontein, Hout Bay and Cape Town between 22 and 27 January 2024. A virtual meeting was held on 1 February 2024.
- 3.7.3 The updated and revised EIAR and associated appendices were made available for public review and comment between 8 April 2024 and 9 May 2024. Further public meetings were held in Port Nolloth, Hondeklip Bay, Doringbaai, Ebenhaeser, Lamberts Bay, Elands Bay, Saldanha Bay, Yzerfontein, Steenberg's Cove, Hout Bay and Cape Town between 15 April and 21 April 2024. A virtual meeting was held on 25 April 2024.
- 3.7.4 Notification letters in English, Afrikaans and isiXhosa were distributed to registered I&APs through either registered mails, faxes, and/or emails and/or SMS to inform the I&APs of the availability of the EIAR and the updated and revised EIAR. The non-technical summaries were prepared in English, Afrikaans, and isiXhosa. They were distributed together with notifications, made available on the EAP's website, and was distributed at the public meetings.
- 3.7.5 One hundred and fifty (150) A1 Correx site notices (English, Afrikaans, and isiXhosa) were placed at 150 locations along the west coast between 12 June 2023 and 17 June 2023.
- 3.7.6 Newspaper advertisements were published in five (5) newspapers (English, Afrikaans, and isiXhosa) between 14 June 2023 and 16 June 2023.
- 3.7.7 Radio advertisements were aired multiple times by four (4) radio stations in English, Afrikaans, and isiXhosa between 12 and 21 June 2023.
- 3.7.8 The comments and issues raised by the I&APs were addressed in the updated and revised EIAR.

#### 4. Conclusion

In view of the above and having taken into consideration environmental management principles as set out in section 2 of the NEMA, this Department is satisfied that the proposed activities will not conflict with the objectives of the integrated environmental management set out in Chapter 5



of the NEMA and will not result in any detrimental risks to the environment and the public. This authorisation is accordingly granted.



.....  
**MR JACOB MBELE**

**DIRECTOR-GENERAL**

**DATE OF THE EA:** 16/09/2024