

3rd SESSION OF THE IHO ASSEMBLY

Monaco, 2-5 May 2023

REPORT OF THE Eastern Atlantic Hydrographic Commission (EAtHC)

1. Chair:

- Radm Laurent Kerléguer, France, October 2022 – present
- Radm Mário Simões Marques, Portugal, January 2022 – October 2022
- Radm Carlos Ventura Soares, Portugal, October 2020 – January 2022
- Radm Chukwuemeka Ebenezer Okafor, Nigeria, October 2018 – October 2020

Vice-Chair:

- Capt Mostafa Tafrihy, Morocco, October 2022 – present
- Radm Laurent Kerléguer, France, October 2020 – October 2022
- Radm Carlos Ventura Soares, Portugal, October 2018 – October 2020

2. Membership:

Members: Cameroon, Democratic Republic of the Congo, France, Ghana, Morocco, Nigeria, Portugal, Spain.

Associate members: Benin, Cabo Verde, Congo, Côte d'Ivoire, Guinea, Guinea-Bissau, Mauritania, Senegal, Togo, United Kingdom.

Observers: Angola, Equatorial Guinea, Gabon, Gambia, Liberia, São Tome and Príncipe, Sierra Leone, USA, IALA, IHO Secretariat.

3. Meetings:

- 16th EAtHC meeting, 29 September – 01 October 2021, Lisbon – Portugal
- 17th EAtHC meeting, 28 – 30 September 2022, Mindelo – Cabo Verde

4. Agenda Items:

The agenda items dealt with during the period have followed the IHO Work Programmes one, two and three, in compliance with the IHO subsidiary bodies. The main activities are listed below.

a) EAtHC Capacity Building:

Since September 2020, 5 technical visits have been carried out in EAtHC region: Benin, Congo, Côte d'Ivoire, Senegal and Togo. 6 other technical visits are planned: Guinea Bissau, Guinea, Mauritania, Morocco, Sierra Leone and São Tome and Príncipe. These technical visits represent an important tool for the regional capacity building policy. They enable the Coastal States to be aware of the national and regional issues of hydrography, MSI and marine cartography and to know the prerequisites. With the help of the experts who realize the visits, the Coastal States can identify the actions to be done to improve their organization, coordination and capacities.

The 17th Conference in Mindelo was preceded by a 2-day seminar funded by the IHO and related to the relationship with NAVAREA II Coordinator and PCAs, risk assessment and survey specification. This seminar made it possible to raise the awareness of many States in the region on these major issues for the development of hydrography and enabled many of these States to attend the EAtHC Conference. All the participants shared their concerns and experiences in the management of Maritime Safety Information, in data exchange with the NAVAREA II Coordinator (France) and/or their Primary Charting Authority (PCA). The IHO

Secretariat reiterated a well-known recommendation in the EAtHC on the establishment of a National Hydrographic Committee, since it appeared that those Coastal States who have established their own national hydrographic committee are in a much better situation for meeting their SOLAS obligations

During these events, training needs are identified for Coastal States but most are not carried out due to lack of funding.

b) EAtHC International Charting Coordination Working Group (EAtHC ICCWG):

The charting coordination of Region G is led by France. The INT charts coordination is ongoing with mature schemes for most of the scale bands.

In order to develop the coordination of the ENC production, the EAtHC entrusted the ICCWG, in consultation with the IHO Secretariat, with the implementation of the ENC scheme in INTOGIS for the usage bands 1 to 3. This action is ongoing in view of the upcoming dual-fuel period with the transition to S-101 ENCs, the effective maintenance of a S-57 scheme being an indispensable prerequisite to a good charting coordination during this period.

The ToRs & RoPs of the EAtHC ICCWG were revised and approved during the 16th EAtHC Conference.

During the 17th EAtHC Conference, the Commission decided to extend the mandate of the ICCWG to coordinate the implementation of S-100 products for Region G. In this context, a working meeting on the coordination of S-100 products is planned with the EAtHC ICCWG members during 2023 in order to define a strategy and to propose to the Commission a revised version of the ToRs & RoPs.

c) EAtHC Marine Spatial Data Infrastructure Working Group (EAtHC MSDIWG):

During the 16th Conference, the EAtHC approved the creation of a MSDI Working Group under the chairpersonship of Portugal. Its first meeting occurred in VTC in February 2022 with the participation of 7 Coastal States. This MSDIWG is also in charge of coordinating for the EAtHC Region the project Seabed2030 and the crowdsourced bathymetry issue.

The 2 main objectives of this working group are to support the development of MSDI through the EAtHC area and to promote the CSB initiative.

d) Maritime Safety Information:

The coordination relating to MSI in the NAVAREA II is carried out by France. Each Conference allows for the monitoring of the situation in terms of nautical information feedback and the transmission of urgent and rapid notices to mariners.

The seminar that preceded the 17th EAtHC Conference mainly focused on the MSI theme with presentations and recommendations from the NAVAREA II coordinator.

On the occasion of the 17th Conference, the attention of Coastal States was drawn to the need to set up national hydrographic committees, or similar national bodies, to gather the stakeholders concerned by MSI and safety of navigation.

e) Disaster Response:

A plan for disaster response framework for the region was approved during the 16th EAtHC Conference.

f) Revision of the EAtHC Statutes:

A revised version of the EAtHC Statutes was unanimously approved during the 16th EAtHC Conference on 1st October 2021. The objective was for the EAtHC to be more compliant with the IHO Resolution 2/1997 "ESTABLISHMENT OF REGIONAL HYDROGRAPHIC COMMISSIONS (RHC)" as amended.

5. Difficulties encountered and challenges yet to be addressed:

a) Travel restrictions due to the COVID-19 pandemic in the region have postponed some capacity building activities and an EAtHC conference.

b) Awareness on the importance of Hydrography is increasing within the Region. Still EAtHC Members should sustain collaborative efforts until the region's hydrographic capacity is fully developed for the good of all mariners. The attendance to the EAtHC Conferences is important to raise awareness in the region and to start a dynamic. Many countries in the region do not have the travel budget to attend Conferences. Organising an IHO-funded seminar prior to the conferences not only raises awareness, but also allows states to attend the conferences. Still, the low available budget from IHO for capacity building makes it increasingly difficult to fund such seminars. External funding should be sought but with an uncertain result.

c) Some of the region's Coastal States are still lacking basic hydrographic and cartographic capacities. It would be very important for national agencies to lobby their governments to adhere to IHO. The EAtHC tries to accompany these coastal states in the process of accession to the IHO, notably through the technical visits. These technical visits, carried out in the frame of the CB policy of IHO, are vital for less developed countries in order to help them identify priority needs, the necessary means and to derive a list of actions in order to start a dynamic that will eventually lead them to meet the obligations of the SOLAS Convention. Here again, the lack of budget threatens the carrying out of such technical visits. Training or provision of equipment fall outside the IHO's CB framework for non IHO members, alternative funding solutions remain very difficult to put in place, making this much needed support erratic.

d) Communication problems persist in the region, between the EAtHC Secretariat and some members and national agencies. The lack of updated contact lists when hand-over / take-over of positions occur is the main reason. Members were requested to keep their contact details up to date.

e) EAtHC tried to contact MOWCA, PMAWCA and AMSSA agencies without success. The Commission is trying to work through the member states of these organisations to re-establish contact and ensure the willingness of these organisations to cooperate.

6. Achievements/outputs/conclusions:

a) The EAtHC continues to keep and strengthen the cooperation in the region.

b) Hydrographic capacity development in the EAtHC region remains a challenge, with most of the Central & Western African coastal states lacking hydrographic infrastructure and relying on a third State to provide hydrographic services and fulfil their SOLAS obligations. The current pattern of capacity building has allowed only limited progress despite particular attention by the IHO to the EAtHC region and the involvement of some Member States (acting as Primary Charting Authority in that region).

c) With this in mind, efforts must therefore be continued with greater involvement of the Coastal States primarily concerned by the development of their hydrographic services in order to meet their SOLAS obligations, with the support of the IHO and the IHO Member States of the region.

d) At the same time, there is a growing need to develop capacity building actions for the benefit of Member States in particular to support the transition to S-100, whereas currently most of the actions carried out benefit non IHO Member States. The resources, both in terms of in-kind contributions from Member States to carry out these actions and in terms of capacity-building funds, are not sufficient to achieve these two objectives at the same time.

e) More technical visits are needed for CB.

- f) Member States should share their education and training programs and develop on-job training (ex: onboard hydrographic survey training, in-office chart production training, etc.).
- g) Member States should articulate the IHO CB initiatives with national initiatives in order to have very consistent on-job training in the coastal State.

7. Actions required of the Assembly:

- a) **Note** the report of the Eastern Atlantic Hydrographic Commission.
- b) **take** any other action considered appropriate.