

**PRO-3.3 Recognition of the Southern Ocean**

**Submitted by:** Secretary-General, as HCA Chair

**References:** A. Publication S-23, Ed. 3, 1953.  
B. HCA-18 Summary Report.

**PROPOSAL**

**Noting the decision made at the 2<sup>nd</sup> Assembly of the IHO on the Status of S-23, Ed.3, 1953 (Reference A and Decision A2/24),**

**Noting the decision made by the IHO Hydrographic Commission of Antarctica (HCA) at their 18<sup>th</sup> meeting in May 2022 (Reference B, Decision HCA18/45 refers),**

**Noting the progress made in the development of the IHO S-130 Product Specification - *Polygonal Demarcations of Global Sea Areas*,**

**The Assembly is invited:**

- to approve the proposed IHO Resolution provided in Annex A on the recognition of the *Southern Ocean* and the consequences on the limits of some global sea areas.**

**EXPLANATORY NOTE**

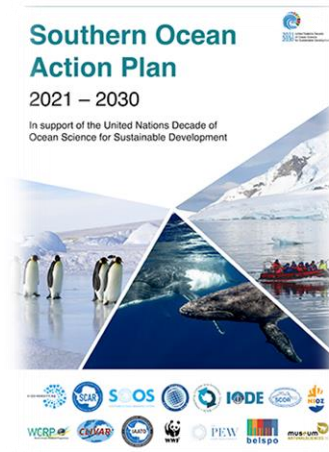
1. In 2021, the HCA Chair informed the participants of the 17<sup>th</sup> meeting of the HCA on the publication of an article<sup>1</sup> in National Geographic, quoting the IHO, and recognizing the *Southern Ocean* as the 5<sup>th</sup> ocean. Following this publication, the IHO Secretariat received a significant number of requests for explanations on how this name had been discussed in the course of the historic reviewing of S-23.
2. The Secretary-General of the IHO, also HCA Chair, took this opportunity to remind that although this name to designate the southern waters of this hemisphere was included in the 2<sup>nd</sup> edition of the IHO Publication S-23 on the Limits of Oceans and Seas published in 1937, the majority of opinions from Member States received after this were not in favour to this inclusion. In short: the "*Southern Ocean*" became an official ocean in 1937, but lost its official status in 1953.
3. Following the 2<sup>nd</sup> Session of the Assembly, decision was made to establish a Project Team (S-130 PT) in charge of the development of a Product Specification for Polygonal Demarcations of Global Sea Areas and the subsequent recommendations for the production of a Dataset. This S-130 PT is currently defining a dataset model using a system of unique numerical identifiers only. When the production of the corresponding dataset is envisaged, there will be for sure a need to decide whether the limits of the *Southern Ocean* exist.

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<sup>1</sup> <https://www.nationalgeographic.com/environment/article/theres-a-new-ocean-now-can-you-name-all-five-southern-ocean>

4. At their 18<sup>th</sup> meeting in May 2022, the HCA (HCA-18) was updated on the publication of the version 2.0 of the International Bathymetric Chart of the *Southern Ocean* bathymetric grid (IBCSO).

The HCA was also briefed by the SCAR representative on their *Southern Ocean* Action Plan in support of the UN Ocean Decade.



5. For the reasons given above, noting the well-established use of the denominator Southern Ocean by geographers and the scientific community, and in order to solve this long lasting issue, HCA Members finally agreed at HCA-18 to submit a proposal for a new IHO Resolution at the 3<sup>rd</sup> Session of the Assembly for approval of IHO Member States, simply focused on the recognition of the existence of the Southern Ocean.
6. Since HCA-18, the proposal in attachment was circulated twice for inputs and comments to HCA Members. The consolidated proposed Resolution taking HCA Members<sup>21</sup> views, comments and reservations is provided in Annex A.

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<sup>2</sup> Argentina, Australia, Chile, Ecuador, UK and the United States of America.

**Proposed new IHO Resolution**

<b>RECOGNITION OF THE SOUTHERN OCEAN AND CONSEQUENCES ON THE LIMITS OF SOME GLOBAL SEA AREAS</b>	<b>xx/2023</b>	<b>A-3</b>	
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Taking note of the acknowledged long lasting existence of IBCSO<sup>3</sup> - *International Bathymetric Chart of the Southern Ocean* as a regional mapping project recognized and supported by GEBCO and the dominant use of the denominator *Southern Ocean* by the international scientific community and media, the IHO recognizes the *Southern Ocean* as the global sea area surrounding the continent of Antarctica.

Noting the established northern limit of the IHO INTernational Charting Region M<sup>4</sup>, it is considered that the northern geographic limit of the *Southern Ocean* is defined by the parallel of Latitude 60°S.

As a consequence, the southern geographic limits of the Atlantic, Indian, and Pacific Oceans are identical with the northern geographic limit of the *Southern Ocean*. This joint geographic limit supersedes those mentioned in Publication S-23<sup>5</sup>, Ed. 3, 1953 for the areas concerned.

Since these limits have neither political nor oceanographic or, more generally, environmental significance whatsoever, Hydrographic Offices may continue to adopt their own limits as long as these limits remain technically consistent with the data model of the polygonal demarcation of global sea areas (IHO S-130). Current national reservations and/or comments on the limits of the *Atlantic, Indian, Pacific, and Southern Oceans* are provided in Appendix 1.

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<sup>3</sup> <https://ibcso.org/>

<sup>4</sup> IHO Publication S-4, section A-204.8 refers.

<sup>5</sup> See « The Oceans » on page 4.

**General information, national positions and reservations  
on the limits of the *Atlantic, Indian, Pacific, and Southern Oceans***

### General Information

It is acknowledged that the Commission for the Conservation of Antarctic Marine Living Resources (CCAMLR) defines, in Art. 4 of its Convention, the limits of the Antarctic Convergence. Despite the seasonal and annual changes of its latitude, this major oceanographic feature creates a distinct biological boundary beyond the parallel of 60°S, applicable to the description of the Antarctica marine ecosystem (<https://gis.ccamlr.org/>).

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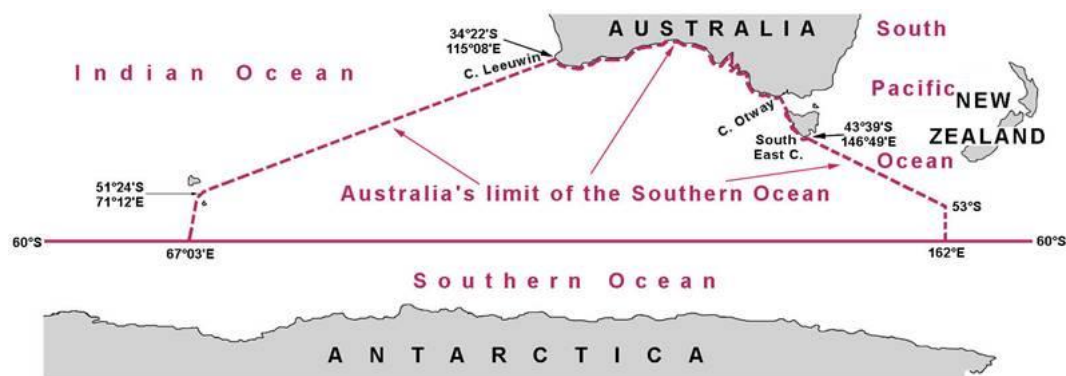
### Argentina

Argentina considers that there are no technical grounds to support a separate reference for the area referred as “Southern Ocean”, which corresponds to the southern zones of the Indian, South Atlantic and South Pacific Oceans.

Furthermore, considering the technical and consultative character of the International Hydrographic Organization, the present resolution is not intended to provide a legal advice on which any individual, Member State of the IHO or any entity may rely upon for political or legal purposes, and should not be considered as such. This resolution is offered without prejudice to or limitation of the views of the IHO or any IHO Member State regarding any subject or matter.

### Australia

Australia’s position on the limits of the *Southern Ocean* and the southern limit of the *South Pacific Ocean* [and *Tasman Sea*] and *Indian Ocean* in accordance with the [national] ICSM<sup>6</sup> Resolution ROO/11/06 - Limits of Oceans and Seas and Offshore Undersea Features [April 2001].



### Chile

Chile recognizes the existence of the Southern Ocean and its limits as follows: *The northern limit of the Southern Ocean is the parallel 60° S and its southern limit is the Antarctic coastline, included the Antarctic Peninsula.*

<sup>6</sup> Interdepartmental Committee of Surveying and Mapping [ICSM]

**Ecuador**

Ecuador recognizes the use of the parallel 60°S as the northern limit of the Southern Ocean.

**United Kingdom**

With this Resolution in force, the UK confirms that the comment from the S-23, edition 3, 1953 "*The UK uses the parallel of Latitude 55°S as the Northern limit of the Southern Ocean [and therefore the Southern limit of the Atlantic, Indian, and Pacific Oceans]*" does not apply anymore.

**United States of America**

The United States supports the resolution and concurs with the proposed limits of the Southern Ocean for use by the IHO. This recognition is without prejudice to the term "Southern Ocean" as other international or regional bodies with appropriate competence may define for their specific purposes.