

## **IHB VISIT TO SURINAME**

5 - 6 December 2007

The IHB Director, whose area of responsibility covers the activities of the Meso-American and Caribbean Sea Hydrographic Commission (MACHC), has had several discussions with representatives from Suriname attending MACHC meetings and technical events. On each occasion the IHB Director expressed the Organization's concern regarding the suspended membership status of Suriname since 1991 and the limited hydrographic development within this maritime country.

At the last MACHC meeting, the Maritime Authority Suriname (MAS) invited the IHB to make a technical visit to Suriname in December 2007, with the following objectives:

- a) A visit to the Ministry of Transport, Communication and Tourism;
- b) A visit to Ministry of Public Works;
- c) A decision on outstanding contributions and
- d) A discussion on capacity building - hydrography within MAS.

Captain Hugo GORZIGLIA, IHB Director, undertook this technical visit on 5<sup>th</sup> and 6<sup>th</sup> December. On the first day MAS gave presentations on their role, organization, capabilities and shortcomings when facing challenging new projects. On the IHO side, a complete presentation was given on the importance of Hydrography and the main tasks the IHO undertakes at the international level, with emphasis on the hydrographic services defined in SOLAS V, Regulation 9. This was accompanied by a detailed presentation on the capacity building effort the Organization is pursuing in order to help Member States to meet their obligations. Discussions continued during a visit to the premises and a visit to the MAS vessel M.V. MARWINA, used to conduct hydrographic surveys. A short trip was made on the vessel where the importance of keeping the river traffic lane well surveyed at all times was emphasized, due to the siltation processes.

The following day the discussions continued and several initiatives were identified to improve the present shortage of human and technological resources within the hydrographic unit in MAS. A presentation was made to the Ministry of Transport and the Minister, Mrs. Richel APINSA, expressed great interest in the presentations made and acknowledged the vulnerability of maritime transport due to the conditions of the river, mainly the river mouth, as all terminals are located on the river, and the evident role hydrography would have in the decision-making process. She decided to take this issue to the Cabinet of Ministries for discussion and requested the Chair of MAS to prepare a complete presentation for the Cabinet.

Finally Captain GORZIGLIA visited the University of Suriname, where discussions were held as to the potential advice IHO could offer in case the University decided to run a program including hydrographic matters.

This visit was very brief, but at the same time very positive in the sense that there was a change in Suriname's attitude towards improving the national priority given to hydrography. This might well result in a prompt re-establishment of Suriname's rights and prerogatives within the Organization in conjunction with an active participation in IHO's activities.