

7th Conference of the Arctic Regional Hydrographic Commission (ARHC)

and *Ilulissat Maritime Workshop*

**Ilulissat, Greenland, Denmark
22 – 24 August**

The 7th Conference of the Arctic Regional Hydrographic Commission (ARHC) was held in Ilulissat, Greenland, Denmark, from 22 to 24 August, and included a maritime workshop that took place on 22 August.

Twenty participants representing four of the five ARHC Members (Canada, Denmark, Norway, and the USA), two Associate Members (Finland and Iceland) participated in the Conference. Fifteen stakeholders including the Association of Arctic Expedition Cruise Operators (AECO), Arctic shipping companies, and representatives from the government of Greenland and from local authorities participated in the workshop. The stakeholder representatives provided informative user perspectives on polar navigation, charting, and marine geospatial information in support of various applications including hunting management.

The Conference was chaired by Ms Pia Dahl Højgaard, Director-General of the Danish Geodata Agency. Assistant Director Yves Guillam represented the IHO Secretariat.



Participants in ARHC-7, Ilulissat, Greenland, Denmark

All participants reported on their activities in the Arctic region. As part of the reorganization of the Danish Geodata Agency, the delegation from Denmark reported on their good progress and efforts made in improving staffing levels and expertise since the last Conference, in order to meet their charting obligations in Greenlandic waters. Highlighting the fact that the Region N charting area is covered by only eight INT charts - all of which are produced by Norway, and that no ENC scheme exists, Norway reported on the role and membership of the Arctic International Charting Coordination Working Group (AICCCWG). The members of the ARHC were invited to consider what should be the objectives and the programme of work to be assigned to the working group. The IHO Secretariat suggested that the AICCCWG develops and maintains, in liaison with the Operational and Technical Working Group of the

ARHC (OTWG), an up-to-date composite polar projection diagram of the existing charting coverage and traffic routes in the Arctic. This could then be used in various stakeholders' forums (Arctic Shipping Summit, PAME¹, etc.) to raise awareness as well as supplementing the cautionary notice regarding the status of charting in the region that was sent to various ARHC stakeholder organizations in June 2017 on behalf of the ARHC Members. It was also suggested that this coverage diagram should be included in the IHO annual report on ECDIS matters provided to the IMO NCSR². Several other tasks were assigned to the AICCWG and/or the OTWG including a re-run of the Chart Adequacy Assessment Analysis, and the monitoring of the population of CATZOC values in ENCs.

The Arctic Regional Marine Spatial Data Infrastructure Working Group (ARMSDIWG) reported on its developing relationship with the Arctic Council's Spatial Data Infrastructure and presented a white paper that will be submitted to PAME, aiming to promote MSDI activities in the Arctic.

The IHO Secretariat reported on IHO Assembly decisions that may impact ARHC. The proposals being submitted to the 1st meeting of the IHO Council were reviewed for coordination purpose, noting that the Chair-elect of the IHO Council was present at the Conference and that all ARHC Members have a seat in the IHO Council. The ARHC Members considered the outcome of the 10th Ministerial Meeting of the Arctic Council in Fairbanks, Alaska, USA, on 11 May 2017 where the IHO application for Observer status was not considered. As a result, the ARHC members agreed to further engage with their national representatives at the Arctic Council in order to ensure that favourable consideration is given to the proposal in future.

Following on from discussions that occurred at ARHC-6 on the possible impact of marine noise management on hydrographic surveying operations, the IHO Secretariat informed the participants of informal discussion raised during the fortieth meeting of the Antarctic Treaty Consultative Meeting (ATCM XL) held in Beijing, China, in May, that identified several countries that have enforced restrictions on the use of certain acoustic devices, including MBES³ and other sonars. He also informed the participants that the United Nations Open-ended Informal Consultative Process on Oceans and the Law of the Sea (UNICPOLOS) will focus its discussions at its nineteenth meeting, in 2018, on the theme "*Anthropogenic underwater noise*"⁴. As a result, the USA agreed to provide copies of relevant reports and studies in relation to acoustic noise and hydrographic surveying, for the information of the ARHC Members and for the use of the IHO Secretariat in appropriate international forums and organizations.

Fruitful discussions took place on crowd-sourced bathymetry, on surveying using autonomous vehicles, and on research projects occurring in the Arctic - some of them being funded by the European Commission Horizon 2020 programme such as the SEDNA⁵ project aiming to improve maritime safety in the Arctic. Canada and Denmark agreed to investigate the possibility of being involved in this project.

The *High North 17* Arctic geophysical research campaign carried out in the south of Svalbard, Norway in July 2017 by the Italian hydrographic service was also considered as part of an application from Italy to be accepted as an Associate Member of the ARHC. This application was approved by consensus.

¹ PAME: Arctic Council's working group on the Protection of the Arctic Marine Environment.

² IMO NCSR : International Maritime Organization Sub-Committee on Navigation Communication and Search and Rescue.

³ MBES: multibeam echo-sounders.

⁴ UN Letter (UN Division for Ocean Affairs and the Law of the Sea, Office of Legal Affairs) dated 31 July 2017, *Ocean noise studies*.

⁵ SEDNA : Safe maritime operations under extreme conditions: the Arctic case



Arctic navigation in practice...

Norway was elevated from the position of Vice-Chair to take over the Chair at the end of the Conference. In the absence of the Russian Federation at the meeting, the Chair will invite the Russian Federation to consider occupying the Vice-Chair position as part of the established rotation.

The Conference noted Norway's offer to host the next Conference in Svalbard, Norway, from 11 to 13 September 2018.