

10th EAHC-CHAto MEETING
LOMÉ, TOGO 3, 4 & 5 December 2008

IHB DIRECTOR STATEMENT
By Captain Hugo GORZIGLIA

- Excellency the Prime Minister of Togo and Minister of Public Works, Transportation and Urbanisms, Honourable Mr. Kokouvi Dogbe
- Excellency the Ambassador of France in Togo Mr. Dominique Renaux
- Director General of the Autonomous Port of Lome Admiral Fogan Kodjo Adegnon
- Chairman of the East Atlantic Hydrographic Commission Captain Francisco Perez Carrillo
- Members, Associated Members and Observers of the East Atlantic Hydrographic Commission
- National Authorities of Togo
- Distinguished guests
- Ladies and Gentlemen

It is a great honour for me, on behalf of the International Hydrographic Bureau, to address a few words on the occasion of the opening ceremony of the Xth Conference of the East Atlantic Hydrographic Commission.

The International Hydrographic Organization gives great importance to the work of the Regional Hydrographic Commissions and the IHB Directors have under their responsibilities, the task to facilitate and provide support to the Commissions aiming at implementing the decisions agreed at their Conferences.

The IHO has 14 RHCs. All have been established: to promote technical cooperation in the domain of hydrographic surveying, marine cartography and nautical information; to stimulate countries in the region to establish and strengthen their hydrographic capabilities and to facilitate the exchange of information.

As you can imagine the 14 RHCs have different challenges and priorities. The EAtHC is one of the RHCs in strong need to improve the capabilities to provide hydro-cartographic and safety to navigation information, products and services, and therefore, this conference shall be seen as an excellent opportunity to work with a regional team spirit.

The IHO has made substantial efforts to motivate both, governmental authorities and maritime and port authorities on the transcendental role hydrography and its related disciplines play in national sustainable development. The maritime transport sector, the fishing industry, the tourism activities, the maritime delimitation issues, defense, coastal zone management, ports, just to mention a few areas, all of great socio-economic significance cannot be effective and efficiently developed if reliable and updated hydrographic information is not available. There is not one activity that takes place in the sea that do not benefit from hydrography.

Between 2002 and 2005 the so called West African Action Team – WAAT- a group of experts in the field of hydrography, nautical cartography and marine safety information established by the EAtHC paid visit to the countries in the region to assess the hydrographic capabilities aiming at providing advice on the way that existing shortcomings could be faced. WAAT offered each country with a frank, technical and responsible report, describing the national arrangements in place, offering some conclusions and recommendations that if implemented could improve national, regional and international responsibilities internationally agree, such as SOLAS, Chapter 5 Regulation 9, related to Hydrographic Services.

In conjunction with these visits and also contributing to raise awareness on the importance of hydrography and the need to establish national structures that would foster initiatives at both, national and regional levels, the EAtHC organized a workshop in Brest in 2004, back to back with the 8th Conference and later, in 2005 a Seminar was held at the former International Maritime Academy, in Trieste, Italy.

The IHO expects that within the region, and at all levels of the society the important role hydrography plays in the development of a maritime nation is unquestionable.

This Conference offers the opportunity to make some reflections on where we stand. Has the EAtHC made some progress? What problems still exist? Which are the priorities? How can the EAtHC achieve a viable progress in improving safety to navigation in the region? Are EAtHC Members ready to identify common targets and assume collectively commitments to move forward? From the IHB side we are particularly interested in learning about the agreements you will reach at this Conference. Mr Chairman and Members of the Commission we wish you a successful conference. The IHB is ready and willing to contribute to the Commission's efforts.

Finally I would like to highlight the presence of the highest governmental authorities of the Republic of TOGO in this opening ceremony. This is a clear indication that hydrography is gaining recognition as a partner in development and priority in the general national context.

Excellency the Prime Minister of Togo, please accept our deep thanks to the Government of Togo for hosting this Conference and particularly we thank you for being with us this morning. Your presence is certainly very motivating and encouraging.

Ladies and Gentlemen,

Thank you very much.