

20th Conference of the Mediterranean and Black Seas Hydrographic Commission Herceg Novi, Montenegro, 4-6 July

The 20th Conference of the Mediterranean and Black Seas Hydrographic Commission (MBSHC) was held in Herceg Novi, Montenegro from 4 to 6 July, hosted by the Institute of Hydrometeorology and Seismology of Montenegro (IHMS). The Conference was chaired by Ingénieur général Bruno Frachon, Director General of the French Hydrographic Service (Shom). A total of 44 representatives from 17 Member States of the MBSHC (Algeria, Croatia, Cyprus, France, Georgia, Greece, Italy, Malta, Monaco, Montenegro, Romania, Russian Federation, Slovenia, Spain, Tunisia, Turkey, Ukraine) and two Associate Member States (United Kingdom and United States of America) participated in the Conference. Albania, Norway, the International Association of Marine Aids to Navigation and Lighthouse Authorities (IALA), the Intergovernmental Oceanographic Commission (IOC) of UNESCO, the Mediterranean Science Commission (CIESM), IC-ENC and PRIMAR, as the two Regional ENC Coordinating Centres (RENC), were represented as observers. Three stakeholders from industry participated as invited expert contributors. A diplomat from the Embassy of the Republic of Korea in Montenegro attended part of the meeting at the invitation of the Director of IHMS. The IHO Secretariat was represented by Director Mustafa Iptes and Assistant Director Yves Guillam.

At the beginning of the Conference, Captain Luigi Sinapi, Director of the Italian Hydrographic Institute (IIM), was elected as Vice-Chair of the MBSHC.

The MBSHC received national reports from Member States and Associate Member States and the report of the IHO Secretariat. Director Iptes reported on the IHO work programme in general and the activities of the Organization during the intersessional period that impact Regional Hydrographic Commissions, including the main outcomes of the IHO Assembly and of the 9th meeting of the Inter-Regional Coordination Committee. The IHO representatives also provided informative presentations and updates on the cooperation with the International Maritime Organization (IMO), on capacity building matters, on the development of standards, and on the evolution of the IHO information management system using GIS¹ layers derived from the country information database maintained by the Secretariat. Participants were encouraged to consider the use of CATZOC values extracted from the official charts as a way of assessing the status of hydrography and charting in the region. They were also invited to liaise with their national representatives to the UN-GGIM² in order to support the growing interest in the maritime component of geospatial information and the likely establishment of a UN-GGIM Marine Geospatial Information Working Group. Following a presentation by Spain on the status of hydrographic surveying in the region (based on the information in IHO publication C-55 – *Status of surveying and charting worldwide*), it was recommended to consider a more dynamic, geographic and interoperable GIS approach in the future, if possible and resources permitting.

It was the first participation of the Director General of the CIESM in a Conference of the MBSHC since the signature of the Memorandum of Understanding with the IHO in March 2017. His presentation was very welcome and was followed by a presentation from Malta focussing on initiatives of the European Union (EU) in which hydrographic offices of the MBSHC might consider to be more directly involved. The coordinated participation of MBSHC representatives in various important European maritime events, at least for raising the IHO profile and at best for capturing some funding, remains a matter of concern for the IHO-EU Network Working Group and its focal point in the region, which is Greece.

One of the remaining and core activities in the Commission is the establishment of agreed INT paper charts and ENC schemes. The MBSHC International Chart Coordination Working Group (ICCWG) held a separate half-day meeting during the Conference period, chaired by the Region F Chart Coordinator (France), to prepare recommendations and decisions to be endorsed in plenary session the day after. Well prepared by the Coordinator as a follow-up of the special meeting that took place as a side event of the IHO Assembly in April, the meeting went very well:

¹ Geographic Information System

² United Nations Committee of Experts on Global Geospatial Information Management

- The new Terms of Reference and Rules of Procedure for the Region F ICCWG were approved;
- The Conference agreed to simplify the access to the Region F ICCWG webpage on the IHO website;
- The Region F INT chart database was updated after fruitful discussions leading to several agreements between the relevant parties;
- The methodology, supported by the RENCs, for assessing ENC overlapping data and their impact on safety of navigation, was agreed;
- The MBSHC also agreed that it was necessary to prepare transition plans (to be endorsed by the MBSHC) every time that new ENC were produced that covered existing INT chart areas but not produced by the relevant INT chart Producer. Decision 10 of the IHO Assembly on the consistency between products was reiterated.



Participants in the 20th Conference of the MBSHC

Director Iptes provided a general overview of the IHO capacity building activities. It was followed by the report of the representative of Turkey, as Capacity Building (CB) Coordinator for the region. All participants were invited to apply the CB procedures so that requirements can be addressed by the CB Sub-Committee in consistent manner.

A report on Maritime Safety Information (MSI) activities in NAVAREA III was presented by Spain and reviewed by the Commission. The recent activities of the Working Group for the Safety of Navigation in the Black and Azov Seas (BASWG) was presented by the Chair of BASWG (Turkey) and potential developments in the hydrographic domain in the Caspian Sea region were discussed.

The Member States of the MBSHC having a seat at the IHO Council considered the provisional agenda of the Council. They met together in the margins of the Conference to coordinate their views and reviewed the available documents.

At the end of the Conference, Captain Luigi Sinapi took over as Chair of the MBSHC. The 21st Conference of the MBSHC is planned to take place in Cádiz, Spain, from 18 to 20 June 2019, subject to confirmation.

All the documents of the Conference are posted at the MBSHC section of the IHO website.