

8th Meeting of the IHO Inter-Regional Coordination Committee
29-31 May, Abu Dhabi, UAE

The eighth meeting of the Inter-Regional Coordination Committee (IRCC8) was held in Abu Dhabi, United Arab Emirates (UAE), from 29 to 31 May, hosted by the General Headquarters (GHQ) Armed Forces, Military Survey Department of the UAE. The meeting was attended by the Chairs, or their representatives, of the 15 Regional Hydrographic Commissions (RHCs) and the IRCC subordinate bodies (except the FIG-IHO-ICA International Board on Standards of Competence (IBSC)) and 20 observers. A total of 41 participants were present. The meeting was chaired by Dr Parry Oei (Singapore).

The IRCC reviewed the reports and activities of the RHCs and its subordinate bodies, proposed amended Terms of Reference for Member States' consideration and approval and considered the need to have a better communication strategy in order to promote the success stories of the IHO. The meeting was informed of the developments in Electronic Navigational Charts (ENC) for the leisure market and the requirement for authoritative and standardised chart products for Electronic Chart Systems (ECS) on ships that are not subject to the ECDIS carriage requirements of SOLAS¹ so as to support national maritime administrations. The meeting noted the increasing level of capacity building activities in West Africa under the effective leadership of Morocco and with key contribution from France. The Committee also noted the high level of engagement and capacity building in the South-West Pacific; a good example being the support provided to Fiji by South West Pacific Hydrographic commission (SWPHC) Members and regional bodies following Tropical Cyclone *Winston*.

With respect to the Arctic Regional Hydrographic Commission, the meeting noted the development of the Arctic Voyage Planning Guides, the efforts to resolve ENC overlaps and the project to develop an Arctic Marine Spatial Data Infrastructure (MSDI) in coordination with other organizations, and the engagement with stakeholders in relation to crowd-sourced bathymetry, satellite-derived bathymetry and hydrographic risk assessment.

The Committee was informed about the approval of the SafetyNET and NAVTEX Manuals by the International Maritime Organization following the new review process endorsed at IRCC7 and subsequently approved by the IHO Member States. Noting the increased cooperation between NAVAREA and METAREA Coordinators, the Committee acknowledged the need for more engagement of Member States, National MSI Coordinators and Observers in matters related to the World-Wide Navigational Warning Service.

The meeting welcomed the development of new Capacity Building (CB) Procedures, including one to assess and monitor the CB phases in coastal States, and the continued support from the Republic of Korea and from the Nippon Foundation of Japan to the CB Fund.

The meeting noted with concern several issues related to ENC coverage. Little progress has been made to resolve existing ENC overlaps, some of the top 2000 ports still lack adequate ENC coverage and some ENCs are not available through or distributed through the RENC distribution system. Difficulties in providing ENC updates at the same frequency as the equivalent paper chart updates was also discussed. The meeting observed that progress in improving coverage is now largely dependent upon new surveys being conducted in those areas where the existing data is insufficient to support the production of ENCs. The Committee agreed guidance on the conditions under which Marine Information Overlays (MIO) could be issued to assist in drawing attention to any differences between a published paper chart and a corresponding ENC or to assist in displaying Temporary & Preliminary Notices to Mariners on ECDIS.

¹ SOLAS: International Convention for the Safety of Life at Sea.

The Committee was informed about progress in updating IHO Publication C-17 *Spatial Data Infrastructures: "The Marine Dimension" - Guidance for Hydrographic Offices*. The Committee also noted the progress of the work of the Crowd-Sourced Bathymetry Working Group and its preparation of a Guidance document on Crowd-Sourced Bathymetry.

The Committee endorsed the draft new edition 1.0.0 of IHO Publication S-5A *Standards of Competence for Category "A" Hydrographic Surveyors* to be circulated for Member States consideration and approval, and approved the work plan for the development and adoption of the draft new editions 1.0.0 of the IHO Publications S-8B *Standards of Competence for Category "B" Nautical Cartographers* and S-8A *Standards of Competence for Category "A" Nautical Cartographers*. The meeting commended the work done by the IBSC with respect to the review of an increasing number of course submissions and the revision of the Standards of Competence for Hydrographic Surveyors and Nautical Cartographers.

The meeting noted the work done by the GEBCO Guiding Committee and its subordinate bodies, especially the evolution of the GEBCO grids, the incorporation of shallow water bathymetry in the GEBCO dataset, the current status of digitizing the GEBCO chart series with the support of Italy and Japan and the organization of the Forum for the Future of Ocean Floor Mapping (F-FOFM).

The meeting discussed the revision of the IHO Strategic Plan and agreed on the need to implement a more pragmatic performance monitoring system. The meeting acknowledged also the need to raise awareness of the role of hydrography and the importance of improving knowledge of the seas and oceans in support of the Agenda 2030 Sustainable Development Goals, disaster risk reduction and the integrity of the oceans.

The next meeting of the IRCC will be held in Paramaribo, Suriname from 12 to 14 June 2017, preceded by the 15th meeting of the Capacity Building Sub-Committee (CBSC15) from 7 to 9 June.