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**OPEN LETTER TO THE HYDROGRAPHERS OF MEMBER STATES OF THE
INTERNATIONAL HYDROGRAPHIC ORGANIZATION**

Dear Colleagues,

On behalf of my fellow hydrographers and policymakers at the United States Navy, National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration (NOAA), National Geospatial-Intelligence Agency (NGA) and Department of State, I am writing to inform you of the strong United States of America support for all the proposals that will be considered at the upcoming 3rd Extraordinary International Hydrographic Conference.

The United States feels that these changes are critical to the future viability of the International Hydrographic Organization (IHO), and this Conference presents an unprecedented opportunity to modify its structure so that the organization can effectively assume its global hydrographic leadership responsibilities. Global, uniform, easily accessible hydrographic data and information are essential to describe the complex, ever-changing maritime environment. These data—based on IHO standards for collection, production, display and exchange—support and enable safe navigation, marine commerce, environmental protection and many other non-traditional uses.

Broad acceptance and utilization of these standards necessitates strong partnerships with non-governmental organizations, including the private sector. International regulations (such as SOLAS Chapter V/Regulation 9) obligate nations to provide a full suite of hydrographic products and services to ensure maritime safety. These pressing requirements demand a flexible, proactive and effective organization with the ability to respond in a timely manner.

The current, antiquated IHO structure does not serve this purpose. We urge you to support the proposals that have resulted from the deeply thoughtful process and hard work of the Strategic Planning Working Group over the past two years. If such change cannot be instituted at this juncture in IHO history, it will be a grave set back for the organization. The time to respond is now.

The United States supports continuous improvement of the organizational effectiveness and efficiency of the IHO without increasing organizational costs. Toward these aims, we support the Extraordinary Conference proposals which contain:

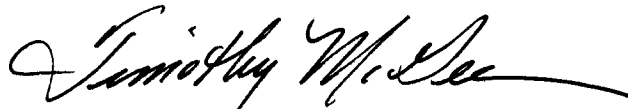
- Measures to improve the relevance of the Organization as a technical and consultative organization;

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- The proposed new Vision, Mission and Objectives of the International Hydrographic Organization;
- The proposed, cost-neutral restructuring of the Organization to include an Assembly, a Council, a Secretariat, a Finance Committee, two main subsidiary bodies (the Hydrographic Services and Standards Committee and an Inter-Regional Coordination Committee), voluntary Regional Hydrographic Commissions and a Legal Advisory Working Group;
- Improved processes for decision-making, resource allocation for organizational objectives, work-plan implementation and accession of new members that will enable the Organization to be more agile and responsive to Member States and strategic partners;
- Engagement of strategic partners with international hydrographic interests; and
- Harmonization of basic documents (the Convention, General Regulations, Financial Regulations, and Rules of Procedure for International Hydrographic Conferences).

Detailed United States comments on specific proposals for the 3rd Extraordinary International Hydrographic Conference are enclosed. I look forward to seeing all of you in Monaco in April, and to an extraordinarily productive conference that will transform the IHO to meet the future.

Sincerely,



TIMOTHY MCGEE
Rear Admiral, U.S.Navy
Commander

Enclosure: 1. USA Comments on Proposals and Documents for Hydrographic Conference

**UNITED STATES OF AMERICA COMMENTS ON PROPOSALS AND
DOCUMENTS FOR THE 3RD EXTRAORDINARY INTERNATIONAL
HYDROGRAPHIC CONFERENCE**

**PROPOSAL 1: ADOPTION OF THE REPORT "A STUDY INTO THE
ORGANIZATIONAL STRUCTURE AND PROCEDURES OF THE IHO"**

The United States of America appreciates the work of the Strategic Planning Working Group (SPWG) and supports the Conference taking note of the Report. The Report of the SPWG, "A Study into the Organizational Structure and Procedures of the IHO", and the Interim Report of the SPWG (re: IHO CL 6/2004 of 23 January 2004) fulfill the basic requirements of Decision No. 2 of the XVIth International Hydrographic Conference. We believe it appropriate for the Conference to actually "adopt" the proposed amendments to the Convention identified in the Report.

PROPOSAL 2: APPROVAL OF AMENDMENTS TO THE IHO CONVENTION

The United States of America supports this proposal, subject to the Conference reaching agreement on proposed amendments to the Convention. Proposed amendments to the IHO Convention are necessary to implement the recommendations set forth in the SPWG Report (CONF.EX3/DOC.1). The United States of America appreciates the fact that the number of amendments has been kept to a minimum; only those needed to effect SPWG-recommended strategic, structural and procedural changes have been proposed. The draft resolution has the added benefit of dispensing with the two pending amendments to the current Convention (re: Decision N° 5, the XIIIth I.H. Conference and Decision N° 13, the XVth I.H. Conference), which have not entered into force.

**PROPOSAL 3: AGREEMENT WITH PRINCIPLES LAID DOWN FOR THE IHO
SUBSIDIARY ORGANS STRUCTURE**

The United States of America supports this proposal. Although not specifically addressed in the proposal above, we note that the IHO Convention currently makes specific reference to a Finance Committee. We fully support continued reference to that committee in the Convention. We also support the SPWG's recommendations as to the proposed functions and organizational alignment of other bodies. We fully agree with the SPWG Report recommendation that the present system of committees, subcommittees and working groups should be simplified. We fully support consolidating these subsidiary organs into the two proposed major committees, the Hydrographic Services & Standards Committee and the Inter-Regional Coordination Committee. Further, subsidiary organs and subordinate groups that are formed by such committees to accomplish specific projects or goals as part of the IHO Strategic Plan and Work Program, should not exist indefinitely. We applaud the adoption of business performance methods and measures (e.g. use of Return on Investment valuations) and continuous monitoring of their progress toward established goals and accomplishments.

PROPOSAL 4: AGREEMENT WITH PRINCIPLES LAID DOWN FOR THE PROCEDURES OF SELECTION OF MEMBERS OF THE IHO COUNCIL

The United States of America supports this proposal. We support the principle that Council representation should reflect a combination of seats selected on the basis of ensuring representation of all geographic areas, and seats selected on the basis of hydrographic interest. Use of the current Regional Hydrographic Commissions (RHCs) as the basis for ensuring geographical representation is acceptable. Member States, however, should be reminded that RHCs are voluntary groups of Member and non-Member States with common interests, which means their number and geographic boundaries can change over time. The use of national tonnage, the current basis for annual assessments, is a useful measure of hydrographic interest. We could also support the use of a nation's Exclusive Economic Zone (EEZ) area as an effective measure of hydrographic responsibility or a combination of the two (an index of tonnage and EEZ area).

PROPOSAL 5: AGREEMENT WITH PRINCIPLES LAID DOWN FOR THE GUIDELINES OF ACCREDITATION OF NGIOS

The United States of America supports this proposal. Many Non-Governmental International Organizations (NGIOs) (e.g. industry, academia and regional organizations) contribute significantly to the work of the IHO. The adoption of standard procedures for the systematic inclusion of these strategic partners at appropriate working and activity levels within the IHO is essential to long-term relevance and effectiveness of the IHO.

PROPOSAL 6: AGREEMENT WITH PRINCIPLES LAID DOWN FOR THE ELIGIBILITY CRITERIA AND TERMS OF OFFICE OF THE SECRETARY-GENERAL AND DIRECTORS

The United States of America supports this proposal, however we note that the reference to the Draft General Regulations (CONF.EX3/DOC.3) should cite Article 12 versus Article 21. (Note: Articles 10 through 15 pertain to the roles, responsibilities and terms of office of the Secretary-General and the Directors, and Articles 17 through 26 pertain to their election.)

PROPOSAL 7: AGREEMENT WITH THE STRUCTURE OF THE REVISED IHO BASIC DOCUMENTS

The United States of America supports this proposal. The "structure" proposed for the IHO Basic Documents should eliminate unnecessary duplications of guidelines and procedures for the Assembly and subsidiary organs of the Organization.

PROPOSAL 8: AMENDMENTS TO THE SPWG TERMS OF REFERENCE

The United States of America supports this proposal. We agree that rendering the Basic Documents in final form for consideration by the Member States is the next logical step

in the strategic reform process. The SPWG, with its collective knowledge of the proposed changes, is best suited to complete the task of harmonizing these documents in concert with the Legal Experts Group and the IHB Directing Committee. SPWG expertise would also be useful in planning the implementation of Conference decisions, again in conjunction with the Legal Experts Group and the IHB Directing Committee. The development of a comprehensive plan for adapting the Organization to the proposed structure should be a valuable tool in hastening successful implementation.

ADDITIONAL COMMENTS ON CCL2-ANNEX B, CONVENTION ON THE IHO, 25 JUNE 2004:

Page 9, Article X: Delete “other” in first line. The IHO is an IGO (Inter-Governmental Organization) and the Convention should not imply that it is a Non-Governmental Organization.

Page 10, Article XVII (d), second line: Change “President of the Directing Committee” to “Secretary General of the Organization”. If the term “President of the D/C” still exists, it should be defined by revising the beginning of Article IX (b) on page 9 to read, “For the election of the Directing Committee (Secretary-General and the Directors)...”

Page 11, Article XIX (b): 2nd line, revise “afirmative” to read “affirmative”.

ADDITIONAL COMMENTS ON CCL2-ANNEX C, DRAFT BASIC DOCUMENTS, 25 JUNE 2004:

General Regulations

Page 3 Contents, Article 11: Revise “Coouncils” to read “Councils”.

Page 7, Article 12 (c): This paragraph is unclear as to how election will be handled at subsequent Assemblies. That is, if the person serves 5 years and there is a limit of 9 years total, the person could only stand for 3 added years. If the person served for 1-1/2 years, could that person stand for 6 years or just 3 years? Perhaps it should read that if the person serves for 3 or more years they would be allowed to stand for 3 added years and if they served for less than 3 years, they could stand for 6 added years.

Page 8, Article 16(c): “Member State” in lines 1 and 6 should read “Member States”. In the last full line, “their” should read “its”.

Financial Regulations

Page 8, Article 16: The United States of America is opposed to any “write offs” of past due amounts. Accordingly, the Member States in arrears should be “warned at 18 months”, “suspended” at 24 months and the IHO annual budget for the 3rd year should be adjusted to reflect the reduced income unless it has been offset by accession of new Member States.

Page 8, Article 18: If the issue of write-offs above is in need of correction, a sentence might be added to this Article to read, "When income is lower than projected, e.g., due to suspension of Member States, the annual operating budget shall be adjusted accordingly."

Page 9, Article 21: The plan that "Any credit balance shall be divided amongst these States in proportion to the total amount of their contributions since 1921....", would be very difficult to compute. The value of money and variance in currencies used by the Organization since 1921, i.e., Special Drawing Rights, French Francs and Euros would be nearly impossible to compute. This should be based not on currency but on shares paid time years of membership.

Rules of Procedure of the Assembly

Page 5, Rule 1: This is confusing as written in that a Member State denied voting rights and benefits is still a Member State. This definition of a Member seems to exclude those denied certain rights.