

31st Meeting of the Joint IAG-IHO Advisory Board on the Law of the Sea (ABLOS) DHN, Rio de Janeiro, Brazil 7 to 9 October 2024

Contribution to the IHO Work Programme 2024

Task 2.1.2.8 Attendance of ABLOS Board Meeting

High level summary:

- The meeting discussed how to raise the profile of ABLOS through specific training and extended web-based communication.
- There is the intention of ABLOS to develop Capacity Building Training Course materials.
- ABLOS started the preparations of the 12th Conference and 32nd Board Meeting that will be hosted in Doha, Qatar.
- The participation of the members at Law of the Sea (LOS) related Conferences was reported.
- The revision of C-51 Manual on Technical Aspects of the UN Convention on the Law of the Sea (7th Edition) is in progress.
- In addition to the Board Meeting, a Seminar was held on 9th October with a programme full of relevant presentations.

Details:

The Advisory Board on the Law of the Sea (ABLOS) is a joint board of the International Hydrographic Organization (IHO) and the International Association of Geodesy (IAG) with the objective of providing information and advice on technical aspects of the Law of the Sea.

The meeting was attended by seven ABLOS members, two of them remotely and IHO and IAG appointed observers from Chile, Democratic Republic of Congo, Ghana, India, Oman, Qatar and the USA. The 31st ABLOS Board Meeting was chaired by Dr Juan Carlos Báez Soto (IAG-Chile), having as Vice-Chair Ms. Fiona BLOOR (IHO – UK). The IHO Secretariat was represented by Assistant Director Leonel Manteigas.

Dr Juan Carlos Báez Soto, ABLOS Chair, opened the meeting welcoming all participants and thanking the Directory of Hydrography of Navigation (DHN) and the Brazilian Navy for hosting this meeting. He regretted that some ABLOS Members could not attend the meeting in person.

Admiral Linhares, Hydrographer of Brazil, welcomed all participants to DHN mentioning that is an honour to have this group of experts gathered at DHN. He stressed the importance of ABLOS and wished everyone a good and fruitful meeting.

Raising the profile of ABLOS was one of the topics discussed and consideration was given to conducting interviews with ABLOS members/stakeholders for publication in relevant industry literature and on the ABLOS website as well as engaging with the IHO Public Relations and Communications Officer to help promote ABLOS conferences.

The meeting discussed the possibility of developing some training materials that may correspond to the needs of the hydrographic regions, and how to engage with the Regional Capacity Building (CB) Coordinators to know what ABLOS can provide in terms of Capacity Building training and regional based seminars, normally associated with an ABLOS Board Meeting. It was decided that some Members will participate in the next intersessional meeting of the Capacity Building Sub-Committee to liaise and receive inputs from the regional CB Coordinators. The possibility to consider developing material for the IHO e-Learning Center was also discussed. To avoid the repetition of developing training material that already exists, the Board will liaise with DOALOS (UN Division for Ocean Affairs and the Law of the Sea) which already has several courses on different topics.

ABLOS decided in 2020 to create an ABLOS website dedicated to the ABLOS Conferences. The website was created and is maintained by the Technical University of Denmark (DTU) to help raise the profile of ABLOS. It was discussed the need to well define which contents should be available on the IHO website/portal and on the ABLOS website. DTU will liaise with the Secretary on the topic.

One important activity of the ABLOS Members is the respective participation in Conferences and other events related with the Law of the Sea. One permanent action is related to the provision of links to relevant events and organizations for inclusion on the ABLOS website. As part of this action, ABLOS members informed the meeting of their participation at Law of the Sea related Conferences.

Mr. John Ells, Chair of the Editorial Board established for the update of the C-51 Manual on Technical Aspects of the UN Convention on the Law of the Sea (TALOS), briefed the meeting on the progress related to the review of Edition 7.0.0. Options for a platform for group editing, revision and participation were discussed. There is a significant quantity of work involved in developing TALOS into a modern digital format whilst supporting printable pdf delivery. A discussion was held around the editing of the diagrams and animations and some graphics that may need updating. The meeting was informed that an Arabic translation of the Edition 6.0.0, carried out by Qatar, is practically completed.

The observers from Qatar offered to host the next ABLOS Board Meeting and the 12th ABLOS Conference in Doha, Qatar. Members recalled that it was not the first time that this offer had been received and that several participants of the last conference recommended to move the Conference to outside Monaco.

Members discussed the need to consider the finance aspects and the attractiveness for the participants, as well as the need to liaise with the Member States in the region. Qatar informed that will be attentive and supportive of all preparations and that expect to be able to draw speakers and delegates from Africa, Europe, Americas and Asia with particular interest in Law of the Sea from Gulf and Arab countries. 200 to 300 delegates are forecast. The Members thanked Qatar for the generous offer and decided to hold the next ABLOS Board Meeting and the 12th ABLOS Conference in Doha, Qatar. The meeting discussed the creation of the Organizing Committee for the 2025 Conference with several members offering volunteers. The Conference theme that should be around addressing “Is UNCLOS fit for purpose in modern times?” was also discussed, as well as other administrative arrangements.

With reference to the membership, the meeting welcomed a new Member from IHO, Dr Virginie Tassin Campanella, and was informed that Mr. Richard S. Gross, IAG President, is a new member from IAG although he was not able to attend this meeting.

The current Chair, Dr Juan Carlos Báez Soto, informed that he will not extend his term and will leave the Board. He will ask IAG to nominate a member to replace him.

Back-to-back to the Meeting, on Wednesday, DHN organized a Seminar with interventions that were considered very relevant by all attendees. The presentations addressed topics related to the Maritime boundaries, the United Nations agreement on Biodiversity Beyond National Jurisdiction (BBNJ Agreement) and the common heritage of mankind principle in the context of recent negotiations on marine resources.

Photo



Upcoming meetings:

At the end of the meeting, the Vice-Chair Ms. Fionna BLOOR took over as new Chair of ABLOS. It was agreed that the next meeting of the ABLOS along with the 12th Conference, will be hosted by Qatar in Doha, from 6 - 9 October 2025.