

## HIGH LEVEL VISIT TO THE BAHAMAS

### NASSAU, The Bahamas, 15-19 April

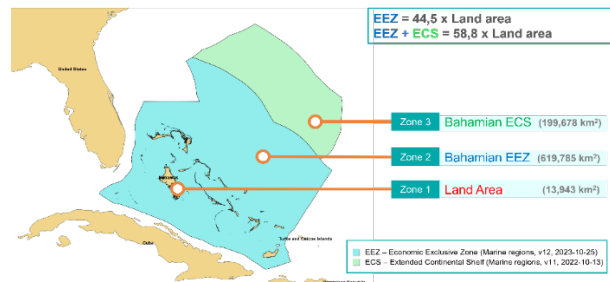
Contribution to the IHO Work Programme 2024	
Task 1.3.2.1	Undertake high-level visits to Governments of non-Member States

Following an invitation from the Bahamian Ministry of Foreign Affairs dated 7<sup>th</sup> February 2024 and the policy to enlarge the IHO membership, the IHO Director Luigi Sinapi paid a High-Level Visit to the Commonwealth of The Bahamas from 15 to 19 April. The Visit was aimed at re-suming discussions on The Bahamas' potential membership to the International Hydrographic Organization, the progress made in the maritime sector of The Bahamas, the way forward to further strengthening the national capacity in hydrography and the future of The Bahamas' charting authority.



*IHO Director visiting the Bahamian Ministries of Foreign Affairs, Legal Affairs, National Security and Environment and Natural Resources*

During the Visit, IHO Director Sinapi met with the Honourable Wayne Munroe, M.P., Minister of National Security, the Parliamentary Secretary of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, Mr. Jamahl Strachan, the Director General of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, Mrs. Jerusa Ali, The Honourable Senator Ryan Pinder, Attorney General and Minister of Legal Affairs, The Honourable Wayne Munroe K.C., Minister of National Security, the Honourable Vaughn Miller, M.P., Minister of Environment and Natural Resources and many other intra-ministerial stakeholders from Maritime & Oceans Affairs Bureau, Royal Bahamas Defence Force, Bahamas National Geographic Information Services, Department of Environmental Planning and Protection, Port Department and Bahamas Maritime Authority.



*The Bahamas' Maritime Limits*

The discussions were focused on the role of Hydrography, IHO and Meso-American and Caribbean Sea Hydrographic Commission (MACHC) in the sustainable development of the Caribbean Ocean economy, the importance of Hydrographic Services at national, regional and international levels, and their role in the sustainable development of national economies, with reference to the economy of The Bahamas and the opportunity to improve the current Maritime National Policy.

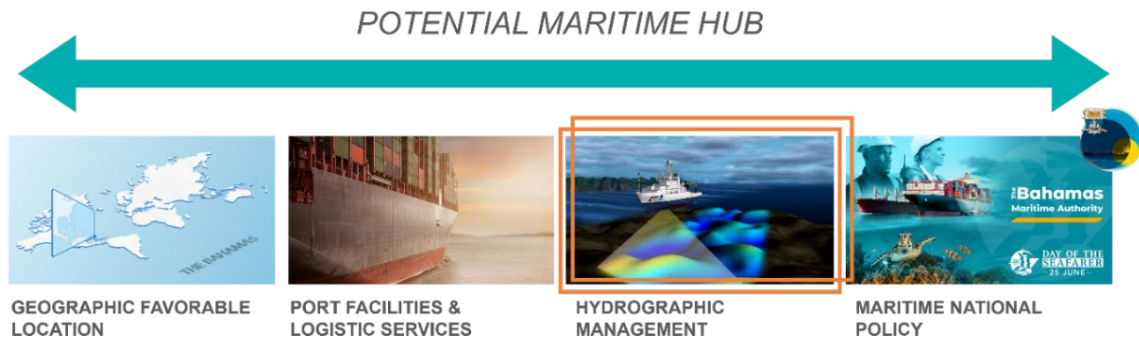


*Press release from the Bahamas Information Services*

The importance of having a hydrographic capacity for becoming a Maritime Hub in the Caribbean region was discussed, as a fundamental means to obtain accurate knowledge of the dynamics of the sea, its resources, limits, and natural changes, to achieve the following two main purposes:

- To optimize The Bahamas' value chains like Tourism, with the construction of new ports and coastal constructions to receive cruise ships with larger capacities and more places to entertain like restaurants and hotels. It also assures the wealth of natural resources like beaches, corals and coastline that are the main reason tourists want to visit The Bahamas, looking for a safer navigation to reduce accidents at; and,
- To achieve a sustainable marine management that allows for the efficient exploitation of marine resources, protection of the marine environment and permanent control of erosion and sedimentation phenomena that affect the coastline.

Following the interest of the Bahamian Authorities, the IHO Director provided also a SWOT (Strengths, Weaknesses, Opportunities and Threats) analysis to become a member of the IHO, highlighting the dependency of a third part for the collection of specific ocean data, due to the lack of technology, trained personnel or a specialized infrastructure, and the threats that could limit this process. It was affirmed that the IHO can accompany and assist The Bahamas throughout the process, thanks to the consolidated IHO Capacity Building program and the international support from other IHO Member States. The Bahamas Information Services released a press release on the Visit.



Finally, the benefits to become an IHO member were summarized as follows:

- Access to Training and Education opportunities.
- Access to a global community of experts.
- Build capacity to address national ocean priorities.
- Have a voice in the development of standards for safety of navigation and ocean data.
- Improve safety of navigation in the geographical region of belonging.
- Access to global best practices.
- Become a Member of IHO Council thanks to the hydrographic interest.
- Preparedness for IMO audits.

and the necessary procedural steps to join the IHO were discussed.

At the end of the individual meetings, the intention of the Bahamian authorities to support the internal process for joining the IHO was confirmed at all levels, as well as the intention to start the familiarization with the hydrographic community through the participation at the MACHC works as Associate Member. It was also agreed that the IHO Secretariat will continue to follow and support the Bahamian authorities along the next procedural steps to join the IHO, providing all the necessary assistance.



*IHO Director and MFA Director General signing the "Concept Note"*

Finally, to provide a “*Way Ahead*” for strengthening the Bahamian national capacity in hydrography, outlining the future of The Bahamas’ charting authority, and consolidating the progress made in the maritime sector of The Bahamas, a “*Concept Note*” was signed by the IHO Director and the Director General of the MFA of The Bahamas. The following are the agreed recommended actions to be taken by the Government of The Bahamas in the next future:

1. Consolidate The Bahamas' presence at the regional level by joining the Meso-American and Caribbean Sea Hydrographic Commission (MACHC) as an Associate Member, through the signing of the MACHC Statutes.
2. Participate actively in the activities of the IHO's Capacity Building Programme for the MACHC Region.
3. Plan - in cooperation with the MACHC Capacity Building coordinator - an IHO Technical Visit to assess the perceived present and future hydrographic requirements of The Bahamas, to prepare the Technical Status Report and identify the various areas of work that a national Hydrographic Service should carry out and the existing gaps.
4. National Hydrographic Coordination Committee (NHCC) to build in collaboration with other stakeholders (Academia, Research centres, Industry etc,) outreach programmes (workshops / announcements / social media) to raise awareness of the importance of Ocean sciences / hydrography.
5. Take steps to identify and allocate appropriate funding to support the creation of a National Authority and a National Hydrographic Service.
6. Implement the phases reported in the *IHO Publication M2 Ed. June 2018 – The Need for National Hydrographic Services* for the creation of a National Hydrographic Service.
7. Ministries of Foreign Affairs, Legal Affairs, National Security, Environment and Natural Resources, in cooperation with the Office of the Prime Minister, to present to the Parliament a proposal of an internal regulatory instrument (e.g. a Law) to approve the “Convention on the International Hydrographic Organization” done in Monaco on 3 May 1967, and as amended by the Protocol dated 14 April 2005 that entered into force on 8 November 2016.
8. Ministry of Foreign Affairs to send a Note verbale submitting a Letter of Accession to the IHO Convention to the Principality of Monaco through diplomatic channels.