

20th Conference of the IHO Hydrographic Commission on Antarctica (HCA)
Punta Arenas, Chile, 03-06 December 2025
&
HPWG, Region M ICCWG and S-100 Workshop (Region M ICC Coordinator)
02 December 2025

Contribution to the IHO Work Programme 2025	
1.1.2 3.2.2	Maintain relationship with the Antarctic Treaty Consultative Meeting (ATCM) Organize, prepare for and report meetings of Hydrographic Commission on Antarctica (HCA)

High level summary

- The concept of a strategic framework (ANCHOR) to guide the initiatives and efforts of the Commission was endorsed. Content will be built in interpretation of the upcoming IHO Strategic Plan for 2027-2032 for the waters of the Southern Ocean and in the scope of the 5th International Polar year (2032-2033),
- The Excellent level of cooperation between HCA Member States on data sharing and harmonized production impressively presented through concrete production projects of new and revised printed and digital charts based on multiple data sources from collaborating HCA members.
- With the first S-101 cells produced in the Antarctic area by Chile and Australia, the need to actively engage S-100 production coordination in accordance with WEND-100 Principles is now considered as a regional priority.
- Some innovative survey technics used in the Antarctica area to collect bathymetric data: ARGO soundings, Seal-Based Bathymetry and Iceberg-Based Bathymetry were presented.

Venue & attendance

1. The 20th Conference of the IHO Hydrographic Commission on Antarctica was held in Punta Arenas (54°S) in Chile from 03 to 06 December 2025, hosted by the Chilean Navy Hydrographic and Oceanographic Service (SHOA). It was preceded by a technical Workshop of the Hydrographic Priorities Working Group (HPWG) and the Region M International Charting Coordination Working Group (Region M ICCWG) on the 2nd December – both chaired by Mr Lee Truscott (UK).
2. The Conference was chaired by Dr Mathias Jonas, supported by Assistant Director Eric Langlois, HCA Secretary, and Ms Caroline Fontanili (IHO Secretariat), as rapporteur. There were 13 out of 27 HCA Member States present: Australia, Brazil, Chile, Colombia, France, Germany, New Zealand, Norway, Poland, Russian Federation, Spain, United Kingdom, USA and observer organization IAATO. Another 8 Member States and the Scientific Committee on Antarctic Research (SCAR), HCA Observer, attended the conference remotely.

Main outcomes

3. The HCA Chair reported on progress made during the 48th Antarctic Treaty Consultative Meeting in June 2025, pointing out the consolidation of the Priority #9 on the use and sharing of hydrographic data in the revision of the ATCM Strategic Plan based on IHO's input.
4. The HCA noted the report provided by the GEBCO GC Chair highlighting the new GEBCO strategy and governance report, as well as the IHO DCDB data holdings in Antarctica and welcomed the outstanding outcomes of various innovative soundings collection methods such as ARGO soundings, Seal-Based Bathymetry and Iceberg-Based Bathymetry. The use of satellite-derived bathymetric data (SDB), not subject to traditional territorial regulations but governed by space law, was discussed as a significant development, potentially changing national approaches to data sharing and management.
5. The HCA noted the release of a global SDB dataset for coastal waters under European Union's Copernicus Marine Service, accessible through the below link: https://data.marine.copernicus.eu/product/BATHYMETRY_GLO_PHY_COASTAL_L4_MY_016_001/description.
6. The ANCHOR proposal (Antarctic Climate and Hydrographic Operation Response) was presented as a strategic framework to guide HCA's response to climate change, linking to international action plans and emphasizing the need for proactive engagement and data sharing. Participants agreed to refine the ANCHOR proposal and align it with the forthcoming IHO Strategic Plan covering the period 2027-2032.
7. The Commission noted the excellent quality of the national reports, and exceptional collaboration between States sharing data in general for harmonized production of nautical charts, avoiding duplication of efforts which must be encouraged. Very substantive reports were delivered by the two Observers IAATO and SCAR.
8. The HCA discussed the need for regional S-100 roadmaps, overlap avoidance strategies, and the ongoing revision of S-11 Part C, with input from various working groups and a focus on coordination and management of S-100 product development.
9. The USA gave a presentation on Marine Spatial Data Infrastructure (MSDI) in the region, the recent merger with the UNGGIM Marine Working Group, and initiated an in-depth discussion on the potential adoption of a common grid scheme for polar regions, including technical options and Member State perspectives.
10. The Chair provided an overview of the VHF Data Exchange System (VDES) for maritime applications, its potential relevance for polar regions, and solicited input from member states regarding awareness and implementation plans.
11. Mr Lee Truscott (UKHO), the ICC coordinator, led discussions on chart and ENC scheme coordination among Argentina, Chile, Spain, the US, Poland, Brazil, and others, addressing specific coverage issues, data sharing, and the production of new charts and ENCs.
12. Mr Lee Truscott (UKHO), also Chair of the HCA Hydrography Priorities Working Group (HPWG) and Chart Coordinator for Region M, provided an outstanding review of the compilation of updates received from Members on INT charts and ENC production. It must be noted that this Conference allowed a real harmonisation of efforts and a great cooperative spirit between the parties.
13. The Region M ICC Coordinator presented the UKHO's progress on automated paper chart production from ENCs using Caris software, with input from Brazil, France, and New Zealand on technical challenges, customization, and future availability.

Next Meeting

14. The 21st Conference of the Commission (**HCA21**) will be held in **Cambridge, UK, 17–21 May 2027**.

Group photo

(Credits: SHOA, Chile)

