

22nd Meeting of the South West Pacific Hydrographic Commission Koror, Palau 3 - 5 March 2025

Contribution to the IHO Work Programme 2025

Task 3.2.1.14 Prepare for and report meetings of the Regional Hydrographic Commissions (RHC) - SWPHC

High level summary (can be used for posting on social media. Please provide concise lists in bullet point format):

- The IHO presented its latest updates regarding technology, coordination, and strategic planning
- The IHO worked to educate non-IHO members on the benefits of IHO membership
- The region shared best practices regarding S-100, survey, the role of hydrographic offices, and technology
- New leadership roles were confirmed in the region
- A workshop to improve the understanding of contract opportunities and relationships with PCAs was held.

Details:

The South West Pacific Hydrographic Commission (SWPHC) was held in Koror, Palau from 3 - 5 March 2025. The meeting was chaired by Ms Hilary Thompson (Australia). The IHO was represented by Dr John Nyberg. Australia, Fiji, France, Indonesia (VTC), Kiribati, Marshall Islands, New Zealand, Niue, Naru, Palau, Papua New Guinea, Samoa, Solomon Islands, Tonga, Tuvalu, United Kingdom, United States, were in attendance.

Ms. Hilary Thompson welcomed the attendees to begin the meeting and introduced the Working Group chairs and the significant accomplishments from the past year. Ms. Thompson was followed by Excellency President Surangel Whipps, Jr. of Palau who noted the importance of hydrography and charting in the region and encouraged the Commission to continue its good work. Dr Nyberg followed the President by welcoming addresses by describing the state of hydrography around the world, the exciting initiatives underway, and some of the opportunities that are on the horizon.

National reports were presented by Australia, Fiji, France, Indonesia (VTC), Kiribati, Marshall Islands, New Zealand, Niue (VTC), Naru, Palau, Papua New Guinea, Samoa, Solomon Islands, Tonga, Tuvalu, United Kingdom, and United States. There were several SWPHC MS who reported progress in planning for S-100 products and services, including the establishment of coordinating committees and S-100 working groups. Some reported writing plans for the implementation of domestic hydrographic activities with the IGIF pathways as the basis. The high cost of survey operations was noted by many hydrographic offices, and the collaborative work being done with primary charting authorities was presented as an important aspect of supporting hydrography in the region. One MS has been coordinating with satellite derived bathymetric initiatives in their waters and has received a copy of the data which has been collected. The data was also included in the GEBCO dataset. At least one MS reported the need for national hydrographic legislation.

Partner and industry presentations were delivered by IALA, IMO, SPC, and JICA. All presented the latest updates for their organizations. Of special note, the IMO presented an S-100 heavy presentation that reviewed the progress on S-100 ECIDS rollout, and the upcoming IHO-IMO S-100 Workshop. During the session there was a presentation on the progress of the IMO Pacific One Maritime Framework document which outlines a strategy for navigation in the region and highlights the importance of a timely S-100 implementation. Drafting of the document has been limited to SPC Member States.

The Commission presented an update on the work being done on IHO governance inclusion, with a preference for increased participation via VTC. A point was raised about the IHO's plans to allow remote voting at the next Assembly, which will be followed by clarification as soon as the preparation process for the 4th Session of the IHO Assembly begins in April 2025 and the IHO Secretariat will commence the issue the usual suite of Assembly Circular Letters to inform Member States about the general and specific conditions..

Presentations on DCDB, CSB, GEBCO Seabed 2030 were given. All of these initiatives are well supported by the region. Following the Seabed 2030 update, Beti Tebetiraoi Inatoa (Kiribati) was selected as the new CSB/Seabed 2030 Coordinator was selected from Kiribati.

There was a session that focused on activities in Palau by the Palau Bureau of Marine Transportation. The overview was delivered by Elson Skebong (Palau). There is substantial work being undertaken in Palau to manage AToNs, conduct surveys, and support marine transportation with an emphasis on protecting the environment and supporting fishermen and other marine based industry. A fantastic presentation was given by the Coral Reef Research Foundation which focused on survey operations to monitor coral reef systems in Palau.

An update on the Hydrographic Leaders Program (HLP) was provided. The HLP mentoring program has proven its value in the SWPHC region with many accolades from mentees and mentors. It has been expanded into other hydrographic commissions using the SWPHC as a model. The SWPHC plans to run the program again this year.

A detailed update from the MSDI WG was provided by Caitlin Boatright (USA) highlighting the path forward for the IHO's MSDI WG. It was followed by a report on the regional initiatives including the IGIF Talanoa. The Commission conducted an activity aimed at helping improve the understanding of the UN IGIF and how it is being implemented in the region. Nick Pion (PG) and Dan Minors (UK) lead the exercise. Nick Pion was elected as the new chair of the regional MSDI WG.

There was an outstanding session on chart coordination which presented the current state of charting in the region along with opportunities and progress related to S-100. The regional chart coordinator, Rob Cario (Australia) started the session with a charting overview, then RENCs and other stakeholders followed with initiatives and opportunities in the region. The S-100 Coordinator assessment was an exemplary example of how this activity should be conducted around the world.

The Commission held a full session for industry presentations which presented private sector capabilities for survey, chart production and services.

The Commission's disaster response plan and charter were discussed. An informative presentation and reminder of regional emergency processes were highlighted. Graham Mimpriss (UK) was selected as the new Disaster Coordinator for the region

Amanda Williams (USA) lead a CB Workshop which focused on the legal and contracting aspects of hydrography. There were presentations from MS who explained their authorities and contracting mechanisms and input from industry participants who discussed their approach toward contracting in

the region. A major focus of the Workshop was to improve MS understanding about how to improve work with their primary charting authorities. Dr Nyberg gave a presentation on the benefits of IHO membership and the importance of hydrographic office contributions to the legal aspects of the sea.

Photos



SWPHC 22



SWPHC 22



Elson Skebong (Palau)



Passing the Paddle

Upcoming meetings:

Next SWPHC to be in
Nouméa, New Caledonia
18-20 February 2026
16-17 February 2026 - CB Workshop