

West African Hydrographic Summit (WAHS) & 2025 World Hydrography Day (WHD) celebrations Abuja, Nigeria – 19-21 June 2025

Contribution to regional cooperation & 2025 World Hydrography Day celebrations.

Task 1.3.3

Celebrate World Hydrography Day including the preparation of information to support the themes.

High level summary

- The inaugural West African Hydrographic Summit (WAHS) represented a unique moment for the West African Coast countries to set up a common strategy for revitalizing regional cooperation in hydrography.
- WAHS recognized the critical role of hydrography in enhancing ocean governance, blue economy as well as aligning environmental stewardship with social responsibilities beyond safety of navigation.
- WHD2025 was celebrated in the presence of the highest political, military, civil and press authorities of Nigeria, the IHO Secretariat, the Nippon Foundation GEBCO Seabed2030 project and the East Atlantic Hydrographic Commission (EAtHC) Chair.
- Large Exhibition of high technology industry in the hydrographic, oceanography and surveying sectors, and the Nigerian shipbuilding industry.
- Inauguration of the IC-ENC West Africa Regional Office & Training Centre, following the endorsement of the IC-ENC Steering Committee in accordance with the IC-ENC CL 11/2025.
- Signing of a Technical Cooperation Agreement between the Nigerian National Hydrography Agency (NHA) and Teledyne Caris.

Details:

At the invitation of NHA (re: Letter of Hydrographer of the Federation dated 27 February 2025), the IHO Secretariat represented by Director Luigi Sinapi participated at the West African Hydrographic Summit (WAHS) and 2025 World Hydrography Day (WHD) celebration, held at Abuja Continental Hotel from 19-21 June 2025.

On 19 June, after the opening remarks, an *Exhibition* on high technology industry in the hydrographic, oceanography and surveying sectors, and the Nigerian shipbuilding industry and the inaugural West African Hydrographic Summit (WAHS) took place. During the Exhibition, the IC-ENC West Africa Regional Office & Training Centre was inaugurated, as well as the booth dedicated to the recently born Nigerian National Hydrography Agency (NHA).

<p>COMMUNIQUE AT THE INAUGURAL WEST AFRICAN HYDROGRAPHIC SUMMIT HELD ON 19 JUNE 2025 AT THE ABUJA CONTINENTAL HOTEL, NIGERIA</p> <p>PREAMBLE</p> <p>1. The inaugural West African Hydrographic Summit (WAHS) was held on 19 June 2025 at Ladi Kwali Hall of the Abuja Continental Hotel and hosted by Nigeria to strengthen regional hydrographic development. The Summit recognized the critical role of hydrography in enhancing ocean governance, blue economy as well as aligning environmental stewardship with social responsibilities beyond safety of navigation. About 25 participants comprising heads of national hydrographic offices and maritime organizations, international partners like IHO, UNESCO IOC as well as past national hydrographers of the Nigerian Navy attended the Summit. Discussed largely on the state of hydrography in West Africa, the need for regional collaboration for hydrographic development and strategic opportunities under African continental Free Trade Area which culminated into a proposed Regional Hydrographic Strategy for the West African area.</p> <p>RESOLUTIONS</p> <p>2. Arising from the deliberations at the WAHS, some key resolutions were reached. Accordingly, members:</p> <p>a. Identified that many countries in the region operate with inadequate hydrographic infrastructure, limiting the capacity to generate accurate and timely nautical data essential for maritime navigation and safety. However, Nigeria and Morocco have comparatively improved hydrographic infrastructure.</p> <p>b. Recognized that a significant number of national hydrographic offices lacked access to modern survey platforms and data acquisition tools, impeding the execution of high-quality hydrographic surveys.</p> <p>c. Agreed that hydrography remains largely underfunded in several West African states resulting in limited survey coverage and an inability to invest in technological upgrades or skilled manpower development.</p> <p>d. Observed that most coastal waters across the region remain largely under-surveyed or inadequately charted. This lack of nautical coherence in data acquisition poses serious risks to safe navigation and port development.</p>	<p>e. Recognized the absence of harmonized data-sharing frameworks and standardized hydrographic practices which impairs regional collaboration.</p> <p>f. Encouraged national hydrographic offices and maritime agencies to continue to extend capacity development initiatives offered by the IHO and other international developmental partners towards improving institutional capacity for hydrographic practices and development in West Africa.</p> <p>g. Recognized the interdependence between hydrography and oceanography in supporting safety of navigation, sustainable ocean management and blue economy.</p> <p>h. Proposed the commencement of due process for the establishment of a dedicated West African sub-regional hydrographic training center with clear objectives:</p> <p>1. Encouraged the conduct of joint surveys to coordinate and rationalize hydrographic survey missions, leveraging shared resources and priorities.</p> <p>2. Recognized the need to develop a secure, interoperable regional geospatial data platform.</p> <p>3. Welcomed the idea of institutionalizing WAHS as an annual event with a consensus that will ensure sustainability. Nigeria committed to continue hosting the Summit until other countries are able to do so.</p> <p>4. Encouraged survey platform acquisition process to include maintenance service agreement particularly for countries without in-country Original Equipment Manufacturers' presence.</p> <p>5. Encouraged all coastal West African nations to join IHO and also attend meetings regularly.</p> <p>6. Suggested that West African countries to articulate a needs assessment, enumerate the focal points and channel same to EAtHC for more coordinated outcome.</p> <p>7. Encouraged the upgrading of Nippon Foundation Hydrographic School and the implementation of CnH Hydrographic Course in Morocco to serve as viable and cost effective option for hydrographic training.</p> <p>8. Encouraged the sharing of bathymetric data with GEBCO in accordance with IHO Resolutions 41932 – Metadata for Oceanic Soundings</p>	<p>and 1/2017 – Improving the Availability of Bathymetric Data Worldwide.</p> <p>9. Encouraged the establishment of hydrographic integration and collaboration based on a spiral approach or 3 concentric principles. These are: alignment with IHO standards, EAtHC Statutes and focus on the needs and imperatives of the West African Hydrographic aspirations.</p> <p>10. Welcomed the establishment of a new framework for the West African Area. WAHS could leverage the upcoming review of the IHO strategic plan to articulate West African Strategy by adopting a Spiral Principle (IHO Strategic Plan 2027-2032 – EAtHC Statute – West African Area Hydrographic Strategic Plan).</p> <table><tr><th>Serial</th><th>Name</th><th>Country/Organization</th><th>Signature</th></tr><tr><th>(a)</th><th>(b)</th><th>(c)</th><th>(d)</th></tr><tr><td colspan="4">West African Pioneer Members</td></tr><tr><td>1.</td><td>Bahamian Century</td><td>Gambia Gambian Ports Authority</td><td><i>[Signature]</i></td></tr><tr><td>2.</td><td>Dr Karim-Deen Ali</td><td>Ghana Ghana Maritime Authority</td><td><i>[Signature]</i></td></tr><tr><td>3.</td><td>Cecce Denis Guarnon</td><td>Guinea Country Guinea Port Authority</td><td><i>[Signature]</i></td></tr><tr><td>4.</td><td>R. Adey AO Oluwalade</td><td>Nigeria National Hydrographic Agency</td><td><i>[Signature]</i></td></tr><tr><td colspan="4">In Presence</td></tr><tr><td>5.</td><td>R. Adm Luigi Sinapi</td><td>IHO</td><td><i>[Signature]</i></td></tr><tr><td>6.</td><td>Captain Scott James</td><td>GEBCO SEABED 2030 Project</td><td><i>[Signature]</i></td></tr><tr><td>7.</td><td>McMichael-Phillips (Rtd)</td><td>Chairman East Atlantic Hydrographic Commission (EAtHC)</td><td><i>[Signature]</i></td></tr><tr><td>8.</td><td>Dr. Oluwalade</td><td>UNESCO IOC</td><td><i>[Signature]</i></td></tr></table> <p>Signed at Abuja on 21 June 2025</p>	Serial	Name	Country/Organization	Signature	(a)	(b)	(c)	(d)	West African Pioneer Members				1.	Bahamian Century	Gambia Gambian Ports Authority	<i>[Signature]</i>	2.	Dr Karim-Deen Ali	Ghana Ghana Maritime Authority	<i>[Signature]</i>	3.	Cecce Denis Guarnon	Guinea Country Guinea Port Authority	<i>[Signature]</i>	4.	R. 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Communique at the inaugural WAHS held on 19 June 2025

25 representatives comprising heads of national hydrographic offices and maritime organizations of Nigeria, Ghana, The Gambia and Guinea, international organizations like IHO, IOC-UNESCO, the Nippon Foundation GEBCO-Seabed2030 project and the East Atlantic Hydrographic Commission participated at the inaugural WAHS. Among the various resolutions taken by the WAHS members, the following are worth mentioning:

- Encourage the sharing of bathymetric data with GEBCO in accordance with IHO Resolutions 4/1932 – Metadata for Oceanic Soundings and 1/2017 – Improving the availability of bathymetric data worldwide.
- Encourage the establishment of hydrographic integration and collaboration based on a spiral approach or 3 concentric principles. These are: alignment with IHO standards, EAHC Statutes and focus on the needs and imperatives of the West African Hydrographic aspirations;
- Welcome the establishment of a new framework for the West African Area. WAHS could leverage the upcoming review of the IHO Strategic Plan to articulate West African Strategy by adopting a spiral approach.



World Hydrography Day (WHD) 2025 celebration

The days 20 and 21 June 2025 were dedicated to the 2025WHD celebration, which included:

- A Plenary Session (on 20 June) with the presentation of 3 Papers focused on the 2025WHD Motto “Seabed Mapping: Enabling Ocean Action”, highlighting the strategic imperative of adopting cutting-edge hydrographic tools to support national, regional and international development goals, sponsoring the use of smart technologies for promoting hydrographic applications, and describing the achievements the Nippon Foundation GEBCO-Seabed2030 project.
- The Celebration of 2025WHD (on 21 June) with 2 Keynote Lectures held by the Head IOC-UNESCO Sub Commission for Africa and Adjacent Island States and IHO Director, which respectfully advocated for Africa’s strategic focus on seabed mapping to drive sustainable development, climate resilience and cultural reclamation, and the crucial role of hydrography in supporting global ocean science, sustainable ocean management and Ocean economy, by announcing that 27.3% of the world’s ocean floor has now been mapped to modern standards. The increase in data represents more than four million square kilometers of newly mapped seafloor – an area roughly equivalent to the entire Indian subcontinent.

- C. A Round Table with women officers of the Nigerian Navy (on 21 June) from the Nigeria's effort to Improve Gender Balance in Hydrography project, where IHO Director presented on the IHO Empowering Women in Hydrography (EWH) project and responded to the questions from the participants.
- D. A Dinner and Awards Night (on 21 June) to present Hydrographic awards to local authorities, hydrographers and Navy officers who distinguished themselves in their hydrographic career, and the speakers and keynote speakers participating at the WAHS and 2025WHD celebration.



Nigeria's effort to Improve Gender Balance in Hydrography