

33rd Meeting of the Joint IAG-IHO Advisory Board on the Law of the Sea (ABLOS) and 2026 ABLOS Seminar Lisbon, Portugal, 14 to 17 September 2026

Contribution to the IHO Work Programme 2026

Task 2.1.2.8 Attendance of ABLOS Board Meeting and Conference

High level summary:

- Preparations for the 2027 13th ABLOS Conference, to be hosted by the Republic of Korea, are progressing well.
- Significant progress was made on the 7th edition of the TALOS Manual (C-51), with milestones established towards completion of the final revision by April 2027.
- The Board reaffirmed its intention to strengthen cooperation with IOC-UNESCO and DOALOS, and explore further engagement with the International Telecommunication Union (ITU), particularly on issues related to submarine cables and the Law of the Sea.
- Dr. Richard Gross was elected Chair and Professor Lorenzo Schiano Di Pepe Vice-Chair.
- ABLOS 2026 Seminar under the theme *“Oceanic Data Sharing and the Law of the Sea”*, attracted more than 70 in-person participants and approximately 323 remote participants from 60 countries.
- The Seminar featured 17 speakers and three moderators.

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 main objective of providing information and advice on technical aspects of the Law of the Sea.

33rd Board Meeting

The 33rd ABLOS Board Meeting was attended by seven ABLOS members, one of whom participated remotely. IHO appointed observers from Australia, Qatar, Portugal and Malaysia also attended, with the newly appointed observers from Malaysia and Portugal participating in their first ABLOS meeting. An observer from Ecuador and the ex-officio representative of the DOALOS also participated remotely. The meeting was chaired by Ms. Fiona Bloor (IHO/UKHO). The IHO Secretariat was represented by Director Adam Greenland and Assistant Director Leonel Manteigas, ABLOS Secretary.

The Director of the Portuguese Hydrographic Office welcomed the participants to the Hydrographic Institute on behalf of the Portuguese Navy and expressed appreciation for their presence. He highlighted the importance of the meeting and the forthcoming seminar on *“Sharing Ocean Data in the Law of the Sea”* and wished participants a productive meeting.

Ms. Fiona Bloss, ABLOS Chair, welcomed all participants and opened the meeting thanking the Portuguese Hydrographic Institute for the excellent hosting and extensive preparations with the ABLOS team for both the meeting and the seminar.

IHO Director Adam Greenland welcomed participants to the 33rd ABLOS Business Meeting and thanked the Portuguese Hydrographic Institute for hosting the meeting and seminar. He highlighted

the importance of ABLOS to interregional cooperation and capacity development and expressed readiness to support participants and engage with them throughout the meeting and seminar.

The Board discussed ABLOS's potential contribution to the IHO Capacity Development Programme, recognizing that despite no requests were made from the IHO Member States the organized conferences and seminars support knowledge sharing on Law of the Sea issues.

The preparations of the 2027 13th ABLOS Conference that will be hosted by Republic of Korea were discussed with confirmation that the host will provide significant support with an offer to coordinate related events back-to-back with the ABLOS Conference to allow greater participation and visibility. The possibility of having the GEBCO Symposium in Busan as a related back-to-back event is also being explored. The draft programme and overarching title of the conference were discussed and will be proposed to the host in due course. It is expected that the title, venue and dates will be confirmed shortly, allowing outreach and invitations to participants to commence.

The Board agreed that the Chatham House Rule (CHR) should be applied on an event-by-event basis and clearly communicated to participants in advance, taking into account the specific challenges of online and hybrid events. The Board also proposed reflecting the CHR principle in the ABLOS Terms of Reference.

Matters of Membership were also discussed, including the status and requirements applicable to ABLOS observers. The Board considered that observer status should be maintained only where observers actively contribute to the work of ABLOS and participate in its meetings.

Following the completion of the two-year terms of the Chair and Vice-Chair, Dr. Richard Gross was elected Chair and Professor Lorenzo Schiano Di Pepe was elected Vice-Chair.

Regarding the future of ABLOS, the Board recognized the need to increase awareness of ABLOS and its work within the wider maritime and Law of the Sea Communities. The recent practice of holding ABLOS Conferences on different continents was considered to have contributed significantly to increasing the geographical reach and engagement of the Board.

ABLOS also intends to continue its collaboration with IOC-UNESCO and to strengthen engagement with DOALOS. Potential collaboration with the International Telecommunication Union (ITU), in cooperation with the IHO and DOALOS, was also discussed, particularly in relation to issues concerning submarine cables.

Until the next Business Meeting, the main priorities will be the organization of the 2027 13th ABLOS Conference in the Republic of Korea and the completion of the 7th edition of the TALOS Manual (IHO Publication C-51). The Board also intends to continue its collaboration with IOC-UNESCO and to strengthen its engagement with DOALOS and issues related to the Agreement under the United Nations Convention on the Law of the Sea on the Conservation and Sustainable Use of Marine Biological Diversity of Areas Beyond National Jurisdiction (BBNJ Agreement).

The Editorial Board reported on progress with the 7th edition of the TALOS Manual (C-51). The Board discussed the future format of the publication and agreed that the 7th edition would initially be issued in PDF format. Following publication, options for developing a dynamic online version of the Manual will be investigated. A key outcome of the discussion was the establishment of milestones for completing the 7th edition, with the final revision of the publication to be completed by ABLOS by April 2027.

ABLOS 2026 Seminar

The ABLOS 2026 Seminar was held in Lisbon, Portugal, on 16 September 2026. The event was organized by the IHO–IAG Advisory Board on the Law of the Sea (ABLOS), in collaboration with IOC-UNESCO and the Portuguese Hydrographic Institute (IHPT), which hosted the Seminar. The overarching theme was *“Oceanic Data Sharing and the Law of the Sea.”*

The Seminar brought together more than 70 participants in person and approximately 323 remote participants from 60 countries worldwide. It is worth noting that both in-person and remote registrations had to be closed well in advance of the Seminar due to the capacity of the auditorium and the maximum number of remote connections supported by the online platform.

A total of 17 speakers and three moderators contributed to the programme through a thematic panel, case studies, panel discussions, and presentations. The Seminar opened with welcome remarks by the Deputy Chief of Staff of the Portuguese Navy, Rear Admiral António Correia. The scientific keynote address was delivered by Luis Menezes Pinheiro, Coordinator of the National Committee for the UN Ocean Decade, while the legal keynote address was delivered by Aldino Campos, Chairperson of the United Nations Commission on the Limits of the Continental Shelf (CLCS). The Seminar concluded with a closing address by Rear Admiral David Pereira, Director of IHPT.

The Programme and Presentations are publicly available on the ABLOS website:
<https://www.ablos.org/conferences/>

Participants unanimously considered the Seminar a resounding success, highlighting the quality of the content, the quality of the speakers, the relevance and timeliness of the topics addressed, and the high level of participation, both in person and remotely.

Photos:



ABLOS 33rd Board meeting



Participants of the ABLOS 2026 Seminar

Upcoming meetings:

The next meeting of the ABLOS along with the 13th ABLOS Conference, will be held in Republic of Korea kindly hosted by the Ministry of Oceans and Fisheries, the city and dates are to be confirmed.

The 35th ABLOS Board Meeting and the 2028 Seminar are planned to be held in Galápagos, Ecuador, with the host country and dates yet to be confirmed.