

19th Meeting of Black and Azov Seas Working Group (BASWG) Varna, Bulgaria, 8-9 September 2026

Black and Azov Seas Working Group (BASWG).

Task 3.2.1.6

MBSHC - Mediterranean and Black Seas Hydrographic Commission and BASWG18.

High level summary

- The meeting reaffirmed the commitment of Black and Azov Sea states to active participation in IHO initiatives and acknowledged the region's unique hydrographic characteristics.
- The BASWG sustained its intent to engage with Caspian Sea states that are not yet IHO Members, aiming to integrate them more closely with the Mediterranean and Black Sea hydrographic community and to disseminate IHO best practices in hydrography, Maritime Safety Information (MSI), and nautical cartographic standards.
- Significant emphasis was placed on advancing the S-100 implementation roadmap by considering the use of a regular gridded scheme over the Black and Azov Seas area and initiating an IHO S-100 Sea Trial Area project.

Details:

The 19th meeting of BASWG was held in Varna, Bulgaria from 8 to 9 September 2026 under the chairmanship of Türkiye. The meeting was attended by 13 representatives from five out of six countries of the Black and Azov Sea Region (Bulgaria, Georgia, Romania, Türkiye and Ukraine). Türkiye also participated as the Chart Region F Coordinator and Spain participated as NAVAREA III coordinator. IHO Assistant Director Eric Langlois represented the IHO Secretariat.

The BASWG Chair formally commenced the meeting by emphasizing the distinct hydrographic characteristics of the Black and Azov Sea (BAS) region and underscoring the critical requirement to adopt the S-100 standard to enhance navigational safety. The meeting's agenda focused on advancing the development of S-1xx production within the Region, as well as the coordination of MSI, particularly in light of the ongoing conflict between the Russian Federation and Ukraine.

From the national reports the following can be highlighted:

- Bulgaria: ongoing process to become an IC-ENC member.
- Georgia: now operating under the Maritime Transport Agency of Georgia, with ongoing reorganization and S-100 production capabilities limitations.
- Romania: reported a tense situation on MSI in their waters due to proximity to the conflict zone (numerous drones presence reported).
- Türkiye: initiated dialogue with other national agencies on S-100 production cooperation and announced the soon creation of a dedicated national S-100 data center.
- Ukraine: Ukraine also drew attention to its inability to fully meet its SOLAS obligations in its Black Sea area of responsibility, looking forward to the application of decision A4/22, particularly the IHO technical visit that should take place in 2027.

The NAVAREA-III Coordinator presented an update on NAVTEX coverage and discussed ongoing operational challenges in the region, which remains fully serviced by active stations. He emphasized that current NAVAREA III navigational warnings are disseminated via SafetyCast (Iridium) and Safety NET II (Inmarsat). Additionally, the Coordinator reported on the progress of S-124 implementation, stressing that MSI should not be utilized to advance political claims, as stated in IMO resolution A.706 (17) as amended. The update also presented the *i-avisos* NAVAREA III software/application and highlighted the potential for other National coordinators to adopt *i-avisos* for their operations.

The Region F INT Chart Coordinator provided a technical update to the Working Group regarding the current status of INT Charts and ENC's within the Region, noting the expanded utilization of the INTToGIS platform by chart producers and the forthcoming release of the INTToGIS III services by the end of 2026 by the IHO Secretariat.

As for the S-100 implementation in the sub-region, BASWG agreed to initiate an S-100 Sea Trial Area project and submit it to the HSSC under the leadership of the Regional ICC Coordinator. The concept of Global Grid Scheme, discussed at the last IRCC meeting, was raised, and BASWG members were invited to consider attending the dedicated workshop that will be held by the IHO Secretariat in November.

The BASWG also reviewed its Terms of Reference to reflect enhanced participation of coastal states from outside the BAS sub-region. The resulting draft will be submitted to the approval of MBSHC.

Photo:



BASWG19 Group Photo (credits: Bulgarian Hydrographic Office)

The 20th BASWG meeting will be held in September 2027, with a venue to be determined in due course.