

## 25<sup>th</sup> Conference of the Mediterranean and Black Seas Hydrographic Commission (MBSHC25) Marseille, France, 30 March – 2 April 2026

### Contribution to the IHO Work Programme 2026

Task 3.2.1.6 Prepare for and report meetings of the Regional Hydrographic Commission: MBSHC

#### High level summary:

- S-100 Transition as the central focus: the Commission made significant progress in implementing S-100 across multiple areas, ultimately uniting the Region F ICCWG and S-1XX Working Group into one cohesive entity, led jointly and securely through to 2030.
- Transfer of charting responsibilities: Lebanon and Morocco officially took on the production of key INT charts previously managed by France (SHOM), marking a strengthening of national capabilities in the region.
- Adoption of the Capacity Building Plan 2026–2028: This plan emphasises S-100 training, MSDI workshops, and bilateral mentoring schemes. Italy, now serving as Vice-Chair of the Commission, has offered to host the MBSHC26 meeting in 2028.
- Challenging circumstances: The ongoing conflict in Ukraine continues to severely disrupt hydrographic activities in the Black Sea, while unresolved charting matters in the Aegean Sea persist, with official reservations noted from Greece and Türkiye.

#### Details:

The **25<sup>th</sup> Conference of the Mediterranean and Black Seas Hydrographic Commission (MBSHC25)** was held in Marseille, France, from 31 March to 2 April 2026, hosted by the French Hydrographic and Oceanographic Service (SHOM). The Conference was preceded on 30 March by working sessions of the Region F ICCWG and the S-1XX Working Group.

The Conference was chaired by Captain Lucian Grigorescu, Director of the Romanian Maritime Hydrographic Directorate (DHM). 70 registered participants attended, comprising delegates from 17 Member States of the MBSHC out of 24 (Albania, Bulgaria, Cyprus, Egypt, France, Georgia, Greece, Italy, Monaco, Montenegro, Morocco, Romania, Slovenia, Spain, Tunisia, Türkiye, Ukraine), two Associate Members (United Kingdom and United States), together with Observers (IALA, CIESM, ACCOBAMS, IC-ENC, PRIMAR) and stakeholders from industry (Exail/iXblue, Fugro, EOMAP, G2 Surveys / Marine Education Consultancy, IIC Technologies, Teledyne CARIS). The IHO Secretariat was represented by Director Luigi Sinapi and Assistant Director Eric Langlois.

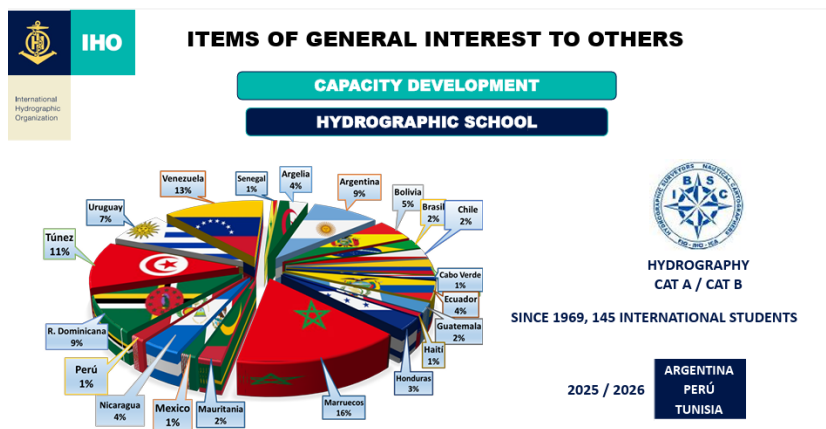
The Chair (Romania) noted the challenges included the resource-intensive nature of the S-100 transition and the need for stronger inter-State coordination on shared charting responsibilities and ENC coverage, and reported on activities since the last Conference, highlighting:

- The formal establishment of the S-1XX Working Group (Terms of Reference approved November 2025).
- Seven regional S-100 training events delivered since 2024.
- The selection of Italy, Romania, and Türkiye to the IHO Council as MBSHC representatives.
- The invitation of Caspian Sea countries (Azerbaijan, Kazakhstan, Turkmenistan) to attend MBSHC25 as observers, broadening the Commission's membership.

IHO Director Sinapi acknowledged Romania and France for their roles in organizing and hosting the conference, emphasizing the strategic significance of the Mediterranean and Black Seas within the IHO framework. These regions serve as critical corridors for global maritime commerce and present multi-faceted challenges regarding navigational safety, environmental stewardship, and the advancement of sustainable economic activities. Director Sinapi provided a technical briefing on the outcomes of

IRCC17 and Council-9, as well as the status of preparations for the 4<sup>th</sup> Session of the IHO Assembly scheduled for April 2026. This Assembly will serve as a pivotal forum for harmonizing regional priorities and input into strategic organizational decisions. Key agenda items include deliberation on the proposed IHO Strategic Plan 2027–2032, the forthcoming Work Programme and associated Budget, and several major initiatives: the establishment of the IHO Infrastructure Centre, the potential creation of a GEBCO Secretariat, and new draft resolutions concerning workforce development, data governance, and provisions to enhance inclusive participation.

Presentations were delivered by IALA (transition to intergovernmental organization and training via the IALA World-Wide Academy), CIESM (Mediterranean scientific programmes and marine data collaboration), ACCOBAMS (cetacean conservation; ACCOBAMS Survey Initiative I (ASI-I) survey data 2017–2020), and GEBCO/Seabed 2030 (call for Member States to contribute bathymetric data towards the 2030 goal). The Commission expressed its commitment to data sharing and capacity building in support of these partnerships.



### SPAIN – The Hydrographic School

National reports of high quality were delivered by Members and Associate Members. Key themes included:

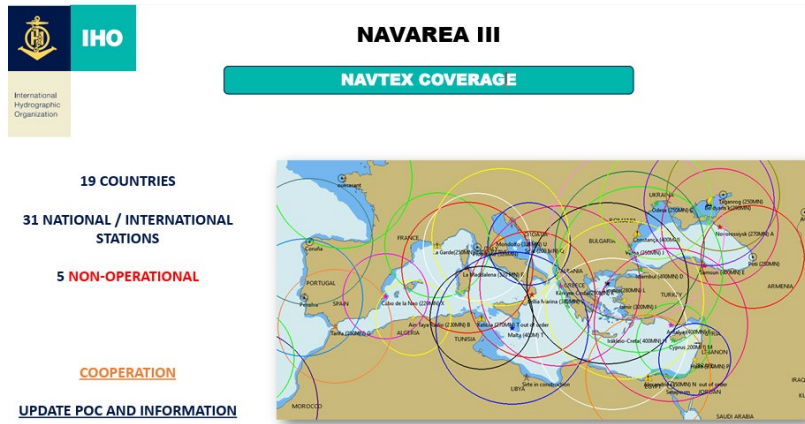
- S-100 transition: widespread commitment across the region. Greece announced the release of its first S-101 ENC, supported by IC-ENC.

- Survey activity: Montenegro reported approximately 60 km<sup>2</sup> of new high-resolution surveys; Morocco and Tunisia also shared significant updates.
- Charting transfers: Lebanon assumed production of INT charts 3674 and 3675 (previously held by SHOM); Morocco confirmed assumption of INT charts 1971 and 1969.
- Conflict impact: Ukraine reported severe damage to 12 hydrographic vessels and urgent needs for replacement survey and buoy tender vessels.
- Capacity constraints: many States cited limited human and financial resources. Montenegro, with five hydrographic staff, highlighted the critical need for targeted support.
- Italy announced the commission of a new major Survey Vessel with polar capacity, and two new Coastal Survey Vessel to operate in the MBS region.
- Spain recommended enhancing coastal MSI exchange and adopting the S-124 standard and presented its Hydrographic School.
- Türkiye proposed a regional S-100 training needs survey.
- The United Kingdom (UKHO) and the United States (NGA/US Navy) reaffirmed their support for regional S-100 implementation and MSDI initiatives.

The Chair of the S-1XX Working Group (France) provided a technical update on six regional training sessions held since 2024, focusing on S-100 system integration, S-1XX product specification, and data quality assurance protocols. Several MBSHC members presented national advancements in S-100 deployment. The Commission formally adopted the Working Group's recommendation requiring all Member States to submit detailed S-1XX production plans by MBSHC26. The Region F ICCWG Coordinator (Türkiye) detailed charting modifications since MBSHC24, noting that five of six proposals—including INT chart transfers to Lebanon and Morocco—were ratified unanimously. Results from a regional S-101 implementation assessment (with ten Member States responding) indicated that most participants have not initiated S-101 ENC production, primarily due to personnel and software limitations. A significant organizational restructuring was approved: the Commission resolved to consolidate

the Region F ICCWG and S-1XX Working Group into a unified technical committee responsible for both legacy INT chart management and S-100 product deployment. To maintain operational continuity throughout the IHO S-100 Implementation Decade (2020–2030), the current ICCWG Coordinator (Türkiye) and Greece will jointly lead the consolidated committee until 2030.

The CB Coordinator (Türkiye) presented the 2026–2028 MBSHC Capacity Building Plan, approved by the Commission. Priorities include continued S-100 training, MSDI development workshops, and bilateral mentorship programmes, with larger Hydrographic Offices (France, Italy, Spain) offering to host engineers from smaller offices for on-the-job training. Member States were encouraged to nominate instructors and communicate annual needs to guide regional resource allocation.



*NAVAREA III – NAVTEX coverage*

The NAVAREA III Coordinator (Spain) reported that 176 NAVAREA warnings were issued in 2025 (up from 129 in 2024), driven by naval exercises and regional security events. Of 31 NAVTEX stations in the region, five are currently inoperative. Coastal States were urged to expedite repairs and update MSI contact information.

Trial S-124 messages have been initiated by NAVAREA III; Member States were encouraged to upgrade their national MSI systems accordingly.

Following the MBSHC Statutes, Vice Admiral Laurent Kerléguer (France), who served as Vice-Chair, was appointed as the Chairman of the Commission at the closure of the conference. The Commission unanimously elected Rear Admiral Fabrizio Orengo (Italy) as the new Vice-Chair.

Finally, Industry presentations were delivered by Exail, EOMAP (satellite-derived bathymetry solutions), G2 Surveys / Marine Education Consultancy (survey technologies and accredited training), IIC Technologies, Teledyne CARIS, and Fugro. A dedicated workshop and ASV shipyard visit were organized by Exail on 3 April back-to-back with the Conference.

**Photo:**



*Participants in the 25th Conference of the MBSHC – Marseille, 31 March–2 April 2026 (Credits: SHOM, France)*

**Upcoming meetings:**

The 26<sup>th</sup> MBSHC meeting is scheduled to take place in Italy in 2028, with the Italian Hydrographic Institute (IIM) serving as host. The exact dates and location are yet to be confirmed.