



## UNGGIM – IHO Joint Working Group on Marine Geospatial Information First In-Person Meeting, Chiang Mai, Thailand, 4 – 8 May 2026

### Contribution to the IHO Work Programme 2026

Goal 2                      Maintain relationship with UN-GGIM and JWG-MGI

#### High level summary:

- The first in-person meeting of the integrated UNGGIM + IHO joint working group on Marine Geospatial Information convened in Chiang Mai, Thailand, over five days, with participation from UN, IHO, OGC, hydrographic offices, and member states from all regions.
- Participants confirmed a strategic direction, drafted joint vision and mission statements, agreed on five strategic work plan categories, and established task teams on metadata, standards harmonisation (C-17/IGIF-Hydro), legal and policy, and capacity development.
- The group agreed to pursue formal recognition via member-state sponsorship at the UNGGIM Committee of Experts (August 2026) and subsequently at the UN General Assembly, with the BBNJ treaty entering into force creating immediate demand for marine geospatial expertise.

#### Details:

Dr. John Nyberg and Mr. Yong Baek represented the IHO at the inaugural meeting of the UNGGIM – IHO Joint Working Group on Marine Geospatial Information in Chiang Mai, Thailand from 4-8 May, 2026. The meeting brought together the former UNGGIM Working Group on Marine Geospatial Information and the IHO MSDI Working Group into a single joint body to consolidate resources and accelerate global coordination on marine geospatial information. Sessions were structured across five full days covering briefings and baseline-setting, national and regional reports, technical standards discussions, partnership and capacity sessions, work plan development, and consolidation of outcomes.

National and regional presentations from more than seventeen countries and organisations including Australia, Canada, Korea, Singapore, Malaysia, the Philippines, Saudi Arabia, Norway, Germany, Mexico, Thailand, Fiji, Tonga, Italy, Indonesia, Brazil, Mozambique, and China demonstrated active MSDI efforts with shared priorities around S-100 adoption, metadata harmonisation, land–sea integration, and capacity building. Key metrics reported included the Philippines Geoportal hosting over 3,500 layers from 57 contributors, Saudi Arabia targeting approximately 70% hydrographic coverage of the Arabian Gulf by end-2026, and Australia’s ambition to survey its entire EEZ at 30-metre resolution by 2050.

Technical sessions addressed S-100 product specifications and their expansion beyond safe navigation into environmental, planning, and conservation applications. Canada reported outcomes from the first live operational S-100 sea trial (June–November 2024), validating feasibility while highlighting organisational and educational gaps. NOAA (USA) presented the Hydro Health seafloor-change model and an 8-metre resolution bathymetric pilot in Tampa, Florida. NGA (USA) outlined a digital twin roadmap targeting proof-of-concept in 2026, geographic expansion over two years, and full capability by FY28–32. OGC described five completed Federated Marine SDI pilot phases and a Good Practices report expected to mature into Best Practices by early 2027.

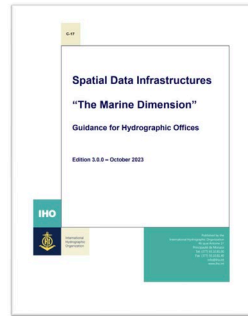
Legal and geospatial briefings examined three priority areas: protection of critical undersea infrastructure (cables and pipelines), maritime domain awareness and data governance, and implementation obligations under the BBNJ Agreement. The group discussed developing layered access models for sensitive infrastructure data, geospatial validation workflows for BBNJ marine genetic resource disclosures, and governance frameworks prioritising transparency, trustability, and state oversight of integrated maritime data systems.

On standards and interoperability, the group agreed to pursue an overarching framework in 3 parts, linking C-17, IGIF-Hydro, and IOC/MSP toolbox materials through improved cross-references rather than a single merged publication. A metadata task group was formalised to produce practical guidance on core metadata elements, recommended schemas, vocabularies, and quality practices. Discussions on AI and large language models highlighted opportunities for data harmonisation and intuitive access, balanced against limitations in consistency, standards compliance, and security.

The group drafted a vision emphasising trusted, interoperable marine geospatial information accessible to all nations and underpinning governance and sustainable management of oceans, seas, coasts, and inland waterways. The mission was framed tactically: enabling practical solutions to legal, technical, collaborative, and operational requirements. Five consolidated strategic categories were agreed for the joint work plan: engagement and coordination; capacity development and inclusion; standards and interoperability; innovation and integration; and communication and advocacy.

Four task teams were established with identified leads: legal and policy (identifying implementation gaps from legal instrument to the practical exercise); capacity development (with a focus on training needs assessment and a standardised core syllabus); metadata (finalize the Metadata guidance including application procedure); and document management (harmonize C-17 and IGIF-Hydro). Key external engagement milestones were identified including potential input to the Omnibus General Assembly resolution recognizing the Working Group as a key reference partner for marine geospatial information in the BBNJ.





### Next steps:

The updated draft vision and mission will be posted on the IHO portal for comments. Draft language for member-state approval at the Committee of Experts will be circulated, with the UNGGIM 16th session (5–7 August 2026) serving as a key milestone. Task teams will begin populating their work plans with short-term (6-month), medium-term, and long-term deliverables, operating virtually and reporting progress at annual sessions. Draft language will be prepared for Working Group support of the BBNJ and circulated with interested Member States ahead of the UNGGIM CoE in August 2026. The joint working group will reconvene in approximately two years for its next in-person meeting with an interim workshop scheduled for 2027.

### Next meeting:

The next meeting is scheduled as a workshop in April/May 2027 in Singapore.