

## Mapping the Ocean Floor Networking Event Grand Café Spinelli, European Parliament, Brussels 12 May 2026

### Contribution to the IHO Work Programme 2025

Task 1.1.4 Maintain relationship with European Union Initiatives (such as INSPIRE and EMODnet)

#### High level summary (can be used for posting on social media. Please provide concise lists in bullet point format):

- The event highlighted the strategic importance of seabed mapping and marine geospatial data in supporting evidence-based European and international ocean policymaking.
- Speakers emphasized that more than 70% of the world's oceans remain unmapped, underlining the urgent need for increased investment, coordination, and data sharing initiatives.
- The Nippon Foundation-GEBCO Seabed 2030 Project initiative demonstrated significant recent progress toward delivering a complete map of the global seabed by 2030.
- Policymakers were encouraged to support open marine data policies and recognize seabed mapping as essential global infrastructure for environmental protection, maritime safety, and sustainable ocean governance.
- The event enhanced collaboration between the GEBCO community and EU stakeholders, fostering future partnership opportunities related to the BBNJ Agreement and EU Oceans Act, while also allowing the IHO to highlight its longstanding contributions to ocean mapping.

#### Details:

The event "Mapping the Ocean Floor" brought together representatives from the marine geospatial and policy communities to highlight the importance of seabed mapping and open marine data sharing in support of informed European and international ocean policy. The IHO Secretariat was represented by the Assistant Director Samuel Harper.

In his opening remarks, MEP Paulo do Nascimento Cabral welcomed participants and reflected on the growing importance of marine geospatial data in policymaking. Drawing on his experience from Portugal and the Azores, he highlighted the significant progress achieved in the region and referenced the implementation of the BBNJ Agreement, as well as the European Union's broader interest in oceans governance within the context of the forthcoming Oceans Act.

Jamie McMichael-Phillips, Director of The Nippon Foundation-GEBCO Seabed 2030 Project, introduced the Seabed 2030 initiative and provided an overview of its objectives and achievements. He noted that more than 70% of the world's oceans remain unmapped, while also highlighting the considerable progress made in recent years. He encouraged policymakers to support open data approaches and emphasized that a fully mapped seabed should be regarded not as a luxury, but as essential international infrastructure underpinning the protection and sustainable management of the marine environment.

Evert Flier, Chair of the GEBCO Guiding Committee, introduced GEBCO, its parent organizations, and its relationship with Seabed 2030. He reflected on the historic legacy of GEBCO and its principal architect, Albert I, Prince of Monaco. He reiterated the value of a fully mapped seabed and stressed that this foundational resource is often taken for granted, underscoring the important role policymakers can play in raising awareness and supporting the shared global effort.

The formal presentations were followed by a networking reception, enabling members of the GEBCO community to engage directly with EU officials and stakeholders on the value of seabed mapping, existing challenges, and opportunities for future collaboration.

### Photo



### Upcoming meetings:

N/A