

17th Meeting of the South-East Pacific Regional Hydrographic Commission (SEPRHC17) - Cartagena de Indias, Colombia, 5–7 October 2026

Contribution to the IHO Work Programme 2026

Task 3.2.1.12 SEPRHC – South East Pacific Regional Hydrographic Commission.

High level summary

- SEPRHC17 brought together Chile, Colombia, Ecuador, Peru, Panama and Spain in Cartagena de Indias. The meeting marked the handover of the Commission Chairmanship from Chile to Colombia and the formal integration of Panama as a full SEPRHC Member State.
- The Commission focused on operational implementation of the IHO strategic agenda: S-100 and S-101 readiness, WEND-100, MSDI, Capacity Development, bathymetric data sharing, GEBCO/Seabed 2030, and stronger regional participation in IHO bodies and initiatives.
- Chile presented an innovative *Global Ocean Mapping Initiative with training Tall Ships*, proposing the use of naval sail training vessels to collect bathymetric data along poorly mapped oceanic routes.
- A new *Working Group on Hydrography and Underwater Cultural Heritage*, a *Regional Support Plan for Panama*, stronger depth-data contribution to IHO/GEBCO, a regional training plan, and six-monthly follow-up by the Chair were approved.

Details:

The 17th Meeting of the South-East Pacific Regional Hydrographic Commission was hosted by the Colombian Directorate General Maritime (DIMAR) from 5 to 7 October 2026. The opening session brought together IHO Secretariat, representatives of the five SEPRHC Member States (Chile, Colombia, Ecuador, Peru, Panama), Spain, GEBCO and the hydrographic industry. Captain Carlos Zúñiga Araya, Director of SHOA, concluded Chile's 2023–2026 Chairmanship and handed over the Chair to Rear Admiral Hermann Aicardo León Rincón, Director General Maritime of Colombia. The IHO Secretariat was represented by Rear Admiral Luigi Sinapi, IHO Secretary-General, whilst Mr. Adam Greenland, IHO Director Coordination, was introduced as the new observer from the IHO Secretariat to the SEPRHC.

A significant milestone was the formal signature of Panama's membership of the Commission. Panama's accession to the IHO and full participation in SEPRHC complete an important stage in regional hydrographic cooperation and open new opportunities for technical exchange, training and coordinated implementation of IHO standards.



IHO Secretary-General visiting CIOH and ship ARC Roncador in Cartagena de Indias

On 6 October 2026, the Director of the Centro de Investigaciones Oceanográficas e Hidrográficas del Caribe (CIOH) hosted the IHO Secretary-General for visits to CIOH and ARC Roncador, the Colombian Navy and Dirección General Marítima (DIMAR) multipurpose oceanographic and hydrographic vessel. The visits provided an overview of Colombia's hydro-oceanographic capabilities.

The IHO Secretary-General placed SEPRHC17 within the framework established by the 4th Session of the IHO Assembly and the new Strategic Plan 2027–2032. The key message was the need to move from decisions to delivery, translating the three strategic priorities — Navigating the digital transition, Mapping the unknown and Building for the future — into measurable regional results. Particular attention was drawn to the IHO Infrastructure Centre in Busan and the dedicated GEBCO Secretariat in Monaco as new operational pillars supporting Member States.

S-100 implementation was a central theme across national reports and regional working-group discussions. Member States reported progress in S-101 and related products, while identifying common challenges in specialized personnel, production and validation workflows, technological infrastructure, secure distribution and sustainable training. The Commission emphasized coordinated national timelines, practical regional training and the need to measure readiness by the ability to deliver reliable operational services. Peru will continue to coordinate S-100 activities and Ecuador the regional WEND work.

The regional Seabed 2030 report showed that 21.59% of the SEPRHC area is mapped to modern standards, leaving 78.41% still to be mapped. Member States agreed to seek the appropriate legal mechanisms to share suitable depth data with the IHO Data Centre for Digital Bathymetry and GEBCO. The meeting also highlighted crowd-sourced bathymetry, data loggers, private-sector data and marine spatial data infrastructures as practical tools to accelerate knowledge of the seabed and improve access to marine geospatial information.



Chile's Implementation Plan for a Global Ocean Mapping Initiative using Tall Ships

Chile presented an innovative *Global Ocean Mapping Initiative with training Tall Ships*, proposing the use of naval sail training vessels to collect bathymetric data along poorly mapped oceanic routes. SEPRHC agreed to explore a pilot linked to a future *Velas Latino-americanas* event, with the potential to evolve into a wider international contribution to GEBCO and Seabed 2030.

Capacity Development remained a cross-cutting priority. The Commission agreed to prepare a regional training plan involving Member States, Spain and industry, combining virtual and in-person activities and seeking support from the IHO, IC-ENC and PRIMAR. Spain offered both training opportunities at the Instituto Hidrográfico de la Marina and the possibility of deploying instructors directly to the region, an approach intended to reach a larger number of participants and reinforce practical S-100 skills.

The meeting also gave strong visibility to the Empowering Women in Hydrography initiative. National presentations from the region demonstrated increasing participation of women in technical, operational and leadership roles. The Commission agreed to continue promoting regional opportunities for professional development, sea-going experience, specialized training and leadership.

Among the principal outcomes, SEPRHC created a *Working Group on Hydrography and Underwater Cultural Heritage*, chaired by Colombia, to develop a technical regional approach without prejudicing the positions of Member States regarding international legal instruments. The Commission also agreed to establish a coordinated support plan for Panama, explore with Peru the possible participation of Bolivia as an observer to SEPRHC, reinforce regional contributions to the International Hydrographic Review, and maintain clear responsibilities for S-100, WEND, MSDI and Seabed 2030 activities.



Ocean Decade – Bathymetry Data Sharing Guideline

Industry presentations on the state-of-the-art Technology, Geo-data and Education, hydrographic equipment and software, and the presentation of the representative of Fugro in the *Ocean Decade Corporate Data Group* on the strategic contribution for the industry to share bathymetric data, completed the agenda of the conference.

SEPRHC17 demonstrated a mature Commission moving from coordination towards delivery. The combination of Panama's integration, renewed regional leadership, stronger S-100 coordination, a clear commitment to seabed-data sharing and practical Capacity Development initiatives provides a solid basis for the 2026–2029 cycle. The IHO Secretariat will continue to support the Commission in connecting regional priorities with the new IHO operational infrastructure and the wider objectives of the Strategic Plan 2027–2032.

Photo



Participants in the 17th Meeting of the SEPRHC, Cartagena de Indias, Colombia

Upcoming meeting

To ensure implementation, the Chair will review progress through virtual meetings every six months, or earlier if required. An intermediate meeting is foreseen for the first half of 2028 to assess implementation of the agreements and actions adopted in Cartagena. Colombia, as the current Chair, will consider the arrangements, format, date and venue of the next meeting.