

## 20<sup>th</sup> Meeting of the South West Atlantic Hydrographic Commission (SWAtHC20), Montevideo, Uruguay – 12-13 March 2026

Contribution to the IHO Work Programme 2026

Task 3.2.1.13

SWAtHC - South West Atlantic Hydrographic Commission.

### High level summary

- All Hydrographic Services have conducted conversion tests from S-57 products to S-101 prototypes; 66% of them estimate S-101 implementation (producing both S-57 and S-101) will likely begin by late 2026 or early 2027.
- SWAtHC confirmed there is no requirement for “*grid rescheme*” for S-57 and S-101 and recommended to maintain the original S-57 scheme also for the new S-101 product.
- Coordinated actions initiated between Brazil (NAVAREA V) and Argentina (NAVAREA VI) to start, through the SWAtHC Planning Committee, the transmission of maritime safety information using S-124.
- Brazil, on behalf of the Inland ENC Harmonization Group (IEHG), reported that S-401 (Inland ENC) Product Specifications are under development; operational edition 2.0.0 is expected to be approved in October 2026, proving the regional consensus on the importance of Inland Waters Navigation.
- Generate coverage development images for the GEBCO program and Seabed2030 project in SWAtHC from the last Assembly to March 2026 will be available for presentation of the outcomes in mapping the regional waters at the 4<sup>th</sup> Session of the IHO Assembly.
- Bolivia confirmed its intention to complete internal procedures for accession to the IHO via its National Hydrographic Office (SNHN).

### Details:



*IHO Director and Comandante en Jefe de la Armada de Uruguay*

On March 11, IHO Director Luigi Sinapi met with the Commander-in-Chief of the Uruguayan Navy – Admiral Jose’ Luis Elizondo Chiesa, who reiterated the strategic importance of hydrography for safe

navigation in both maritime and inland waters. The Commander-in-Chief emphasized the need for increased national investment in hydrography, commended SWAtHC's achievements, and facilitated a press interview for the IHO Director to highlight SWAtHC's regional impact.

The interview took place on March 12 with the editor of ALTAMAR, a Montevideo-based maritime and port industry news outlet. Key topics included the roles and responsibilities of the IHO and SWAtHC, with emphasis on the engagement of Member and Observer States. The IHO Director stressed the importance of hydrography for navigation and noted that South America has the world's largest network of navigable waterways. The interview can be accessed at: *Montevideo reúne a los servicios hidrográficos del Atlántico Sudoccidental - Altamar News* <https://share.google/QSzcjClyOp8CbQKG>.

**The 20<sup>th</sup> Meeting of South West Atlantic Hydrographic Commission – SWAtHC20** took place in the Hotel Palladium in Montevideo, Uruguay, in the days 12-13 March, hosted by the *Servicio de Oceanografía, Hidrografía y Meteorología de la Armada (SOHMA)*. 25 attendees in person and virtually from the 3 SWAtHC Member States (Argentina, Brazil and Uruguay), 1 SWAtHC Associate Member (Paraguay) and 3 SWAtHC Observer States (Bolivia, Portugal and Spain) and Industry participated in the meeting. The IHO Secretariat was represented by Director Luigi Sinapi.

SWAtHC Chair Vice Admiral Ricardo Jaques Ferreira – Director of the Directorate of Hydrography and Navigation of the Brazilian Navy opened the meeting, remarking the importance of improving cooperation and safety of navigation in the area and progressing in a smooth and harmonious implementation of S-100 amongst the States of the Region.

During the opening session and presentation of the IHO Secretariat Report, IRCC17 Report, Council-9 Report and 4<sup>th</sup> Session of the IHO Assembly Report, Director Sinapi emphasized the significance of SWAtHC20 as an event taking place at a particularly important time for the IHO. This is not only due to the new challenges we are facing, such as the operational phase of S-100 products in Phase 1 of the Roadmap, significant progress in seabed mapping and GEBCO, but also because of the expected adoption of the new IHO Strategic Plan for 2027–2032. The new plan includes the introduction of a new strategic goal focused on "workforce," since it truly forms the backbone of any company, institution, or organization, whether national or international. All these topics will be discussed at the 4<sup>th</sup> Session of the IHO Assembly, scheduled for April 2026 in Monaco, to which all IHO Member States present at SWAtHC20 are already registered to participate in this Assembly.



*Bolivia inland waters' surveys*

The following main topics were discussed alongside the presentation of the National reports from the 3 Members States, 1 Associate Member and 3 Observers States to SWAtHC:

- Production of initial S-101 ENCs will commence during 2026–2027 by the three SWAtHC Member State Hydrographic Offices, following the regional S-100 Implementation Plan, in full alignment with the IHO S-100 Roadmap.

- Deployment of S-124 for Maritime Safety Information (MSI) dissemination in NAVAREA V and VI will begin, with S-124 and traditional MSI methods coexisting for an extended period. Close collaboration among SWAtHC members and Spain (NAVAREA III) is required, leveraging Spain's automated MSI dissemination system (NAVTEX and Iridium SafetyCast) to minimize human error.
- It is critical to increase Capacity Development initiatives specifically targeting S-100 implementation.
- Brazil emphasized the need to maintain simultaneous production lines for Paper Charts, S-57 ENC's, and S-101 ENC's from 2026 onward.
- Uruguay highlighted the necessity to expand training opportunities in Category A and B Hydrography.
- Emphasis was placed on the importance of navigation safety and hydrography in inland waters, with a requirement to standardize nautical product types for river navigation.
- Bolivia reported on hydrographic surveys conducted in 2024 and 2025, underscoring the economic and sustainable development impact of inland navigation and progress in IHO accession due to increased domestic political stability.
- Paraguay presented details of the new Hospital and Hydrographic Unit "*Cap. N Ing. Carlos Cubas*" and the deployment of a new buoy system in the northern Rio Paraguay sector.
- Portugal reported ongoing efforts to achieve 100% mapping coverage of its EEZ and Continental Shelf by 2030.

The SWAtHC Planning Committee noted unanimous interest among members for exchange internships to accelerate S-101 training. Regular Planning Committee meetings are recommended to coordinate and deliver targeted training sessions. With respect to S-57 and S-101 harmonization, no conflicts or overlaps have been identified, and all Hydrographic Services concur on preserving the S-57 framework for S-101 implementation. Additionally, there is consensus on the necessity to initiate S-100 adoption, prioritizing S-101 at this stage. Regional Capacity Building activities—completed, ongoing, and planned—were detailed, emphasizing investment in S-100 implementation, MSI training, and online courses within the SWAtHC region. The inter-regional approach, involving four RHCs (SWAtHC, SEPRHC, MACHC, and EAHC), was highlighted as a force multiplier for Capacity Building/Development among participating IHO Member States.

The CSB/GEBCO/Seabed2030 coordinator for the SWAtHC region presented on the contribution provided by SWAtHC to DCDB, GEBCO and Seabed2030, highlighting the involvement of the local Governments, Academia, Institutions and Merchant Navies in providing seabed data from ENC, Multibeam and Single beam echosounders, Seismic devices, etc. to populate the GEBCO grid and increase the percentage of global seafloor mapped. The maps showing the progress achieved in Seabed Mapping during the 2023–2026 period between the two Assemblies will be presented in the SWAtHC Report at the 4<sup>th</sup> Session of the IHO Assembly.

Brazil presented on the principles activities and achievements of the Inland ENC harmonization Group (IEHG), highlighting that S-401 (Inland ENC) is under development and the related edition 2.0.0 will be ready for approval in October 2026. On this regard, a paper will be submitted to the HSSC to verify the possibility of that ECDIS S-100 supports S-401 and then to create the S-403 to address interoperability of its own products. In case that is not possible, S-401 will be integrated with the S-98 in the future.

Industry representatives confirmed a strong focus on automating the generation of paper nautical charts, investing in autonomous hydrographic survey systems, and, specifically, Kongsberg expressed its intention to support the IHO Capacity Building/Development program by offering online courses on hydrographic systems operation.

Finally, Uruguay assumed the Chairmanship of SWAtHC for the next three years (until 40 days prior to the IHO Assembly in 2029), and will concurrently hold a seat on the IHO Council for the same term.



*Moments from the visit to Argentina*

On March 16, the IHO Director, acting in their capacity as permanent Observer of the IHO Secretariat to SWATHC, visited the Chief of Staff of the Argentine Navy, Vice Admiral Juan Carlos Romay, the Escuela de Ciencia del Mar, and the Servicio de Hidrografia Naval (SHN) at the invitation of the Director of SHN. These visits reaffirmed Argentina’s institutional commitment to IHO objectives and highlighted the nation’s emphasis on hydrographic education and training. Evidence includes sustained support for IHO training initiatives and the provision of the IBSC-certified Nautical Cartography Category A course at the Escuela de Ciencia del Mar (one of only two IHO Member States to offer it), as well as the IBSC-certified Category B Hydrography course.

### Photo



*SWATHC20 participants – Montevideo, Uruguay*

### Upcoming meetings:

Next meeting will be held in Buenos Aires, Argentina in the period 27-28 April 2027 (venue TBD).