

**8th Meeting of the IHO Hydrographic Surveys Working Group
VTC, 3 – 6 March 2025**

**9th Meeting of the IHO Hydrographic Surveys Working Group Monaco, 29
September – 3 October 2025**

Contribution to the IHO Work Programme 2025

Task 2.1.2.9

Attendance of HSWG8 and HSWG9

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

- The Hydrographic Surveys Working Group (HSWG) has been tasked by the IHO Hydrographic Services and Standards Committee (HSSC) to act as the focal point for hydrographic surveying industry engagement with the IHO and maintain and promote the use of IHO publications S-44 Standards for Hydrographic Surveys, B-13 Guidance on Satellite Derived Bathymetry and C-13 Manual on Hydrography.

Details:

The 8th Meeting of the IHO Hydrographic Surveys Working Group (HSWG8) was held via VTC from 3 – 6 March 2025. The IHO was represented by Assistant Director Sam Harper. HSWG8 addressed updates to significant publications such as S-44, B-13, and C-13. The meeting also provided a platform to review progress on a number of other relevant IHO standards and set the course for intersessional activities.

S-44 Standards for Hydrographic Surveys. HSWG8 noted that the two-year update cycle for S-44, agreed and endorsed by HSSC in 2022, continues to function effectively, enabling steady incremental improvements rather than infrequent major revisions.

Ed. 6.2.0 of S-44 was submitted to HSSC in 2024, subsequently endorsed, and published as a draft for Member States. HSWG8 was advised of two remaining comments from Russia and Bangladesh; draft responses are being prepared. The group concluded that no further changes to version 6.2.0 were necessary or justified, and expressed the expectation that this would permit formal publication. Work is ongoing on Ed. 3.60.

HSWG also highlighted the ongoing work of its supporting sub-groups addressing bathymetric coverage, uncertainty, and metadata. In addition, the Chair Team reported continued liaison with the GEO-HAB Backscatter Working Group to develop guidance on backscatter data, with limited related content already incorporated into S-44 version 6.2.0.

C-13 Manual on Hydrography. HSWG8 reviewed the current chapters of the Manual on Hydrography (C-13) and discussed opportunities to improve its presentation, including the use of enhanced images and illustrations. The Working Group also explored the potential development of a wiki-style format to support more dynamic updating and accessibility. It was noted that the current planning assumption is to publish a new edition of C-13 in 2027.

B-13 Satellite Derived Bathymetry Guidance. HSWG8 noted that the B-13 Satellite Derived Bathymetry Best Practice Guide had been finalised, submitted to HSSC15 for endorsement, and subsequently published by the IHO in March 2024. The Project Team confirmed that it continues to follow the S-44 two-year update cycle and reported and agreed that no updates were required for the current cycle.

Building on lessons learned during the ESA visit at HSWG7, HSWG8 also agreed to rename the Project Team as the Earth Observation Project Team. This change reflects an expanded remit beyond bathymetry alone, recognising the growing importance of other Earth-observation-derived hydrographic data needed to support S-100 products.

Other items of interest. HSWG continues to maintain active liaison with other key Working Groups, including S-100, HDWG, DQWG, and TWCWG, with the aim of improving coordination and alignment across standards. Particular attention was drawn to existing inconsistencies, such as differences in uncertainty formulas between S-44 and S-100, and to an offer made to TWCWG to consider the inclusion of water level and current standards in a future edition of S-44.

The Chair also briefed HSWG8 on a meeting of HSSC Working Group Chairs held in January 2025, during which the need for improved harmonisation across standards was discussed. It was agreed that Chairs would meet every six months to support this objective.

In addition, HSWG8 recorded the outcome of a formal Member State vote regarding the potential live streaming of in-person meetings following a proposal from Denmark. The vote was strongly against enabling live streaming, primarily due to concerns that such arrangements could restrict some delegations' ability to attend meetings in person.

HSWG9

The 9th Meeting of the IHO Hydrographic Surveys Working Group (HSWG8) was held at the IHO Secretariat, Monaco from 29 September – 3 October 2025. The IHO was represented by Assistant Director Sam Harper. HSWG9 addressed updates to key publications such as S-44 and B-13, but had a particular focus on C-13.

The meeting opened with remarks highlighting the fundamental importance of high quality hydrographic data for navigation and wider applications. 27 delegates from 18 Member States attended alongside industry representatives and academia. Outcomes from HSSC17 session were reported, including approval of the 2025 to 2026 work plan and the renaming of the Satellite Derived Bathymetry Project Group to the Hydrographic Earth Observation Project Team.

liaison with other working groups, particularly around harmonisation of standards and possible development of generic bathymetric data formats was discussed at length. Questionnaires were agreed to collect member views and formal liaison channels with TSCOM were reinforced.

Following the resignation of David Parker as HSWG Chair, Megan Greenaway was appointed Interim Chair and a call for Vice Chair nominations was issued

S-44 Standards for Hydrographic Surveys. The S-44 Drafting Team are continuing work toward completion of S-44 Ed. 6.3.0 2026 for onward submission to HSSC18. Backscatter proposals received broad support, and drafting teams were instructed to condense and integrate suitable text into the standard. Bathymetric coverage work remained ongoing, with point density and grid resolution approaches still under debate.

Uncertainty definitions within the GI Registry were reviewed in detail, leading to multiple actions for revising S 44 text, circulating proposals to the wider group, and preparing submissions to the Hydrographic Dictionary Correspondence Group once consensus is reached. Metadata was also identified as requiring further drafting before being shared for comment. Member States were encouraged to pursue additional translations of S 44 for publication through the IHO.

Group drafting of the next edition formally began, alongside planning for graphics, resource allocation, and alignment with related guidance documents. The membership of the S 44 Drafting Team was confirmed, with flexibility to add further contributors if needed.

B-13 Satellite Derived Bathymetry Guidance. The Hydrographic Earth Observation Project Team (HEOPT) provided an update. It was decided that, because feedback during the first cycle had been limited, no new edition would be issued for the present. Instead, HEOPT will concentrate on assessing demand for the use of space-based Earth observation to support S one hundred products and will only proceed with further guidance if clear interest is demonstrated.

C-13 Manual on Hydrography. Much effort was placed on reviewing progress on C-13 re-writing. The Project Team discussed how to coordinate with the IHO on how images and graphics could be incorporated into S-44 and C-13 and to determine what level of resource might be available to support development of C 13. Actions were also set to estimate funding requirements for engaging an external writer and to include graphic related needs in an approach paper for HSSC.

The Manual on Hydrography Project Team requested additional volunteers to support the C 13 effort and proposed a new delivery model whereby chapters could be submitted to HSSC incrementally rather than waiting for completion of the entire document.

Photo

To be received

Upcoming meetings:

HSWG10 will be held via VTC from the 23 – 26 February 2026