

**IHO File No. S1/6100/2020**

**THIS ASSEMBLY CIRCULAR LETTER REQUIRES YOU TO VOTE**

**ASSEMBLY CIRCULAR LETTER N° 29 Rev1  
21 August 2020**

**2<sup>nd</sup> SESSION OF THE IHO ASSEMBLY (A-2)  
Monaco, 16-18 November 2020**

**ALTERNATIVE CONDUCT OF THE 2<sup>ND</sup> SESSION OF THE IHO ASSEMBLY AND 4<sup>TH</sup>  
MEETING OF THE COUNCIL AS REMOTE EVENTS**

References:

- A. IHO ACL 17/2020 dated 20 March 2020 - Proposed scenario on the postponement of the 2<sup>nd</sup> Session of the IHO Assembly and associated activities resulting from exceptional circumstances due to COVID-19
- B. IHO ACL 19/2020 dated 21 April 2020 – Approval of the scenario on the postponement of the 2<sup>nd</sup> Session of the IHO Assembly and associated activities
- C. IHO ACL 26/2020 – Approval of the first tranche of proposals originally for consideration by the 2<sup>nd</sup> session of the Assembly
- D. IHO ACL 27/2020 – Approval of the second tranche of proposals originally for consideration by the 2<sup>nd</sup> session of the Assembly
- E. IHO ACL 28/2020 - Formation of the IHO Council for the period 2020 – 2023 and call for nominations for the positions of the Chair and the Vice-Chair of the IHO Council
- F. IMO C/ES.32/5/22/Rev. 1 Draft Interim Guidance to facilitate remote sessions of the IMO Council during the COVID-19 pandemic
- G. Publication M1, Edition 2.1.0, June 2017 <sup>1</sup>- Basic Documents of the International Hydrographic Organization
- H. Assembly Document - A2\_2020\_G\_02\_EN – Comments on Proposals (Red Book)

<sup>1</sup> Following Decisions reported in References C and D, Ed. 2.2.0 is in preparation.

Dear Hydrographer,

1. The postponement of the second session of the IHO Assembly in reaction to the global COVID-19 outbreak (Reference A and B) has led already to a series of thirteen (13) Assembly decisions (Annex B) made by correspondence (References C, D and E). As explained in Reference A in more detail, a condensed format Assembly session focusing only on the essential decisions with the consecutive meeting of the Council, was planned as face-to-face events from 17 to 19 November 2020 in Monaco.

2. It is now the view of the Secretariat that the continuing global effects of the COVID-19 pandemic, such as limitations of administrative services and travel constraints, do not allow the holding of the postponed Assembly and Council as face-to-face events in Monaco. As an alternative to the originally approved scenario (Reference B), the Secretary-General, in liaison with the Council Chair and the Monaco Government, therefore proposes the conduct of the forthcoming Assembly session and Council meeting as *remote events*.

3. The Secretariat is constantly monitoring comparable considerations affecting the operations of other international organizations such as IMO, IOC and IALA. The IMO in particular has started a comprehensive discussion process to investigate legal, technical, financial and procedural options covering how its organs may continue to function and decisions can be made under the ongoing extraordinary circumstances (Reference F). Over the previous few months, numerous IHO subordinate bodies have also added valuable experiences with video telephone conferences (VTC), helping the Secretariat identify suitable alternative meeting formats for future consideration and use.

4. Applying the experiences gained to date and drawing on the guidance and best-practice examples developed by other international organizations, the recommended *remote event* format will be a sequential combination of Assembly circular letters and virtual Assembly/Council sessions, which will allow delegations to pose questions and put context to their formal written comments.

5. However, it is clear that such arrangements can only be implemented with the approval of Member States indicating their agreement to deviate from the established procedures. The main procedural issues to be considered for these remote events, in the IHO context, include:

- a. whether the relevant organizational rules allow for such meetings,
- b. the designation of the office bearers such as Assembly Chair and Vice-Chair,
- c. the establishment of a meeting quorum,
- d. working and conference languages,
- e. decision-making procedures including voting, and
- f. the publication and circulation of commenting papers, recording of the discussions, the format of interim reports for each session and final meeting report including the formal list of decisions.

6. Rule 2 of the Assembly Rules of Procedures and Council Rules of Procedures (Reference G) requires to meet in ordinary session every three years (for Council every year) at the seat of the Organization *in Monaco*. Under the proposed remote event scenario this rule has to be waived as a collective decision by Member States. Likewise, the Rule 14 (f) to confirm the election of the Assembly Chair at the beginning of the Assembly session could be combined, if Member States agree, with the preceding nomination procedure of Rule 14 (a) to (d).

7. The use of the Assembly working languages English, French, Spanish and Russian for the simultaneous interpretation of the virtual session proceedings (Rule 22 of Assembly RoP) is technically challenging and complex to manage. The Secretariat recommends the waiver of Rule 22 for oral interventions and use English as the only working language for the virtual Assembly sessions. The four Assembly languages may be used for written comments for the procedure explained under paragraph 17. As usual the working language for the Council will be English only.

8. For the Assembly and the Council, a majority of the Members shall constitute a quorum. For events held physically, the number of Members present is easily determined by their physical presence in the meeting room. However, for virtual events, especially where participants are not visible at the same time, a countable registration system will have to be devised and provided to determine which Members are "present" online for the purposes of establishing a quorum. The Assembly Chair will confirm that a quorum is present prior to summing up the discussions and indicating the perceived direction on the related proposal.

9. The decision-making process at IHO is consensus-based and a majority of the decisions of the Assembly are taken without the need to hold a vote. However, in the few instances that it becomes apparent a decision would be needed by voting in the course of the virtual session, it is proposed that the wording on the matter on which the decision is to be made is explicitly drafted and agreed as a final result of the virtual Assembly session while the voting itself is postponed to a vote by correspondence.

10. Incoming papers, the interim report for the sessions and final meeting report including the formal list of decisions made will be translated into the official languages of the IHO – English and French. Virtual sessions will be digitally recorded.

11. The whole process will be under the aegis of the Assembly Chair assisted by the Secretariat. The Assembly Chair is planned to be present and acting in Monaco prior to, at the time of, and after the virtual Assembly sessions. It is also planned that the Chairs of HSSC and IRCC will be present in Monaco. In this case, it is proposed that one of those two office bearers could be confirmed as Vice-Chair.

12. The limitations of the remote event format in terms of time and content requires to focus on the topics most essential for the operations of the Organization. The resulting agenda of the Assembly will include the following items:

- a. The Financial report for the term 2017 – 2019;
- b. The report of the Council-Chair for the term 2017 – 2020;
- c. The 3 years' work plan 2021 – 2023;
- d. The 3 years' budget 2021 – 2023;
- e. The revised Strategic Plan;
- f. HSSC and IRCC updates;
- g. The S-100 Implementation Strategy;
- h. RHC reports;
- i. The report on the informal consultation process for the future of S-23;
- j. The establishment of an e-learning centre.

13. It is proposed to postpone the discussion of proposals PRO-1.4 and PRO-1.5 on the definition of hydrographic interest to the third Assembly in 2023, suggesting that the Assembly tasks the new Council to consider the best way forward on this issue, and to move the thematic session on the celebrations of the one hundred years of IHO's existence to the activities planned for the World Hydrographic Day on 21 June 2021.

14. The series of altogether three Virtual Assembly Session events of three hours each will take place from 16 to 18 November preceded by a preparatory event on 12 November. The sequence of Assembly proposals and the Red book comments received and published (Reference H) will form the basis for the following design:

Thursday, 12 November 2020 Preparatory Event	
13:15 – 14:45 CET	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>➤ Technical testing of the communication infrastructure</li> <li>➤ Meeting of the Finance Committee               <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Secretary-General (SG) in his role as Finance Committee Secretary comments on the distribution of the surplus, the financial situation under Covid-19 conditions, the option of a raise of MS fees from 2022 onward and asks for comments</li> </ul> </li> </ul>
15 minutes break	
15:00 – 16:30 CET	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>➤ Heads of Delegation meeting               <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- SG welcomes Member States, introduces the Assembly Chair and explains the format and procedures of the Assembly session as a remote event</li> </ul> </li> </ul>

Monday, 16 November 2020 Virtual Assembly Session Event No. 1	
13:15 – 14:45 CET	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>➤ Assembly Chair welcomes participants and opens the Assembly officially</li> <li>➤ Council Chair presents his report briefly               <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Assembly Chair (AC) refers to the Red Book and calls for additional comments</li> </ul> </li> </ul>
15 minutes break	
15:00 – 16:30 CET	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>➤ Revised Strategic Plan Update               <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Council Chair supported by Chair SPRWG briefs the audience</li> <li>- AC refers to the Red Book and calls for additional comments</li> </ul> </li> <li>➤ Secretary-General briefs on his report on the informal consultation process for the future of S-23;               <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- AC refers to the Red Book and calls for additional comments</li> </ul> </li> </ul>

Tuesday, 17 November 2020 Virtual Assembly Session Event No. 2	
13:15 – 14:45 CET	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>➤ Update on HSSC <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- HSSC Chair briefs the audience on the outcome of the recent HSSC meeting in October 2020</li> <li>- AC calls for comments</li> </ul> </li> <li>➤ S-100 Implementation Strategy <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- AC refers to PRO 2.1, PRO 2.2 and PRO 2.3 and related Red Book comments, calls the Secretariat and others for additional comments</li> </ul> </li> </ul>
15 minutes break	
15:00 – 16:30 CET	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>➤ S-100 Implementation Strategy continue</li> <li>➤ IRCC Chair briefs the audience on the outcome of the recent IRCC meeting in October 2020 <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- AC calls for comments and refers to PRO 3.3 and related Red Book comments</li> </ul> </li> </ul>

Wednesday, 18 November 2020 Virtual Assembly Session Event No. 3	
13:15 – 14:45 CET	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>➤ RHC and HCA reports <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Secretariat briefs the audience on significant issues and updates raised by the RHC reports and refers to the application process of IHO Resolution 2/1997 as amended by A-2</li> <li>- SG briefs the audience on HCA activities</li> <li>- AC calls for comments</li> </ul> </li> </ul>
15 minutes break	
15:00 – 16:30 CET	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>➤ SG presents the Finance Committee Report <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- SG as Finance Committee Secretary comments on the distribution of the surplus, the financial situation under Covid-19 conditions, the option of a raise of MS fees from 2022 onward</li> <li>- AC calls for comments</li> </ul> </li> <li>➤ SG presents the IHO Work Programme and Budget 2021 – 2023 <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- AC calls for comments</li> </ul> </li> <li>➤ AC proposes adoption of the Membership of the new Council and Seating Order of A-2 to be applied for A-3</li> <li>➤ Date of the 3rd Assembly Session 2023</li> </ul>

15. The virtual Assembly session events are not considered or designed for final decisions. It will be up to the authority of the Assembly Chair to lead and summarize the discussion. He will indicate how the session notes / Assembly report will be worded and provide guidance on the perceived direction during or at the end of each of the three virtual Assembly session events.

16. Right after closing of the third and last of the virtual Assembly session event, the Assembly Chair, assisted by the Rapporteurs and Secretariat, will compile Assembly session notes, conclusive remarks and assumed decisions ready for dispatch as a draft virtual Assembly session report on the evening (CET) of Sunday, 22 November 2020.

17. Based on this draft compilation of the virtual Assembly session report, Member States will be invited to provide comments in writing within the next 72 hours, until Midnight of Wednesday, 25 November 2020. Such comments will be accepted in all four Assembly working languages: English, French, Spanish and Russian.

18. The Assembly Chair, again assisted by the Secretariat, will then consider the comments received. It is proposed that items for which the Assembly Chair concludes no consensus has been achieved, will be automatically postponed to A-3 in 2023. The compilation of the final version of the virtual Assembly session report and the final list of A-2 decisions will be completed for dispatch by Monday 30 November 2020.

19. Based on the above approach the Secretariat considers that the IHO will be able to make the required decisions to keep the Organization functioning and it will enable the new Council to commence its role of supervision of the IHO including its subordinate Committees and the Secretariat.

20. It is proposed that the conduct of the 4<sup>th</sup> Council meeting at 19 November will follow the same principles as a remote event as specified for the virtual Assembly session. The Agenda however will be much shorter and only extended by items delegated for Council consideration in the course of the preceding Assembly session. It is vital therefore that the future Council Chair and Vice-Chair are aware of their nomination in advance of the Assembly and the Council (Reference E).

Thursday, 19 November 2020 Virtual Council Meeting Event	
13:15 – 14:45 CET	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>➤ Approval of the new Chair and Vice-Chair proposed by SG</li> <li>➤ Focus of the new Council: Council Chair presents its views based on the directions given by the Assembly</li> <li>➤ Council Chair proposes a way forward for the effective implementation of all Assembly Decisions including Pro c) of the Council Chair Report to A-2 (Reference D, Decision n° 12)</li> </ul>
15 minutes break	
15:00 – 16:30 CET	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>➤ Discussion on the best way forward on the definition of hydrographic interest</li> <li>➤ Date for C-5 in 2021</li> </ul>

21. As a result, this Circular Letter requires Member States to vote on the following proposed arrangements as a package:

- a. Decision to conduct the forthcoming Assembly session and Council meeting as remote events;

- b. Decision to waive Rule 2 of the Assembly Rules of Procedures and Council Rules of Procedures as described in paragraph 6;
  - c. Decision to confirm alternative conduct of the Assembly as a remote event, the election of the Assembly Chair at the beginning of the Assembly session may be then combined with the preceding nomination procedure of Rule 14 (a) to (d) as described in paragraph 6;
  - d. Decisions to waive Rule 22 of the Assembly Rules of Procedures and use English as the only working language in the Assembly session events for the reasons described in paragraph 7.
  - e. Decision to confirm alternative conduct of the forthcoming Assembly session and Council meeting according to the procedural arrangements as described in paragraph 12 to 20;
  - f. Task the new Council to consider the best way forward with proposals PRO-1.4 and PRO-1.5 on the definition of hydrographic interest and report to A-3 in 2023;
  - g. Move the thematic session on the celebrations of the one hundred years of IHO's existence to the activities planned for the World Hydrographic Day on 21 June 2021.
22. It should be acknowledged that these arrangements and subsequent adoption of proposals will be deemed to have been given by the Assembly. As a consequence, it is required for this vote that:
- a. Minimum of Member States voting is 45 to meet the quorum of the Assembly (half of the Member States excluding those suspended);
  - b. Minimum of affirmative or negative votes required is 30, as being one third of the Member States (excluding the suspended); and
  - c. The final decision is based on simple majority of the votes cast.
23. The approval by vote of these proposed arrangements is requested **no later than 21 September 2020** (to be forwarded to the Secretariat by email: [cl-lc@iho.int](mailto:cl-lc@iho.int)) by using the Voting Form in Annex A, but preferably using the IHO Online Form System by accessing the following link: [https://iho.formstack.com/forms/web\\_form\\_acl\\_29\\_20](https://iho.formstack.com/forms/web_form_acl_29_20).
24. More details on the administrative and technical arrangements for the preparation of these events will be provided by a separate Assembly Circular Letter when appropriate.

Yours sincerely,



Dr Mathias JONAS  
Secretary-General

Annex A: Voting Form on the package of proposed arrangements

Annex B: Cumulative list of Assembly Decisions as of 27 July 2020

**ALTERNATIVE CONDUCT OF THE 2<sup>ND</sup> SESSION OF THE IHO ASSEMBLY AND 4<sup>TH</sup>  
MEETING OF THE COUNCIL AS REMOTE EVENTS**

**VOTING FORM ACL 29/2020**

to be returned to the IHO Secretariat **no later than 21 September 2020**

E-mail: cl-lc@iho.int - Fax: +377 93 10 81 40

**Member  
State:**

**Contact:**

**E-mail:**

**Do you approve the proposed alternative conduct of the 2<sup>nd</sup> Session of the IHO  
Assembly and the 4<sup>th</sup> Meeting of the Council as remote events as proposed by the  
Secretary-General and summed up in paragraph 21?**

Please tick  the appropriate box:

YES

NO

Please provide any additional comments in the section below.

Comments (if required)

**Cumulative List of Assembly Decisions as of 27 July 2020**

<b>Decision No.1 of A-2, 2020 is</b>
The Assembly, following a special voting procedure depicted in ACL 20/2020 and reported in ACL 25/2020, elected Rear Admiral Luigi SINAPI (Italy) to a post of Director for a term of office of six years starting on 1 September 2020.
<b>Decision No.2 of A-2, 2020 is</b>
The Assembly, following the approved voting procedure by correspondence as reported in ACL 19/2020, approved the interpretation that the Council has the authority to request and consider proposals submitted by Member States or the Secretary-General and confirmed that the Council is entitled to propose amendments to the General Regulations of the IHO for Member States' approval.
<b>Decision No.3 of A-2, 2020 is</b>
The Assembly, following the approved voting procedure by correspondence as reported in ACL 19/2020, approved the final proposal compiled by the Secretary-General on the revision of Articles 14, 15, 20 and 25 of the General Regulations of the IHO (ACL 26/2020 refers).
<b>Decision No.4 of A-2, 2020 is</b>
The Assembly, following the approved voting procedure by correspondence as reported in ACL 19/2020, approved the final proposal compiled by the Secretary-General on the revision of Clause (c) of Article 16 of the General Regulations of the IHO – Hydrographic Interest (ACL 26/2020 refers).
<b>Decision No.5 of A-2, 2020 is</b>
The Assembly, following the approved voting procedure by correspondence as reported in ACL 19/2020, approved Table of Tonnages, Shares, Contribution and Votes (2021-2023) (Assembly Document – A2_2020_G_03_EN - Table of Tonnages, Shares, Contribution and Votes (2021-2023))
<b>Decision No.6 of A-2, 2020 is</b>
The Assembly, following the approved voting procedure by correspondence as reported in ACL 19/2020, approved Revision of Rule 12 of the Rules of Procedure of the IHO Council and consequence on Rules 8 and 11 - Timing of Election of the Chair and Vice-Chair.
<b>Decision No.7 of A-2, 2020 is</b>
The Assembly, following the approved voting procedure by correspondence as reported in ACL 19/2020, approved the establishment of an IHO strategy and resolution for gender-inclusive language.  The Assembly tasked the Secretary-General to: - to conduct a comprehensive review of the IHO Basic Documents and Resolutions, adopting the UN Guidelines on Gender-inclusive Language, and to provide draft revisions of IHO Publications M-1 and M-3 for the consideration of the Assembly at the next ordinary session (A-3).

- to monitor the IHO's progress towards the implementation of the UN Guidelines on Gender-inclusive Language to all IHO documentation and communications and report to the Assembly at the next ordinary session (A-3).

**Decision No.8 of A-2, 2020 is**

The Assembly, following the approved voting procedure by correspondence as reported in ACL 19/2020, approved the establishment of the joint IHO-Singapore Innovation and Technology Laboratory in Singapore to coordinate and testbed initiatives under the proposed composition, governance structure and terms of reference for the governing board and the management team.

The Assembly tasked

- the Secretariat as well as the Chairs of HSSC and IRCC to represent the IHO on the governing board and report regularly to the Council;
- the Council to advise the governing board of the laboratory on other themes and projects regarded as supportive to the IHO Work Programme.

**Decision No.9 of A-2, 2020 is**

The Assembly, following the approved voting procedure by correspondence as reported in ACL 19/2020, approved the Revision of the IHO Resolution 2/1997 – Establishment of Regional Hydrographic Commissions (RHC) (Assembly Document A2\_2020\_PRO3-1\_EN\_Res\_21997\_cc\_v1).

**Decision No.10 of A-2, 2020 is**

The Assembly, following the approved voting procedure by correspondence as reported in ACL 19/2020, approved Revision of the IHO Resolution 1/2005 - IHO Response to Disasters (Assembly Document A2\_2020\_PRO3-2\_EN\_Res\_12005\_cc\_v1)

**Decision No.11 of A-2, 2020 is**

The Assembly, following the approved voting procedure by correspondence as reported in ACL 19/2020, confirmed the option to convene Council meetings regularly at the IHO Secretariat until the Council decides otherwise.

**Decision No.12 of A-2, 2020 is**

The Assembly, following the approved voting procedure by correspondence as reported in ACL 19/2020, confirmed the adoption of the effective implementation of the Revised Strategic Plan keeping in mind to apply the principles of ISO 9001 as the main theme of supervision and control of the Council until Assembly 3 (A-3).

**Decision No 13 of A-2, 2020 is**

The Assembly reviewed and endorsed the selection process for the Council as proposed in IHO CL 52/2019 Rev1 and approved the composition of the Council set out in Annex A of IHO ACL 28/2020 for the period 2020-2023 (until the 3<sup>rd</sup> session of the Assembly).