

**3<sup>rd</sup> SESSION OF THE IHO ASSEMBLY**  
**SUMMARY RECORD OF THE SECOND PLENARY SESSION**  
**2 May 2023**

**ADOPTION OF THE AGENDA (AGENDA ITEM 3)**

(A.3/G/01/Rev.4)

The CHAIR invited the Assembly to adopt the draft agenda contained in document A.3/G/01/Rev.4.

The agenda was adopted.

**CONSIDERATION OF COUNCIL CHAIR REPORT AND PROPOSALS (WORK PROGRAMME 1) (AGENDA ITEM 4)**

**SUMMARY REPORT ON COUNCIL ACTIVITIES (COUNCIL CHAIR) (AGENDA ITEM 4.1)**

(A.3/G/05/v2.1)

COUNCIL CHAIR, drawing attention to the report of the IHO Council contained in document A.3/G/05/v2.1, gave a presentation outlining the Council's activities since 2020, which is reproduced in these proceedings. In particular, as directed by the second Assembly, the Council had continued to discuss the definition of "hydrographic interest" at its fourth meeting and had invited parties interested in developing a revised definition of the term to participate in an informal group with a view to producing a single, consolidated proposal on the subject. It had further been suggested that the group review and consider all related materials, including past proposals and other Assembly or Conference outcomes. The goal had been to prepare a new proposal for the sixth meeting of the Council or the third Assembly, but the pandemic of coronavirus disease (COVID-19) had prevented interested parties from meeting in person until 2022. Since the 2020–2023 Council was now dissolved, the agenda item had been closed at the Council's sixth meeting, with the suggestion that it be taken up again by the next Council once more detailed solutions had been developed. The Council therefore recommended to the Assembly that the topic be put on hold until the interested parties had worked out and submitted a mature proposal for a revised definition.

SECRETARY-GENERAL explained that, as the Council had been formally disbanded pending the establishment of a new Council by the third Assembly, the issue of finding a way forward on the definition of "hydrographic interest", which the Council had recommended be put on hold, was considered formally closed. It would be placed on the agenda of either the Assembly or the Council, only if a new proposal to that effect is presented from a Member State.

GERMANY expressed support for this interpretation of the position by the Secretary-General.

CHAIR concluded that the Assembly agreed to endorse both the presentation given by the Council Chair and the written report of the Council contained in document A.3/G/05/v2.1, subject to the specific approval of the proposals submitted, namely PRO 1.1, 1.2, 1.3, 1.4, 2.1, 3.1 and 3.2, and in the light of the clarification provided by the Secretary-General.

It was so agreed.

CHAIR further concluded that the Assembly agreed to endorse the position that the item relating to a revised definition of "hydrographic interest" would remain closed until a new submission or proposal by Member States was put forward to the Council or the Assembly.

It was so agreed.

## **SUMMARY REPORT ON WORK PROGRAMME 1 (SECRETARY-GENERAL) (AGENDA ITEM 4.2)**

(A.3/G/05.1/v2)

SECRETARY-GENERAL gave a presentation outlining the work of IHO during the period 2021–2023 on the six elements of Work Programme 1, “Corporate affairs”. In addition to the excellent relations the Organization enjoyed with the Government of Monaco, it had strong working relationships with a number of international Organizations and had continued to participate in relevant meetings.

Work within the United Nations Committee of Experts on Global Geospatial Information Management (UN-GGIM) provides greater scope on how to manage geospatial information, of which hydrographic information was a subset. Together with the International Organization for Standardization Technical Committee ISO/TC 211 (Geographic Information/Geomatics) and the Open Geospatial Consortium (OGC), IHO had co-authored a key revision of the UN-GGIM Guide to the Role of Standards in Geospatial Management, which was a fundamental tool for establishing Marine Spatial Data Infrastructure (MSDI). IHO also worked closely with the United Nations Division of Oceans and Law of the Sea (UN-DOALOS), the IHO–International Association of Geodesy (IAG) Advisory Board on the Law of the Sea (ABLOS) and the United Nations Open-ended Consultative Process on Oceans and the Law of the Sea. A presentation on mapping the ocean had been well received, helping participants in the Open-ended Consultative Process to understand why it was an essential activity that provided baseline data for use in a variety of applications. UN-DOALOS had gained support through the development of the S-121 Product Specification on Maritime Limits and Boundaries as the recommended format for States to deposit data in support of maritime limits and boundaries within the United Nations, in accordance with the provisions of the United Nations Convention on the Law of the Sea. It was anticipated that legal advice would be sought from UN-DOALOS in relation to the issue of crowd-sourced bathymetry data, especially in the context of the “30 by 30” initiative on marine protected areas.

IHO’s relations with WMO continued to mature. WMO was faced with the challenge of setting up a global meteorological service based on modern data standards and had decided to use the S-4xx range of data Product Specifications, based on S-100 paradigms, which would help to increase the popularity of the S-100 framework. If S-100 became better integrated into digital frameworks, it would be better for all processes affected. There had also been promising developments in relations with the International Seabed Authority (ISA): many years of negotiations had resulted in an agreement that bathymetry data gathered by ISA contractors in their respective licence areas would be submitted for inclusion in the IHO Data Centre for Digital Bathymetry archive. IHO was grateful to the ISA for its flexibility.

One of IHO’s strategic goals was to improve links with the ocean community, and good progress had been made in that regard. In June 2022, IHO had contributed proactively for the first time to the United Nations Ocean Conference, organizing a side event on how hydrography could support a wide range of activities and help countries to develop the Blue Economy. It had also continued to work with the International Federation of Surveyors (FIG) and the International Cartographic Association (ICA) to ensure that training courses for cartographers and surveyors remained fit for purpose and responded to technological changes in the industry.

In the area of information management, digital processes had been implemented to maintain relations with Member States. IHO was grateful for support from Japan and the Republic of Korea in the form of Project Officers to help provide these digital services. Public relations and outreach had also changed significantly with the vast increase in use of social media, making it easier to enhance the Organization’s visibility and to leverage resources as a result. The IHO website had been reviewed and relaunched, and the Organization was keen to hear of activities in Member States to mark World Hydrography Day, as well as taking part in events in the host State. The centenary of the Organization had been celebrated on 21 June 2021.

The conduct of Work Programme 1 was permanently overseen by the Council. The mechanism worked well and provided good oversight. The report of the Finance Committee, which had met the previous day, would be submitted to the Assembly once it had been finalized.

In terms of Secretariat services, the Staff Regulations would be discussed separately later in the week. There had been significant changes in the profile of permanent staff members. With the departure of two translators from the permanent staff, much translation into Spanish and French had been outsourced to competent external translators. Thanks were due to the officers who had helped with the process. The arrival of a dedicated Geographic Information System (GIS) expert on the permanent staff was welcome. Gratitude was also due to Japan, the Republic of Korea and Peru for providing seconded officers to work on specific projects. The Secretariat's workload had increased with the vast expansion in video teleconferencing and hybrid formats for in-house meetings. That trend looked set to continue, especially as the S-100 framework increases in popularity.

Holding the Assembly at the Grimaldi Forum instead of the original venue of the Auditorium Rainier III, which had proved impossible as a result of continuing COVID-related measures, would have a significant impact on its cost. Consideration would need to be given to ways of compensating for the additional financial burden in the coming years. The issue would be deliberated with the Council in the context of preparing budget estimates for 2024.

The Assembly was invited to take note of the fact that the Secretariat had maintained its operational duties and had represented the Organization's scope and interests despite COVID-19 constraints; that greater levels of liaison with other international Organizations and stakeholder groups had been achieved as a result of the expansion of the Work Programme scope to the targets of Goal 2 and Goal 3 of the IHO Strategy, together with the active involvement of the Secretariat Staff in time-limited projects; and that any request for increased operational duties placed on the Secretariat should take into account the required additional personnel and material resources.

CHAIR invited the Assembly to comment on the Secretary-General's summary report on Work Programme 1.

NORWAY, emphasizing how much IHO had changed in recent years in response to broader changes in the world, welcomed the increasing professionalization of the Organization and congratulated the Secretary-General and his team on their work.

CHAIR took it that the Assembly agreed to endorse the summary report on Work Programme 1 contained in document A.3/G/05.1/v2.

It was so agreed.

## **CONSIDERATION OF COUNCIL CHAIR REPORT AND PROPOSALS (WORK PROGRAMME 1) (AGENDA ITEM 4)**

### **PRO 1.1 – NEW IHO RESOLUTION – S-100 IMPLEMENTATION (IHO COUNCIL) (AGENDA ITEM 4.3)**

COUNCIL CHAIR said that Proposal 1.1 introduced a new, overarching Resolution on S-100, embracing concepts and pathways depicted in the Roadmap for the S-100 Implementation Decade 2020 – 2030 with reference to the new IMO Resolution on Performance Standards for ECDIS and the enforced dates agreed upon.

She recalled that, at A2, Republic of Korea had proposed that IHO Resolutions be updated to include elements of S-100 implementation; it became apparent that there was a need for an overarching Resolution in order to tie together the particular elements of S-100 implementation including guidance, timelines, maintenance and which body would be responsible for monitoring the implementation. The new Resolution was to be guided by the Roadmap and its

Annexes and it would emphasize the expectation of adequate S-100 ENC coverage and appropriate S-100 data products and services when S-100 ECDIS became operational in 2026. Noting the endorsement by Council, the Assembly was invited to approve the proposed Resolution.

CHAIR noted that there had been unanimous support in the Red Book with one comment from Canada proposing editorial changes so that the Annexes were renamed numerically to correspond with the IHO-100 implementation strategy webpage.

In the absence of any comments, the CHAIR took it that the Assembly approved the new Resolution on S-100 Implementation including the editorial suggestions proposed by Canada.

PRO 1.1, as amended, was adopted.

## **PRO 1.2 – IMPLEMENTATION AND REVIEW OF THE STRATEGIC PLAN (IHO COUNCIL) (AGENDA ITEM 4.4)**

(A3/2023/EN/PRO 1.2)

COUNCIL CHAIR said that, in accordance with IHO Resolution 12/2002, the Strategic Plan was to be reviewed by the Council for fitness of purpose prior to each Session of the Assembly. In its latest review, the Council had found that current version of the Strategic Plan was still viable and recommended that it continued to be used to provide general context and direction to the IHO Work Programme.

The Council's deliberations had also led to the proposals on adjusting priorities and on a change of focus for one of the targets. In 2022, the International Maritime Organization (IMO) had endorsed a proposal for revision to the Electronic Chart Display and Information System (ECDIS) Performance Standards and ECDIS Guidance for Good Practice to include S-100 functionality and the timelines for the phase-in of S-100 capable ECDIS from 01 January 2026. In order to meet the expectations set in place by the IMO decisions, it was important for Member States and stakeholders to accelerate the pace of development in S-100, S-98, S-164 and S-128 so that the operational versions of the Specifications would be capable of supporting S-101 Electronic Navigational Chart (ENC) in use. The goal was to provide as much as possible S-101 ENC coverage where there were also S-57 ENCs, by 01 January 2026. In order to achieve that aim, Council proposed to prioritize Goal-1-related activities. The increased focus on Goal 1 was to be temporary pending progress towards complete S-101 coverage.

After careful consideration and analysis, Goal 2 / Target 2.1, to "Build a portal to support and promote regional and international cooperation in Marine Spatial Data Infrastructures (MSDI)" was deemed to be impractical and a duplication of national efforts. As an alternative, Council proposed to focus on a portal consisting of global thematic layers of information such as those that were already provided under IHO online catalogues on the IHO website.

Council believed that the Strategic Performance Indicators, as developed, were sufficient to measure progress and success and recommended that the Council begin preparations for the next Strategic Plan to be put in place for 2027–2032.

The Assembly was invited to agree on the continuation of conduct of the annual Work Programmes on the basis of the Strategic Plan in place for 2021–2026; to approve that Goal 1 of the IHO Strategic Plan and its targets should have the highest priority in the implementation of the 2024–2026 Work Programme; to direct the Inter-Regional Coordination Committee (IRCC) to provide guidance to the MSDI Working Group on the focus shift in implementation of Goal 2/Target 2.1 towards an IHO Data-Products-Services portal providing global thematic layers; to continue to measure the effectiveness and the efficiency of the three Work Programmes' implementation by means of the Strategic Performance Indicators in place; and to provide directions to the next Council for the preparation of the Strategic Plan 2027–2032.

CHAIR noted that there had been unanimous support and some comments in the Red Book for the five points outlined in the proposal. She invited further comments.

UNITED KINGDOM believed that, at this stage, efforts should be targeted on supporting national and regional MSDI through Regional Hydrographic Commissions (RHCs) rather than through creating a global portal. The United Kingdom advocated the use of the nine strategic pathways of the United Nations Integrated Geospatial Information Framework (UN-IGIF) to maximize the value of geospatial data to societies and economies; and took the view that technologies and portals represented only one aspect of that holistic framework. At the request of the CHAIR, UNITED KINGDOM undertook to provide a proposed amendment to paragraph (c) of the proposed decision, setting out the views of the United Kingdom Hydrographic Office on MSDI and the IHO Data-Products-Services portal providing global thematic layers. The United Kingdom supported all other proposed paragraphs.

UNITED STATES OF AMERICA supported Proposal 1.2 on implementation and review of the Strategic Plan. The next three years would be a critical period for realizing IHO's vision of the promised S-100 products and services, and the proposal recognized the important connectivity between the Strategic Plan, the Work Programme and deliverables in the efforts to achieve Goal 1. The United States looked forward to working with Member States, the IHO Secretariat and key stakeholders in those regards. The Science on the Sphere display demonstrated the value of hydrography beyond navigation in addressing, among others, local, regional and global challenges including sea-level rise, hazard forecasting in mitigation and marine spatial planning. While Goal 1 was foundational to IHO's work, hydrography's considerable additional value beyond navigation was also affirmed in Goals 2 and 3. United States also supported United Kingdom's comments on the IGIF pathways and noted that a new version of the IGIF-Hydro would be available to Member States between May and August 2023.

SWEDEN supported the review and proposed implementation of the Strategic Plan. It was of particular importance that IHO focused on Goal 1 and S-100 implementation. Sweden appreciated the additional comments from Canada and the Secretariat, but believed that the existing wording was generic enough to cover any concerns.

SURINAME supported the Secretariat's recommendation to refocus the function of the MSDI portal on global thematic layers.

CHAIR took it that the decision was agreed apart from subparagraph (c) for which UNITED KINGDOM would submit a proposal of amendment on the following day.

It was so agreed.

### **PRO 1.3 – GENDER-INCLUSIVE LANGUAGE TO BE USED IN IHO DOCUMENTS AND COMMUNICATIONS (IHO COUNCIL) (AGENDA ITEM 4.5)**

(3\_2023\_EN\_PRO\_1.3)

COUNCIL CHAIR recalled that, at its second session (A2), the Assembly had tasked the Secretary-General with conducting a comprehensive review of IHO basic documents and resolutions with respect to the use of gender-inclusive language and to submit draft revisions of IHO publications M-1 and M-3 to A3; to monitor IHO's progress towards the implementation of the relevant United Nations guidelines in all IHO documentation and communications; and to report to A3.

The review of the documents had revealed relatively few single-gender references and the modifications required did not impact the readability of the documents. Based on the Secretary-General's report to the fifth session of the Council (C5), it was recommended that, to the extent possible, the updating of gender references in existing IHO documents would take place in conjunction with other edits and revisions which had been received as proposals from IHO bodies; there would be no systematic updating of all IHO documents for the single

purpose of addressing gender language issues. The Council also proposed that guiding principles on gender-inclusive language, once approved, would apply to all new IHO documents and communications. An amendment was proposed to IHO Resolution 1/2020 in order that the use of gender-inclusive language should become part of the regular drafting and revision process of all IHO documents and communication.

The Assembly was invited to approve the proposed amendment to IHO Resolution 1/2020 on gender-inclusive language to be used in IHO documents and communications; to direct the IHO Secretariat to implement the gender-inclusive language in M-1 as a first step and invite all IHO Committees, Sub-Committees, Working Groups and Project Teams to review their Terms of Reference and Rules of Procedure in application of the new IHO Resolution; and to endorse the proposal that the application process of the proposed revised version of IHO Resolution 1/2020 would become part of the regular drafting and revision process of all IHO documents and communications.

JAPAN supported the proposal, noting that the East Asian Hydrographic Commission had amended its statute to provide for the use of gender-inclusive language. Japan proposed therefore that, in paragraph (b), Regional Hydrographic Commissions should also be invited to review their Terms of Reference and Rules of Procedure in application of the new IHO Resolution.

UNITED STATES strongly supported IHO's commitment to gender equity and equality and the empowerment of women in hydrography. United States supported the use of gender-inclusive language in IHO documents and activities and supported the proposal by Japan to include a reference to Regional Hydrographic Commissions in the draft decision. United States recognized the administrative burden of amending documents and stood ready to provide support in the rewording of documents.

NEW ZEALAND supported the amendment proposed by Japan to include a reference to Regional Hydrographic Commissions reviewing their Terms of Reference and Rules of Procedure.

CHAIR took it that the decision was approved, with the amendment proposed by Japan. She suggested the following wording: "b) to direct the IHO Secretariat to implement the gender-inclusive language in M1 as a first step and invite Committees, Working Groups and Regional Hydrographic Commissions to review their Terms of Reference and Rules of Procedure in application of the new IHO Resolution".

PRO 1.3, as amended, was adopted.

## **PRO 1.5 – REVISION OF M-7 IHO STAFF REGULATIONS (SECRETARY-GENERAL) (AGENDA ITEM 4.6)**

(A3/2023/EN/PRO 1.5)

SECRETARY-GENERAL, introducing PRO 1.5, said that the proposal to revise M-7 IHO Staff Regulations had been prompted by rearrangements made in connection with the health insurance and retirement system for IHO Secretariat staff. IHO obligations in respect of rights granted to staff members would not change as a result of the proposal, which would similarly have no impact on the IHO Budget. Based on experiences during the COVID-19 pandemic, one of the main changes proposed was to introduce teleworking as an option available to IHO staff on a permanent basis. During the revision process, the opportunity had been taken to make minor editorial changes, updates and clarifications to the publication. The proposal had been endorsed by the Council and the Finance Committee.

The Assembly was invited to take note of the need to revise the IHO Staff Regulations for the reasons set out in PRO 1.5; approve the proposed revision of the IHO Publication M-7 Staff Regulations; and endorse the proposal to put the new Edition 9.0.0 in force by 1 July 2023,

subject to the inclusion of gender-inclusive language in accordance with the decision taken under agenda item 4.5.

CHAIR said she took it that the Assembly wished to agree to each of those three actions.

It was so agreed.

PRO 1.5 was adopted.

**PRO 1.6 – POLYGONAL DEMARCATION OF GLOBAL SEA AREAS (SECRETARY-GENERAL) (AGENDA ITEM 4.7)**

(A3/2023/EN/PRO 1.6)

SECRETARY-GENERAL, introducing PRO 1.6, recalled that A2 had approved the proposal for the future of S-23 as a package and had tasked him with its implementation. It had also tasked the Hydrographic Services and Standards Committee (HSSC), as the responsible technical body, with the development of a new S-130 Polygonal Demarcations of Global Sea Areas Product Specification. The 11 members of the S-130 Project Team (S-130PT) established for that purpose had worked in accordance with the Rules of Procedure and Terms of Reference endorsed by the HSSC. At the HSSC's 14<sup>th</sup> session (HSSC14), the S-130PT Chair had provided a progress report stating that S-130 Product Specification Edition 1.0.0 would be submitted to HSSC15 for endorsement in June 2023; that the related initial implementation and test phase with a view to Edition 2.0.0 would be completed by the end of 2023; and that Edition 2.0.0 and the authoritative S-130 dataset would be submitted to HSSC16 in May or June 2024 for endorsement and subsequent report to C8. On the assumption that those timelines would be met, C9 was expected to be in a position to report to A4 accordingly.

SECRETARY-GENERAL, noting that the Council had endorsed the timelines mentioned, said that the Assembly was invited to take note of the timeline for the development and implementation of the S-130 Product Specification; endorse his recommendation to postpone consideration of the need for the subsequent development of basic guidelines for the allocation and display of attributes of sea areas to be applied to geographic information systems until the S-130 Product Specification and the implementation as authoritative S-130 dataset had been finalized; and endorse his recommendation to postpone the consideration of subsequent amendments to the relevant IHO Resolutions 32/1919, as amended, and 13/1919, as amended, for endorsement by the Council, if appropriate, until the S-130 Product Specification and the implementation of the authoritative S-130 dataset had been finalized.

SWEDEN, speaking in its capacity as HSSC Chair, confirmed that S-130 Edition 1.0.0 had already been submitted and would be made available on the IHO website in advance of HSSC15 in June 2023.

JAPAN expressed support for the proposal, as well as great appreciation for the sincere efforts and generous support of the Secretary-General concerning the implementation of the decisions adopted in respect of PRO 1.9 at A2.

BELGIUM, speaking in its capacity as Chair of the S-130 Project Team and likewise expressing support for the proposal, thanked all team members who had contributed to the work to date and would continue to contribute on a technical level in future.

CHAIR said she took it that the Assembly wished to take note of the timeline detailed by the Secretary-General and to endorse his two recommendations.

It was so agreed.

PRO 1.6 was adopted.

**[Annex: initial statement of Council Chair to be added]**