

3rd SESSION OF THE IHO ASSEMBLY
SUMMARY RECORD OF THE FIFTH PLENARY SESSION

4 May 2023

CONSIDERATION OF REPORTS AND PROPOSALS (WORK PROGRAMME 3) (AGENDA ITEM 6) (continued)

PRO 3.5 ESTABLISHMENT OF A TASK FORCE TO EXPLORE THE POTENTIAL MERITS, STRUCTURES, AND OPTIONS FOR ALTERNATE FUND GENERATION TO SUPPORT CAPACITY BUILDING AND OTHER IHO INITIATIVES (UNITED STATES OF AMERICA, CANADA, NORWAY, UNITED KINGDOM AND AUSTRALIA) (AGENDA ITEM 6.6)

(A3/2023/PRO 3.5)

UNITED STATES OF AMERICA, introducing PRO 3.5, said that coastal nations required more capacity building support to achieve the IHO Strategic Plan. With funding requests for capacity building in recent years persistently exceeding the amounts available, only a relatively small number of projects were accepted each year. That situation would be exacerbated by the challenge of fulfilling the S-100 implementation plan. Moreover, annual Member State contributions were unlikely to increase, and the finite solution of adding new Member States was undermined by the fact that those same States generally required the most capacity building assistance. Highlighting the generally supportive comments in the Red Book, the United States noted that the suggested changes had been taken into account and invited the Assembly to approve the exploratory and non-binding proposal.

PORTUGAL, expressing concern at the decline in funding for capacity building, said that it endorsed the proposal. It welcomed initiatives to seek new, stable funding sources which strengthened IHO's commitment to capacity building.

SWEDEN, strongly supportive of the proposal, said that it agreed that the task force should be established under the Inter-Regional Coordination Committee (IRCC). It was also important to strengthen IHO's work concerning the S-100 infrastructure.

NORWAY thanked the United States for proposing a long-overdue solution. It was crucial to address the strategic pillar of capacity building and ensure that Member States' requests in that area could be met.

CHILE said that it fully backed the proposal and encouraged the exploration of innovative pathways to fund capacity building.

ITALY, endorsing the proposal, suggested strengthening the role of the Capacity Building Sub-Committee (CBSC) by adding "especially regarding the search for reliable alternative funding sources" in the second paragraph of the proposal.

SURINAME said that it supported the proposal, which would ensure that no one was left behind.

NEW ZEALAND, recognizing that alternative funding was indispensable to achieve the IHO Strategic Plan, said that it supported the proposal.

CANADA said that it supported the proposal and the search for new sources of stable and sustainable funding. At a time of significant transformation and change, capacity building was vital to ensure that no one was left behind. Canada looked forward to participating in the initiative.

INTERNATIONAL CENTRE FOR ELECTRONIC NAVIGATIONAL CHARTS (IC ENC), noting the reference in the proposal to Regional Electronic Navigational Chart Coordinating Centres

(RENCs), said that it stood ready to provide guidance to the proposed task force in areas such as financial infrastructure, policies and processes.

FINLAND said that it supported the proposal as presented.

FRANCE, endorsing the proposal, reiterated that the task force should come under IRCC.

DIRECTOR SINAPI said that the establishment of a powerful task force would require networking with national, regional and international institutions able to support hydrographic capacity building. The Secretariat therefore stood ready to support the proposed initiative by facilitating those connections.

IRCC CHAIR, appreciative of the proposal and the Secretariat's offer of assistance, agreed that an ad hoc project team under IRCC would be the most suitable format. Given that the revised Capacity Building Strategy adopted the previous day entailed a greater number of S-100 activities, creative ways to increase funding were urgently needed. If the Assembly decided to make IRCC responsible for the task force, work could begin at the upcoming IRCC meeting in June 2023.

INDONESIA, expressing support for the proposal, said that the Regional Hydrographic Commissions (RHCs) should explore ways to fund regional capacity building, in particular for young hydrographers.

CHAIR, highlighting the overwhelming support for the proposal, suggested amending the second and third paragraphs to specify that the Project Team would come under IRCC and that Council would be authorized to review progress via that body.

In the absence of any objections, the CHAIR took it that the Assembly agreed with the amended wording.

It was so agreed.

TÜRKIYE said that the proposed task force should also consider ways to improve spending efficiency. A lack of coordination among RHCs sometimes led to duplicate capacity building requests, thereby contributing to the lack of funding.

IRCC CHAIR said that the CBSC was working to improve interregional cooperation and had already delivered several cross regional training sessions. However, the limited funds had to be focused on those Member States most in need.

PRO 3.5: The Assembly recognized the important global maritime issues facing the hydrographic community worldwide and that addressing those issues would require expanded global hydrographic capacity; approved the proposal to establish an ad hoc Project Team under the IRCC to explore the possible establishment of reliable alternative funding for activities including capacity building and GEBCO; and, authorized Council via IRCC to review progress reports from the Project Team at least annually and provide guidance to the Project Team in preparation to report out to 4th Assembly (A4).

PRESENTATION OF THE REPORTS OF THE 15 REGIONAL HYDROGRAPHIC COMMISSIONS (AGENDA ITEM 7)

The CHAIR invited the Chairs of the Regional Hydrographic Commissions to present summaries of their reports, noting that the full reports were available on the IHO website.

DENMARK presented the report of the Nordic Hydrographic Commission.

The Assembly took note of the report.

SWEDEN presented the report of the North Sea Hydrographic Commission.

The Assembly took note of the report.

CROATIA presented the report of the Mediterranean and Black Seas Hydrographic Commission.

The Assembly took note of the report.

DENMARK presented the report of the Arctic Regional Hydrographic Commission.

The Assembly took note of the report.

FINLAND presented the report of the Baltic Sea Hydrographic Commission.

The Assembly took note of the report.

UNITED STATES OF AMERICA presented the report of the US–Canada Hydrographic Commission.

The Assembly took note of the report.

INDONESIA presented the report of the East Asia Hydrographic Commission.

CHAIR congratulated the East Asia Hydrographic Commission on its 50th anniversary in 2021.

The Assembly took note of the report.

PRESENTATION OF THE REPORT OF THE IHO HYDROGRAPHIC COMMISSION ON ANTARCTICA

SECRETARY-GENERAL, as Chair of the IHO Hydrographic Commission on Antarctica (HCA), presented the report of the HCA and concluded by commending Mr Lee Truscott (United Kingdom), Chair of the HCA Hydrographic Priority Working Group and ENC/INT Chart Coordinator, for his outstanding achievements and sustained support to the work of the Commission.

The Assembly took note of the report.

FRANCE presented the report of the Eastern Atlantic Hydrographic Commission.

The Assembly took note of the report of the Eastern Atlantic Hydrographic Commission.

PERU presented the report of the South East Pacific Regional Hydrographic Commission.

The Assembly took note of the report of the South East Pacific Regional Hydrographic Commission.

NEW ZEALAND presented the report of the South West Pacific Hydrographic Commission.

The Assembly took note of the report of the South West Pacific Hydrographic Commission and agreed to consider the implementation of appropriate mechanisms to ensure greater inclusion, representation and participation of Member States at IHO meetings, in particular the IHO Assembly.

UNITED KINGDOM presented the report of the Meso American & Caribbean Sea Hydrographic Commission.

The Assembly took note of the full report of the Meso American & Caribbean Sea Hydrographic Commission and noted that work on maintenance of IHO Capacity Building Fund for annual Seminars on Raising Awareness in Hydrography, Technical Visits and High-Level Technical Visits for Associate Members was already under way.

UNITED KINGDOM presented the report of the Southern African and Islands Hydrographic Commission.

The Assembly took note of the report of the Southern African and Islands Hydrographic Commission.

INDONESIA presented the report of the North Indian Ocean Hydrographic Commission.

The Assembly took note of the report of the North Indian Ocean Hydrographic Commission.

OMAN presented the report of the ROPME Sea Area Hydrographic Commission.

The Assembly took note of the report of the ROPME Sea Area Hydrographic Commission.

BRAZIL presented the report of the South West Atlantic Hydrographic Commission.

The Assembly took note of the report of the South West Atlantic Hydrographic Commission.

IMPLEMENTATION OF APPROPRIATE MECHANISMS TO ENSURE GREATER INCLUSION, REPRESENTATION AND PARTICIPATION OF MEMBER STATES AT IHO MEETINGS, IN PARTICULAR THE IHO ASSEMBLY

The CHAIR proposed that Assembly should task Council with discussing appropriate mechanisms to ensure greater inclusion, representation and participation of Member States at IHO meetings, in particular the IHO Assembly, and bring a proposal to the next Assembly. The initial request had come from the South West Pacific Hydrographic Commission (SWPHC).

NEW ZEALAND supported the proposal but asked how the process might be expedited, given that the next Assembly was three years away.

UNITED KINGDOM strongly supported the proposal and shared the concerns that three years was too long. He noted that although the Assembly was quorate, many countries were unrepresented.

SURINAME supported the proposal and suggested that a hybrid meeting format be utilized to facilitate participation.

SECRETARY-GENERAL said that the proposal was to put the item on the agenda of the Council for its October 2023 session. His understanding was that Members would be invited to put proposals, the Secretariat would provide its position, and the Council could start discussions in October about how to address the issue in a balanced way. He noted that certain technical, regulatory and financial conditions set down in the IHO Basic Documents would need to be assessed for any changes required; an open discussion was therefore needed on if and how to make any changes. If there were decisions to be made that might affect the next Assembly, those decisions could be made at Council level, as Council was mandated to oversee operations of the Organization in between Assemblies. He understood that there was no intention to move the Assembly itself. The changes needed would depend on what mechanisms were wanted. He noted that it was not realistic to change the IHO Convention but that amending other instruments might be possible in due course if it were so agreed.

CHAIR proposed a two-step approach, in which it was first considered what could be done within the existing framework and then what facilitatory changes it might be necessary to ask the next Assembly to make to the Basic Documents.

NORWAY noted that the IRCC meeting would be the next opportunity for discussions.

SWEDEN appreciated the concerns expressed by New Zealand but fully supported the idea of delegating the task to Council as the current Assembly did not have a mature proposal for its consideration.

UNITED KINGDOM said that although he recognized that procedurally IHO must wait for Council, he noted that remote and hybrid meetings were already a de facto way of working for Regional Hydrographic Commissions and that remote working arrangements for the Secretariat had already been approved. Given IHO's responsibility of stewardship towards the environment, hybrid work was a way to reduce the Organization's carbon emissions.

CHAIR said there was a recognized need for greater inclusion, as well as a need to have a balance between meeting physically and virtually at Assembly, Council and RHCs. Council could be tasked with discussing the request and coming back as quickly as possible with proposals. She emphasized the need for a specific proposal from a Council member, and the desire for the Council to work together to find solutions as fast as possible.

SECRETARY-GENERAL said that the Secretariat had done its best to prepare the technology needed to accommodate hybrid meetings, which had already become common practice in Secretariat working groups. However, the high-level decision-making bodies of the Organization came with a different level of responsibility, as the use of remote or hybrid formats came with substantial side effects, including financial implications as digital meetings were not free. IHO's working methods had already begun to reflect the changes being seen in the world, but discussion was needed of how the Organization wished to go further.

The Assembly tasked the Council to discuss the request from the SWPHC for the provision of mechanisms to ensure greater inclusion and participation of all Member States at IHO meetings, in particular the IHO Assembly, and come up with solutions as soon as possible.

OFFICIAL SIGNATURE CEREMONY OF THE STATUTES OF THE IHO HYDROGRAPHIC COMMISSION ON ANTARCTICA (AGENDA ITEM 8)

The new HCA members, Netherlands, Poland and Türkiye, signed the HCA Statutes in the presence of HCA CHAIR.

INTERNATIONAL HYDROGRAPHIC REVIEW CENTENARY (EDITOR IN CHIEF OF THE INTERNATIONAL HYDROGRAPHIC REVIEW) (AGENDA ITEM 9)

EDITOR IN CHIEF OF THE INTERNATIONAL HYDROGRAPHIC REVIEW presented a history of the publication through to the present day. First issued as The Hydrographic Review from 1923 to 1946, with the aim of communicating the purposes of hydrography and sharing new developments in the field, the name of the publication was changed to International Hydrographic Review (IHR) in 1947. Since 2009 the review had been a digital publication and was made available free of charge. A new website, ihr.iho.int, had been launched in 2021. A printed anniversary issue had been provided to Assembly participants. It included a compendium of 13 reprinted articles chosen by the editorial board and showcased the new format for the review. He thanked the German hydrographic office for printing and binding the anniversary issue.

He emphasized the value of the review in facilitating interdisciplinary knowledge exchange. As an applied science, hydrography encompassed fields such as geophysics, oceanography, geodesy, acoustics, cartography, remote sensing and others. The goal was that the International Hydrographic Review would become the go-to international journal for people with a hydrographic background as well as for those working in neighbouring disciplines. The Review published double-blind peer-reviewed articles, as well as event announcements, book reviews and so on, and so provided a platform for discussion to allow exchange within the hydrographic community. A number of changes had been made to make the journal more attractive to publish in, including a new and modern layout and the introduction of digital object identifiers, improvements to the

review process and to correspondence with authors and more effective use of social media. Key next steps included registering IHR for journal ranking lists and feeding relevant repositories with new International Hydrographic Review content, more frequent publication of special issues and further optimization of the website. The infrastructure was thus in place, but contributions still had to be chased up: he therefore encouraged participants to consider submitting or encouraging colleagues to submit contributions as a means of sharing knowledge. He thanked colleagues at IHO as well as the editorial board, whose members were representatives of hydrographic commissions.

SWEDEN thanked the Editor in Chief of the International Hydrographic Review for his work, which had raised the standard of the publication to a much higher level.

THE CHAIR commended the Editor in Chief on the new approach he had introduced and noted that all should seek to increase the wisdom of the IHO community by contributing to IHR.