

Paper for Consideration by Council

Update on the Empowering Women in Hydrography Project

Submitted by:	IHO Secretariat
Executive Summary:	The paper intends to provide a state of play on the EWH project, on the activities conducted in the first three years thanks to Canada's financial contribution, to present the current transition phase of the project, and to present the Council with the way-ahead to frame the initiative in a broader concept of " <i>Gender balance / Inclusiveness</i> ", in line with the IHO Convention Edition 2016 and to comply with Council action C7/24.
Related Documents:	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> A. Fisheries and Oceans Canada – International Hydrographic Organization Agreement for the Project Empowering Women in Hydrography – Edition May 2021 and following amendments B. IOC-UNESCO Letter IOC/VR/22.377/JB/AC/mb dated 9 September 2022 - Endorsement of EWH project as Decade Action entitled “No. 62.2 - Empowering Women in Hydrography” C. Letter of Intent between IHO and WMU dated March 2023 - Contributing to the United Nations Decade of Ocean Science for Sustainable Development in empowering women and promoting gender equality D. List of Actions and Decisions from C-7 – Action C7/24 – Gender Balance in Hydrography E. UKHO Letter 025-24/NH dated 7 May 2024 – Establishment of a Fund to support the EWH project F. IRCC16 Decision 21 – Creation of a Scoping Team to prepare the regulatory framework for a continued activity on this human resource theme G. 17 IHO Circular Letters issued in the period May 2021- May 2024
Related Projects:	//

Introduction / Background

1. The EWH project was established in 2021 accordance with a proposal from Canada, which funded the project and activities listed in the annual programmes attached to the MoU in *reference A* for a total of 265,000 CAD. Activities included Internships at the IHO Secretariat and IHO Working Groups / Committees, At Sea Experiences, Webinars and Workshops on Gender-balance and empowering leaders, participation at international Conferences on SGD 5 – Gender Equity, Outreach programme, Interviews to women leaders in Hydrography and related matters, Mentoring programme, Teaming up with other events in the ocean science or maritime domain (e.g. IMO, WISTA, WMU, UN Ocean Decade Collaborating Center for the NE Pacific), establishment of the EWH Assistant position at the IHO Secretariat, and cooperation with parent International and Intergovernmental Organizations on Gender Balance and related projects / programmes.

2. As described in *Reference B*, the EWH project was endorsed as a United Nations Decade Action entitled “No. 62.2 - Empowering Women in Hydrography”, as a project forming part of the UN Decade of Ocean Science for Sustainable Development 2021-2030. The IHO Secretariat has also established cooperation with the IMO World Maritime University, with a view to develop synergies in their actions to empower women and promote gender equality, starting with areas such as hosting joint events and participating in each other’s events, a mentorship programme, external peer review of findings, gender equality training, participating in the High Level Advisory Group, gender action plan and strategy review, and speaker recommendations (*Reference C* refers). Thanks to this international recognition, the IHO Secretariat participated actively in the United Nations Decade Conference in Barcelona in April 2024, co-sponsoring with IMO-WMU and ISA a satellite event on “Empowering Women for the Ocean Decade: Achieving Gender Equality in Ocean Sciences and Policy Making”.
3. Upon expiry of the MoU with Canada (*Reference A*) on 31 December 2023 (C7/D24 in *Reference D* refers), it was agreed to continue with the EWH project led by the CBSC and supported by remaining funds and future financial and / or in-kind support as currently announced by some IHO member states such as Belgium, Canada, Denmark, France, Norway, United Kingdom (*Reference E* refers to a fund available in UK intended to provide support which enables opportunities for women to participate and develop their careers including progression to leadership positions) and USA. In this regard, the IHO Secretariat proceeded to fill the post of EWH Assistant/Outreach & Communication Assistant (OCA), selecting the candidate from Colombia who will start working at the IHO Secretariat on 1 September 2024 for a period of 1 year with the prospect of renewability for a second year if further financial Member States support will be granted in 2025/2026.
4. To accomplish what was requested in *Reference D*, the Council, supported by IRCC, is engaged to develop a proposal on the future framework for the initiative in subject (incl. Gender Balance in Hydrography) to be submitted to the 4th Session of IHO Assembly in 2026. IRCC16 agreed on the creation of a Scoping Team consisting of HOs and representative/s from the IHO Directing Committee, to prepare the regulatory framework for a continued activity on this human resource theme embedded in the capacity building programme through a proposal for an IHO Resolution and draft the Terms of Reference (ToR) for a future Project Team by C-8 (*Reference F* refers).

Analysis/Discussion

5. During the period under review, the EWH project has received both appreciation from IHO Member States and recognition from the international community as an initiative in line with the UN Decade of Ocean Science for Sustainable Development 2021-2030 and SGD 5 - "Gender Equity" of the UN Agenda 2030 - in dealing with issues that are not purely technical but potentially able to improve the technical output of the IHO, through recruitment of the best talents, a greater sensitivity towards issues such as inclusiveness and the reduction of barriers related to gender difference.
6. The concepts of Recruitment, Inclusiveness, Reduction of Gender Barriers, and Gender Balance must be thoroughly considered and integrated into the framework of the IHO Basic Documents. This should be done within a suitable normative framework that positions the EWH project within the existing IHO instruments, allowing it to adapt in alignment with the strategic objectives of the IHO Strategic Plan. The Strategic Plan Review Working Group (SPRWG) is currently revising the strategic plan, and once approved, the sustainability of these initiatives should be ensured through a dedicated IHO Resolution.

Recommendations

7. Before considering an IHO Resolution, it is important to note the initiatives that have been conducted by international and intergovernmental partner organizations of the IHO such as the IMO, WMO, IALA through specific internal resolutions and implementation plans to support similar gender themes. Valuable sources can be "*Towards gender equality in ocean science and ocean governance: Gender equality strategy and action plan for ocean-related institutions*" Ed. 2024, recently published by the IMO-WMU and *ICES Gender Equality Plan* Ed. December 2022..
8. It is further recommended that Council endorses the actions undertaken by the IRCC and CBSC, in order to prepare the regulatory framework for a continued activity on this human resource theme embedded in the capacity building programme. The envisioned proposal for an IHO Resolution to do so, shall focus on concepts such as Inclusivity and Gender Balance, to provide the IHO Member States with a modern and flexible regulatory instrument in line with the future strategic objectives of the IHO Strategic Plan 2027-2032.

Justification and Impacts

9. In terms of justification, the proposed approach reflects the "*consultative and technical nature*" of the IHO as stated in Article 2 of the IHO Convention.
10. In terms of impacts, the continuity of the project can only be ensured through ongoing financial / in-kind support of the IHO Member States and only marginally through the IHO Budget - Capacity Building Fund unless the A-4 decides to adopt it as a regular work item to the forthcoming IHO Work Programme 2027 – 2029.

Action Required of Council

The Council is invited to:

- a. Note and discuss the paper,
- b. Endorse the proposed recommendations
- c. Direct the IRCC Project Team in charge to draft an IHO Resolution on Gender Balance / Inclusiveness accordingly and present it to Member States at A-4 after endorsement of C-9.