8th Conference of the Arctic Regional Hydrographic Commission (ARHC)

and Open Forum *Improving Marine Knowledge in the Arctic*

Longyearbyen (78° N), Svalbard, Norway
11 – 13 September 2018

Contribution to the IHO Work Programme 2018		Kartverket
Task 3.2.1.1	Prepare for and report meetings of the Regional Hydrographic Commissions (RHC) / ARHC	

The 8th Conference of the Arctic Regional Hydrographic Commission (ARHC) was held in Longyearbyen (78°N°), Svalbard, Norway, from 11 to 13 September, and included an Open Forum "*Improving Marine Knowledge in the Arctic*" that took place on 11 September.

Twenty five participants representing four of the five ARHC Members (Canada, Denmark, Norway, and the USA), three Associate Members (Finland, Iceland and Italy) participated in the Conference. Ten stakeholders participated in the Open Forum, including the Norwegian Institute for Marine Research and representatives from the government of Svalbard and from local authorities such as the University Centre of Svalbard (UNIS), who hosted the Open Forum.

At this Open Forum, after an encouraging video message delivered by HSH Prince Albert II of Monaco introduced by the Secretary-General, the stakeholders provided informative user perspectives on the fleets of research vessels, on the design of polar research vessels and their possible contribution to hydrographic programmes, on pilotage requirements for Spitzbergen areas and marine geospatial information in support of various applications. Most of the presentations provided useful information to fully understand the Arctic issues that are at stake and may impact on marine activities in the near future (climate change, etc.).

Representatives of the Arctic Spatial Data Infrastructure (Arctic SDI), a cooperation which is based on a Memorandum of Understanding between the National Mapping Agencies of the eight Arctic Council countries, were also present and had a fruitful side meeting with the ARHC MSDI Working Group (ARMSDIWG).

The ARHC Conference itself was chaired by Ms Birte Noer Borrevik, Director of the Norwegian Hydrographic Service (Kartverket). Dr Mathias Jonas, Secretary-General of the IHO and Assistant

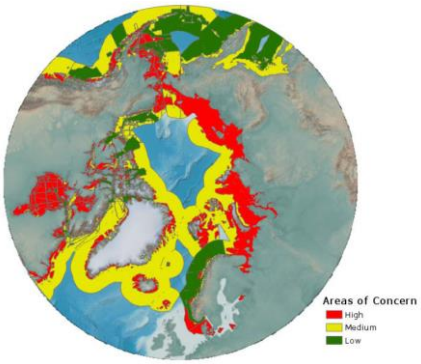
Director Yves Guillam represented the IHO Secretariat and arranged a preparatory meeting of the 2nd meeting of the IHO Council in the margins of the Conference, with the Chair of the Council.

Participants in ARHC-8, Longyearbyen (78°N), Svalbard, Norway

All participants reported on their activities in the Arctic region since the last Conference.

The ARHC Members were informed by the Secretary-General of the strategic issues that will be on the agenda of the 2nd meeting of the Council. As part of the lessons learned from the last Conference of the IHO Hydrographic Commission on Antarctica, he also reported on the outcome of the 19th meeting of the United Nations Open-ended Informal Consultative Process on Oceans and the Law of the Sea on the theme "*Anthropogenic underwater noise*" as it might impact on the organization of some hydrographic and geophysic surveys in Polar regions in the future when low frequency acoustic sensors are to be used. Canada agreed to upgrade their flyer on this issue.

Under the guidance of the Operational and Technical Working Group of the ARHC (OTWG), the US provided an update of the results of a desktop study aiming to provide some indicators of the Arctic Hydrographic Adequacy, the results of which could be used to invite vessels of opportunity, including research vessels and cruise ships, to support crowd-sourced bathymetry initiatives and contribute to the Seabed 2030 project.



The Region N Chart Coordinator (Norway) reported on the status of nautical charting in the region, which was complemented by a presentation by the Secretariat of the new functionalities offered by INToGIS II, which is now under the testing phase by some coordinators. Norway also reported on the Arctic 2030 project, which aims to improve the access to marine geospatial information for the Arctic through the Arctic SDI. This project could be used as a key enabler to reinforce the links with PAME[1]. Based on several years of the ARHC's technical cooperation with PAME on polar navigation matters, the ARHC expressed its desire to explore and develop a Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) with

[1] PAME: Arctic Council's working group on the Protection of the Arctic Marine Environment.

the PAME Working Group in the upcoming year. An MoU would define a cooperative framework to facilitate planning, support, and technical exchanges.

The Director of the Office of Coast Survey (US (NOAA) presented the NOAA data policy for the use of non-traditional data and their best practices for the management of data provided from external sources, a topic of interest for many hydrographic offices.

The ARHC Members present at the Conference noted the comments received from the hydrographic service of the Russian Federation (DNO) about the different agenda items, and in particular about the application of the United Kingdom to become an Associate Member of the ARHC. It was agreed to defer the discussion to the next Conference, where the participation of observers and stakeholders (industry, research and academic institutes, other IHO Member States) in possible ARHC open sessions will be reconsidered as well.

The Russian Federation was elevated from the position of Vice-Chair to take over the Chair at the end of the Conference. The Conference noted the Russian Federation's offer to host the 9th Conference of the ARHC. Noting the IHO calendar in 2019, it was agreed to invite the Russian Federation to consider the possibility for hosting the ARHC from 17 to 19 September 2019.

The Conference was closed by a technical visit to the Svalbard Satellite Station. This station provides the up-and-downlink to low orbit satellite surveillance for the main purpose of ocean observation by SAR, AIS and optical satellites. The conference attendees learnt that seamless and high frequent surveillance of the full global, up to a resolution of 50 cm, is currently the usual practice. All data are commercially available for any client – either for governmental or commercial purposes.