

IHO SECRETARIAT SPEECH TO GGC – 18.01.2021

Good morning, good afternoon and good evening to all and many greetings from the IHO Secretariat and a sunny Monaco!

Thanks for this opportunity you reserved to me to address the GEBCO GUIDING COMMITTEE on the significant events, achievements, engagements with IHO regional bodies, outcomes, outputs/deliverables and matters requiring GGC action.

With reference to the last virtual inter-sessional GGC meeting happened in October 2020, there are three significant events, initiatives and outcomes – at IHO Secretariat and IHO regional bodies' level – requiring the GGC attention and possibly action, all framed in the largest initiative ever in favor of the Ocean: the UN's Decade of Ocean Science for Sustainable Development.

- 1) The 2nd IHO Assembly was held virtually, for the first time ever, in November 2020. The outcome of particular interest of GGC is the approval of the “**New IHO Strategic Plan 2021-2026**”, also inspired to the incoming UN's Decade.

The Plan is structured through three overarching goals, and lays out the organization's priorities for the next 6 years (2021-2026).

The GOAL 3: “**Participating actively in international initiatives related to the knowledge and the sustainable use of the Ocean**” confirms the IHO's ambition – and I would say the GEBCO ambition – to help to design and delivery a qualitative and quantitative ocean knowledge to inform solutions that will contribute to the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development. And, of course, this is a witness of the important role that GEBCO can continue playing on the international scene to support the Decade.

Besides, the IHO's strong ambition will be translated in measures by the strategic performance indicator related to the “*Percentage of total sea area that is Seabed 2030 compliant for incorporation into the GEBCO dataset and services*”.

The validity of this approach to the reality reflects particularly on the Hydrographic Offices and the Regional Hydrographic Commissions, which are facing significant challenges that shape the context in which the IHO builds the strategy to fulfil its vision.

- 2) The role that the IHO Regional Hydrographic Commissions are playing and will be playing in the next years to contribute to the Ocean knowledge.

The awareness of the importance that the Regions and their Member States can play in achieving the Seabed2030 and UN's Decade goals – in particular Goal 14 – is growing all around the world, but at different speeds and with different commitments from the Regions. In fact, there are Regions where both the initiatives are part of the Agenda of their annual/biannual meetings, and specific working groups have been created to support concretely them. Other Regions, where concerted outreach efforts at the regional and international level are needed to ensure those linkages are made.

Let me mention, as virtuous example, the Meso American and Caribbean Hydrographic Region, where the MACHC - IOCARIBE Seabed 2030 strategy for 2021-2030 along with the three goals and the International Bathymetric Chart of the Caribbean Sea and Gulf of Mexico (IBCCA) – a regional cartographic project of great importance for the region, sponsored by the IOC of UNESCO, were presented. Besides, MACHC participated – with its Strategy – at the first Call for Actions launched by the UN's Decade.

Particularly on this aspect, thanks to the outstanding cooperation between IHO and IOC, GEBCO can act as a **bridge between the two largest global initiatives ever for the Ocean: Seabed2030 and UN's Decade, stimulating the Regional Hydrographic Commissions in increasing their support to GEBCO Seabed2030 and the UN's Decade.**

- 3) As third element worthy of GGC attention, I want to mention the importance that the IHO Secretariat attaches to the **CROWDSOURCED BATHYMETRY**, as a tool to effectively contribute to map the ocean's floor.

In that sense, 2020 was the year of two important achievements in that field:

- a. The approval of B-12, the IHO "Crowdsourced Bathymetry Guidance Document". It provides general advice and information for those considering collecting or using crowdsourced bathymetry;
- b. The recent initiative launched by the CSBWG Chair to stimulate the IHO Regional Hydrographic Commission Chairs to nominate a joint coordinator, broadening the Seabed 2030 Coordinator role to include CSB.

The initiative was inspired by one of the targets to be achieved in accordance with GOAL 3 of the new IHO Strategic Plan, which is to "***Improve knowledge of the world's seafloors***". Infact, it was proposed by the IHO Council that RHCs could be tasked to report annually on the percentage of 'Seabed 2030 compliant' bathymetric coverage achieved within the region. This target is perfectly in line with the objectives of the CSB and Seabed 2030 initiatives, having the RHCs an important role in the monitoring, managing and increasing the percentage of total sea area that is Seabed 2030 compliant.

This initiative, on which probably the CSBWG Chair will speak more later on, is another example on how much is the attention of the IHO Secretariat on the important role that GEBCO will be playing in the next year in improving the Ocean's knowledge.

Dear GGC Chair and Members, thank you very much for your kind attention, and I hope that these my few words can stimulate the discussion during the meeting.