

## **GEBCO STRATEGY 2023-2030**

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### **SUMMARY**

**Executive Summary:** This document provides details of the work undertaken by the GEBCO Strategy Drafting Working Group since its establishment at GGC38 and with particular focus on the work undertaken over the last 12 months. A first draft of the GEBCO Strategy 2023-2030 was discussed at GGC 39. Over the last 12 months ongoing discussions have focussed on the wording of GEBCO's vision and mission, in particular whether the words "seafloor data" or "seafloor dataset" should be used over the original use of the word "bathymetry". A full final draft of the GEBCO Strategy 2023-2030 is proposed to the GGC for discussion.

Action to be taken: GGC to agree on the final strategy

**Related documents:** GEBCO-Strategy.draft-FINAL.docx

### **1. Overview/Introduction**

The GEBCO Strategy 2023-2030 has been developed by the GEBCO Strategy Drafting Working Group with discussions essentially undertaken via email. The drafting working group met four times online (video) to discuss specific issues. Other one on one meetings were also held at various times. Other members of the GGC were invited to discuss an advanced draft on 21 February 2023, reviews and extended comments were received, discussed and acted upon by the drafting group and an extended meeting was convened on 7 Sep 2023.

All comments and responses are kept in the various versions of the GEBCO Strategy 2023-2030 on the G-Drive.

The framework of the GEBCO Strategy 2023-2030 was initially established at GGC39. The past year has been dedicated to fine-tuning the wording. Detailed discussions were held, particularly regarding the articulation of the vision and mission. Notably, some members of the extended GGC expressed reservations about transitioning from 'bathymetry' to 'seabed data' and 'seabed datasets.' The following discussion provides a rationale for the decision made by the GEBCO Strategy Drafting Working Group to maintain its proposition of using the terms 'seabed data' and 'seabed dataset' in the strategy

### **2. Discussion**

The main point of discussion revolved around the use of the words "seabed data" and "seabed dataset" as opposed to "bathymetry".

Multiple comments were provided by the member of the GGC on the 21 Feb 2023 version (v.2). The pros and cons of using the terms “seabed data” and “seabed dataset” are recapitulated in the table below:

| Pro<br>(in favor of using Seabed data)   | Cons<br>(in favor of using bathymetry)  |
|--|---|
| The term “seabed data” includes bathymetry,  | “seabed data” makes the strategy unclear  |
| Bathymetry is too restrictive and too technical (i.e. as soon as we use “bathymetry” we lose people, if this is for everyone then seabed data is preferable) | Seabed data is too wide; too ambitious; it would be all too hard for GEBCO to take on   |
| “Seabed data” extends to other data and clearer<br>Seabed is more readable; more flexible  | “Seabed” is a <b>fundamental</b> shift from bathymetry for us. Are we recognizing the implications?   |
| General bathymetry is already there, it's not precise enough   | Bathymetry is perfectly (better) aligned with past and future   |
| The strategy needs to look beyond 2030; so GEBCO can move fwd into the 21C;  | Bathymetry has always been GEBCO’s sole focus and should remain so; It’s what we doing best;  |
| Providing seabed data is an aspiration; a strategy must be aspirational; We may not be resourced for seabed data but we aspire to do it                      | Have the terms “seabed’ and “seabed data” got an accepted definition? Where does the seabed end?  |
| SCUFN is based on features not only on bathymetry; “Seabed data” provides a more unified and coherent view with features                                     | Far too ambitious - Be careful what we wish for! This is a huge change in data types, volumes, database structures, and human, organizational and financial capacities. Do we mean to do that? What time frame? |
| BBNJ is having a big impact - if we do not take these onboard who will?  | We may not get ratification from IHO and IOC; briefing note to the IRCC then IHO council; Should be included in the IHO strategic plan  |
|  | All our standards will need change  |
| We're not doing chart anymore; GEBCO has already moved substantially from charts   | We’re struggling to collect, compile and distribute bathymetry, what are the implications of adding other data sets ?   |
| Seabed data accounts for development of technology   | Do not underestimate the implications of one simple word change   |
| Use accessible language but clarify the limitation can’t limit bathymetry to everything else   | This has come up many times over last 40 yrs; the conclusion has been that others groups and orgs were doing it;  |
| need to start the move toward dataset; provide an umbrella for seabed dataset  | The strategy goes to 2030, so bathymetry should be the focus in coherence with Seabed2030; Seabed 2030 is about bathymetry and this is already a huge commitment  |
| It adds from SB2030 and goes beyond  | GEBCO would need at new name, e.g., General Seabed Characterization of the Ocean (GESCO).   |

Most of these points were discussed at length by the working group and by various members of the GGC. Multiple emails and comments were provided by members of the GGC. Overall the drafting group remain confident that the use of seabed data was better representing the

dynamic of GEBCO into the future. All arguments against the use of seabed data are well recorded and demonstrate that the challenge of moving from bathymetry to seabed data will be significant, but it was felt that this was a challenge that GEBCO was ready and should take if it was to move into the 21C.

Other comments on the March draft included the need to better acknowledge the NF Seabed 2030 programme. This was noted and agreed by the Drafting group and acted upon in the latest version. It was also observed that the strategy will take GEBCO beyond year 2030. It is therefore critical that GEBCO is ready in 2030 to move forward and beyond the NF Seabed 2030 project.

### **3. Action**

The GGC is requested to:

- a. **Read** the final draft of the Strategy
- b. **Note** the points raised in this report
- c. **Discuss** the final draft of the strategy; and
- d. **Agree** on the next step(s) to be taken