

**34th Meeting of the IHO-IOC GEBCO Sub-Committee on
Undersea Feature Names (SCUFN),
Series of Video-teleconferences (VTC),
7 January, 7 June and 16-17 November 2021**

Contribution to the IHO Work Programme 2021	
Task 3.6.1	Organize, prepare and report annual meetings of ... associated bodies including...SCUFN

Due to the Covid-19 pandemic, the 34th meeting of the IHO-IOC GEBCO Sub-Committee on Undersea Feature Names (SCUFN), initially scheduled in Saint-Petersburg, Russian Federation, was re-arranged through 3 video-teleconferences (VTC) of 3-hour sessions each on 7 January (VTC01), 7 June (VTC02) and 16-17 November 2021 (VTC03). All together, these series of VTC sessions constitute the 34th meeting of SCUFN.

The meeting was chaired by Dr Hyun-Chul Han (IOC representative) from the Korean Institute of Geoscience and Mineral Resources (KIGAM – ROK). VTC01 was attended by about 30 registered participants, with 10 SCUFN Members out of 12. Observers and subject matter experts from Brazil, Chile, China, India, Japan, Malaysia, Portugal, Republic of Korea and Viet Nam and Mr Toshihiko Chiba from the Marine Policy and Regional Coordination Section of the Intergovernmental Oceanographic Commission of UNESCO also participated in the VTC01 session. Director Luigi Sinapi and Assistant Director Yves Guillam (SCUFN Secretary) represented the IHO Secretariat. Due to the nature of SCUFN, it soon became apparent that it was too complicated to run such short VTC sessions with so many participants making important statements¹ that could not be addressed in the allocated time. It was therefore decided that participation in VTC02 and VTC03 should be restricted to SCUFN Members only, priority being given in the agenda to the assessment of naming proposals.

SCUFN received a significant number of naming proposals in 2021:

- For VTC01, submissions were received from Canada (2+12²), Republic of Korea (3), China (13), New Zealand (12+3²), Viet Nam (70), Malaysia (11), Brazil (25+1²), Russian Federation (2), Chile (1), United States of America (1) and Serbia (4).
- For VTC02, submissions were received from Japan (28), Japan-USA (4), United Kingdom (1), United States of America (90³) and China (27).
- For VTC03, submissions were received from the Philippines (25+5²), Russian Federation (1), United States of America (2), New Zealand (12+1²), Brazil (8), Chile (1), Viet Nam (67) and China (56+9²).

Out of these 497 naming proposals, only 77, assessed as presenting no significant issues, were directly accepted⁴ by SCUFN Members. All the others were either deferred (187), not accepted (6) or kept as “*pending*” (227). Most of the proposals considered *pending* are those having the related undersea features located in sensitive maritime areas where *mutual consultation by all interested parties* is highly recommended by SCUFN in accordance to B-6 Guidelines. The cumulated experience suggests that normally consensus cannot be reached without previous consultation. Subsequently, the *pending* proposals are stored for 2 years only in the SCUFN archive.

In order to escape from this critical situation and tentatively build a more robust decision-making process, the SCUFN Secretary, supported by the Chair and Vice-Chair, offered to design a “decision tree” based on the location of naming proposals (within national EEZ limits, in ECS, official limits, claimed, disputed, etc.). This experimental process was developed prior

¹ Statements by China, Malaysia and Viet Nam available on the SCUFN34 webpage > VTC01.

² Fast-track procedure.

³ From Caladan Oceanic.

⁴ Accepted (and adopted for fast-track procedure).

to VTC02, but was put on hold due to serious and sensitive concerns raised by some SCUFN Members that could not be discussed efficiently via emails or in VTC meetings only. At VTC03, SCUFN voted to continue this development for being explained and discussed at SCUFN-35 in 2022 and then tested for a couple of future SCUFN meetings.

IHO Towards a decision tree?

How to facilitate the work of SCUFN and the decision-making process depending on the position of undersea features – Towards a decision tree

Version 3-A dated 30 March 2022
by Yves GUILLET, Assistant Director and SCUFN Secretary, IHO Secretariat

A. Guidelines, Rules of Procedures (not exhaustive)

1. International consent for naming undersea features is limited to those features entirely or nearly (more than 70 %) outside the external limits of the territorial sea, not exceeding 12 nautical miles from the baselines, in agreement with the United Nations Convention on the Law of the Sea (UNCLOS, Art. 4.2.D, Section I.A).
2. Names approved by national authorities in waters beyond the territorial sea should be accepted by other States if the names have been applied in confidence with internationally accepted procedures. (UNCLOS, Art. 4.2.D, Section I.D)
3. In the event of a conflict, the persons and/or authorities involved should resolve the matter. Where two names have been applied to the same feature, the older name generally should be accepted, unless a single name has been applied to two different features; the feature named first generally should retain the name. (UNCLOS, Art. 4.2.D, Section I.E)
4. It should be the policy to use forms of names applied by national authorities having responsibility for the pertinent area. (UNCLOS, Art. 4.2.D, Section I.D)
5. Where a significant benefit is to be gained from mutual consultation by all interested parties in preparing and submitting proposals to SCUFN, national naming authorities are encouraged to consult on undersea features names in their mutual areas of interest prior to submitting proposals to SCUFN. (UNCLOS, Art. 4.2.D, Section II.D)
6. Appointed members of the Sub-Committee represent their parent organization (IHO or IOC) as experts. (SCUFN ROP 2.1.2)
7. The Sub-Committee will not consider undersea feature name proposals that are politically sensitive. (SCUFN ROP 2.1.5)
8. Since Art. 4.2.D of UNCLOS, the List of Naming Authorities (per country) is maintained, as a stand-alone document, on the SCUFN webpage. This list indicates those countries who wish to be informed/consulted when an undersea feature naming proposal is located in their areas of jurisdiction (SCUFN ROP, paragraph 3.1 and subsequent items).

B. Initial and Basic considerations

The existing Guidelines and Rules of Procedures, use sometimes unclear wording for designating maritime areas (areas of interest, areas of jurisdiction...), encouraging mutual consultation rather than enforcing, noting the possibility of having politically sensitive cases, without explicitly defining them. This is intentional.

@ All tests by SCUFN Members

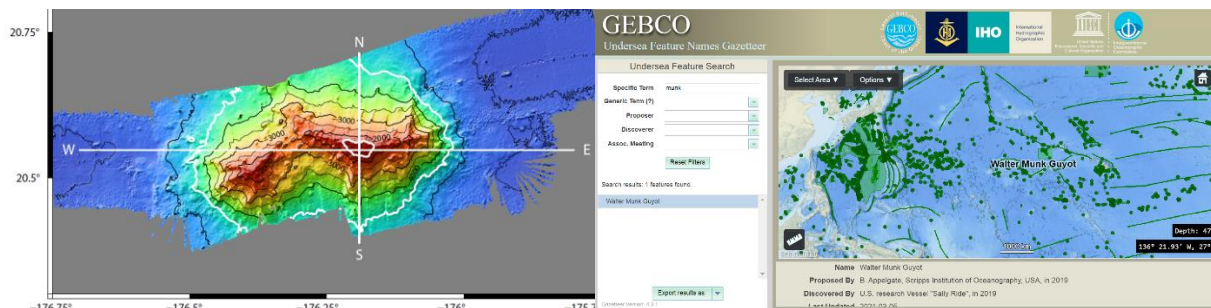
TCP 1 to 6?

Flowchart showing decision points: 0, 200, 210, 300, 310, 320, 330, 400, 410, 500, 510, 600. Includes decision diamonds for 'ECS = EEZ?' and '110.2.1', '110.2.2', '110.2.3'.

2. It is intentional because Member States who have approved the Guidelines and ROP's hope and trust the scientific experts of SCUFN representing IHO and IOC in their great ability to find the most appropriate solutions and compromise by consensus to move forward in the spirit of international recognition of undersea feature names for mankind.
3. It should be duly acknowledged that it is also a major asset for SCUFN to be legitimate to accept any undersea feature name proposal as long as it is located beyond the external limit of the territorial sea of any coastal State. It's a strength.
4. In law, under UNCLOS, there is no disposition for undersea feature naming as such. In other words, the EEZ deals with regulations related to the water column. If I may say that in simple words... but UNCLOS does not address the rights of a coastal State with regards to undersea feature naming.
5. This can be applied to the Extended Continental Shelf (ECS). However, the ECS, by construction, implies that we deal not with the water column anymore, but with sea bottom and sub-bottom. For this reason, one could argue that undersea (rock) feature naming might be a matter of concern or interest for the coastal State claiming an ECS.
6. This helps in stating that when the Guidelines mention "... areas of interest...", it does not mean strictly speaking that it is equivalent to a one-to-one relationship with EEZ and ECS limits.
7. Therefore, it should be acknowledged that in general, "areas of interest" may apply to EEZ, ECS, but also Deep Seabed Mining areas, Submarine Cables restricted areas... areas managed by the International Seabed Authority. And then, even if the limits of an area are IHO approved that this approval is not ratified by a coastal State (for instance), or claimed only, or recognized by some but not by all, etc. it means that any specific area of such type can fall under Art. 4.2.D of UNCLOS. As a consequence, should we test SCUFN international recognition to undersea features located in uncharted, unclaimed, un... of the High Seas only? It would certainly be contradictory with the spirit of GEBCO and IHO. It would be pointless and ridiculous.

Thanks to the pre-review made by SCUFN members through the scufn.ops-webservices.kr assessment interface, the VTC process led by the Chair was efficient enough to approve 77 naming proposals as indicated above. Among those names, one should note that the work of two outstanding scientists was recognized by SCUFN this year. They are:

- the “*Agapova Seamount*”, proposed by the Geological Institute of the Russian Academy of Science (GINRAS), in memory of Ms Galina Vladimirovna Agapova (1930-2018);
- the “*Walter Munk Guyot*”, proposed by the Scripps Institution of Oceanography at the University of California San Diego, USA, in memory of the legendary oceanographer/geophysicist Dr Munk (1917-2019).



Feature Description:	Maximum Depth:	5200 meters	Steepness :	2603m vertical relief in 9 km horizontal distance
	Minimum Depth :	1397 meters	Shape :	Base: Ellipse Summit: Ellipse
	Total Relief :	3803 meters	Dimension/Size :	Base diameter: 32 km

The “Walter Munk Guyot” located in the eastern Mid-Pacific Mountains

Some other naming proposals were put with the “*pending*” status due to the use of the names of living persons. SCUFN does not accept these specific terms, in general, in application of a recommendation in Resolution VIII/2 of the United Nations Conference on the Standardization

of Geographical Names, now in force in B-6 Guidelines. However, it was decided to tentatively define some criteria allowing possible exceptions from the rules in the future.

The Sub-Committee also faced a situation this year by which several “corporate” issues could not be addressed “in-depth” during the sessions (SCUFN Archive and Repository, interoperability with the GEBCO Gazetteer operated by NOAA, interface for direct submission by proposers, etc.). At VTC03 however, SCUFN agreed to amend the definitions of some decision criteria used in the outcome of naming proposals reviews (ACCEPTED, ADOPTED, NON ACCEPTED, PENDING). Noting that some Members were nearly at the end of their first 5-year mandate, the SCUFN Secretary also undertook a quick review of the status of SCUFN Membership in order to anticipate the need for IHO and IOC to call for vacancies, if and when appropriate.

Due to the backlog induced by the pandemic situation, the Sub-Committee agreed to plan two full in-person sessions for SCUFN-35 in 2022. SCUFN-35.1 is planned to be hosted for a week by the IHO Secretariat, Monaco, in March. If agreed by the Russian Federation, SCUFN-35.2 is planned to take place in Saint-Petersburg. SCUFN Members from Australia and Kenya offered to consider the possibility of hosting SCUFN-36 and SCUFN-37, respectively in 2023 and 2024.

At the end of the VTC03, the Chair thanked all the participants for their efforts, support and involvement as well as Mr Insung Park, IHO Secretariat Associate Professional Officer (secondment by the Republic of Korea), who provided outstanding support in the preparation of the 3 VTC sessions.



Participants in SCUFN-34 VTC03