

**35th Meeting of the IHO-IOC GEBSCO Sub-Committee on
Undersea Feature Names (SCUFN),
Part 1 - IOC, UNESCO, Paris (hybrid), 14 – 18 March 2022
Part 2 – IHO Secretariat, Monaco (in-person), 28 November – 2 December 2022**

Contribution to the IHO Work Programme 2022	
Task 3.6.1	Organize, prepare and report annual meetings of ... associated bodies including...SCUFN

At the end of their previous virtual meeting in November 2021 (SCUFN34 VTC03) SCUFN agreed to arrange the 35th meeting of the IHO-IOC GEBSCO Sub-Committee on Undersea Feature Names (SCUFN) in 2022, due to the backlog of proposals and the uncertainties with regard to the possibility of having the next meeting early 2022 in St. Petersburg, Russian Federation, exceptionally into two parts:

- Part 1 – hosted by the Intergovernmental Oceanographic Commission of UNESCO (IOC), at their headquarters in Paris (hybrid format), from 14 to 18 March 2022;
- Part 2 – hosted by the IHO Secretariat in Monaco (in-person format), from 28 November to 2 December 2022.

The meetings were chaired by Dr Hyun-Chul Han (IOC Representative) from the Korean Institute of Geoscience and Mineral Resources (KIGAM – Republic of Korea). Assistant Director Yves Guillam (SCUFN Secretary) represented the IHO Secretariat. Technical support for running the meetings was provided by the IHO staff (Mr Rémy Roquefort)¹, and the Project Officer (Mr Insung Park) seconded to the IHO by the Republic of Korea.

- Part 1 was attended by about 51 registered participants (18 in-person), with 10 SCUFN Members out of 12 (5 in-person). Observers, and subject matter experts from, Brazil, China, India, Indonesia, Japan, Malaysia, New Zealand, Philippines, Republic of Korea, United States of America, Viet Nam, Marine Regions (also Chair of the S-130 Project Team) and Mr Toshihiko Chiba from the Marine Policy and Regional Coordination Section of the IOC also participated in this Part 1.
- Part 2 was attended by about 24 registered participants, with 8 SCUFN Members out of 12 and observers or subject matter experts from China, Türkiye, Japan, Philippines, United States of America, and Viet Nam, the US Advisory Committee on Undersea Feature Names (ACUF) and Marine Region.

SCUFN had a significant number of naming proposals to consider in 2022. Most of them were pending proposals from previous meetings, which were re-submitted after correction or the provision of complementary data and information. Reaching a total number of 334, and in chronological order of reception by the Secretariat, the breakdown of these proposals was: Indonesia (10), USA (88)², Philippines (12+9), Germany (15), Republic of Korea (1), China (11+23+60), New Zealand (9), Viet Nam (67), Malaysia (11), Japan (14), and Brazil (4).

With a majority of naming proposals of features located in the South China Sea (SCS), both meetings were affected by strong statements from the representatives of the Coastal States, claiming priority for naming features within the limits of their EEZ, and ECS... most of these limits being disputed by others. The participants were reminded by the Secretary that in accordance with clause I.A of B-6, the international recognition of naming proposals by SCUFN was legitimate as long as the features were located *outside the external limits of the territorial sea*.

¹ For one day in Paris.

² From Caladan Oceanic.

Since 2014, many naming proposals, although technically reviewed and accepted by SCUFN in general, have therefore been kept as “*pending*” in application of the clause D.III in Publication B-6³ by which proposers are invited to engage in *mutual consultation* for features located in *mutual areas of interest*. It turned out that there was at least an implicit consensus by the interested parties not to apply this clause since it is not applicable when limits are precisely disputed. These *pending* proposals are stored for two years only in the SCUFN archive and the GEBCO Gazetteer database, then *deleted* if the issue is not solved. In other words, all efforts for improving marine knowledge and GEBCO products are wiped out!



Unsolved PENDING names in the GEBCO Gazetteer for the South China Sea? Not anymore...

As a consequence, some participants suggested to apply the SCUFN Rule of Procedure 2.10 (ROP 2.10) for the SCS (undersea feature name proposals that are politically sensitive are not considered). SCUFN agreed that it was a radical option that would simplify SCUFN work for sure, but would certainly flag the full SCS as a “no-go” area for feature naming, creating a precedence in the future for some other disputed areas in the world.

In order to avoid this side effect, and after considerable discussions during Part 1, a vote (secret ballot) on the applicability of ROP 2.10 was arranged⁴ and SCUFN Members voted almost unanimously for going ahead with the technical review of the naming proposals located in the SCS.

Most of the proposals were accepted from a technical point of view, but also challenged by a coastal State requesting the application of clause I.D of B-6, since they had already named them (principle of anteriority). Since it was unclear whether these names were already recognized by the scientific community, a sub-group was set up at Part 1 to clarify the criteria by which this principle of anteriority should be used (peer-review international scientific publications for instance). The setting up of this sub-group, supported by approved TORs, was not completed at the start of Part 2, since the members did not reach a consensus in the drafting process of the TORs.

To avoid a second postponement of final decisions affecting all the pre-technically-accepted names made at Part 1, SCUFN agreed at the beginning of Part 2:

- on the main objective of the meeting, being the resumption of the entire backlog, otherwise it would not be possible to accept new proposals in 2023 and onwards;
- on the decision-making process, which was in good spirit, to only use the Rules of Procedure and Guidelines in force at the beginning of the meeting, providing the acceptance of their intrinsic uncertainties.

³ Standardization of Undersea Feature Names – Guidelines.

⁴ In application of SCUFN ROP 2.9.

Despite numerous statements again, a consensus based on the principle of equal treatment of the proposals wherever the feature is located was reached to move forward.

Out of 334 proposals, 263 names were finally ACCEPTED⁵, thanks also to the work achieved by correspondence by SCUFN Members and the Secretariat, between Part 1 and Part 2. Some were rejected for technical reasons and very few still require some mutual consultation due to conflicting naming proposals affecting the same feature: for these cases, in a good will spirit, SCUFN suggested to the proposers to submit a joint proposal at the next meeting.

Despite this substantial progress this does not mean that the road is clear for future proposals. One participant argued that the implicit principle “first come-first served basis” provided a privilege to the nations and organizations who support the activities of their SCUFN Members as they know before all, what and where is submitted for being reviewed. The Secretary reported on the procedure to inform the coastal States who are listed with a “*” in the SCUFN List of Naming Authorities maintained by the Secretariat on the SCUFN webpage. He also invited SCUFN Members not to encourage implicitly and unconsciously some sort of surveying-undersea feature naming *race*, as the consequences for SCUFN would become totally unmanageable.

SCUFN also made significant progress on some internal corporate matters and dilemma (future of the *Cookbook on Generic Terms, Repository of Typical Cases* for decision-making, horizontal strategy for naming features and bathymetric grid resolution, open initial discussion on the possible wave(s) of naming proposals and their impact on SCUFN when automated feature detection tools become robust, naming strategies and minor features, spelling or generic term identified errors in already-named features and their propagation in scientific publications in the future if not modified by SCUFN,...). The work by correspondence was also regulated (no silence procedure, ROP 2.9 applies).

At the end, the Chair thanked Dr Marie-Françoise Lalancette (IHO branch) for her contribution and welcomed the incoming Members (Dr Oke Dwiyananda and Dr Hyun Suk Lee). The Vice-Chair and Secretary thanked Dr Han, stepping down from his Chair position, for his long commitment and expertise in SCUFN since 2009 and his outstanding achievements as Chair since 2018. The Chair thanked the IHO staff for their excellent support and hospitality during the week, including for the antigenic self-tests. Dr Ohara, Vice-Chair, will be Acting Chair until the SCUFN-36 meeting included in 2023. The Acting Chair thanked Australia for their offer to host the next meeting in November 2023.



⁵ And/or APPROVED for those names already pre-ACCEPTED in March 2022 at Part 1.



Participants in SCUFN-35, Part 1



Participants in SCUFN-35, Part 2