



Ref. : IOC/VR/23.354/JB/ic

The Secretariat of the Intergovernmental Oceanographic Commission of UNESCO (IOC) presents its compliments to the Permanent Delegation of the Argentine Republic to UNESCO and acknowledges the reception of the Note Verbale 139/23 (2 August 2023) concerning the publication of the General Bathymetric Chart of the Oceans (GEBCO) seafloor map distributed on the occasion of the 32nd IOC Assembly, containing incorrect references to certain forms of submarine relief.

The Secretariat notes with regret that this situation has occurred. Following careful review, the International Hydrographic Organisation (IHO) has been consulted in preparing the response to NV 139/23.

Concerning the omission of double nomenclature for features such as Falkland Escarpment/ Malvinas Escarpment, Falkland Ridge/ Malvinas Ridge, and Falkland Plateau/ Malvinas Plateau, it appears that before the establishment of the Sub-Committee on Undersea Features Names (SCUFN), there was the GEBCO Sub-Committee on Geographical Names and Nomenclature of Ocean Bottom Features (SCGN). In April 1987, at their SCGN-07 meeting, decision reported in section 5.1 of the SCGN-07 Report, was made about GEBCO Sheets 5.12 & 5.16, to "insert under "Falkland Escarpment" the name (Malvinas Escarpment)", to insert under "Falkland Ridge" the name (Malvinas Ridge)" and to insert under "Falkland Plateau" the name (Malvinas Plateau)". It is worth noting that this decision was made in the context of the production of regional portfolios of GEBCO Bathymetric Maps which came solely as print. Those paper chart schemes of that time took orientation on chart specifications for mid-scale analogue products – including the use of dual naming. Since then, GEBCO's technical management of bathymetric information has moved to a more digital environment. For systematic reasons the GEBCO Gazetteer does not accept dual naming, i.e. does not offer such an attribute for the encoded features. In order to address such technical issue, a manual procedure has been developed to be able to insert the dual names for the production of local maps/charts as an additional Information field of the noted GEBCO Gazetteer entries. Therefore, according to the SCUFN Gazetteer entries on the areas in question, the alternative names should have been included into the circulated General Bathymetric Chart of the Oceans – but this seems to have been omitted unintentionally. Please rest assured that IOC and IHO, both parent organizations of GEBCO, will ensure that future printouts of the GEBCO General Bathymetric Chart of the Oceans will present the dual nomenclature for the features in question.

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Permanent Delegation of Argentina to UNESCO
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Concerning Argentina's objection to the use of undersea names such as "Georgia Basin", "Northlast Georgia Rise", "South Sandwich Trench", "South Sandwich Fracture Zone», the Secretariat takes note of the objection but observe that these toponyms have been approved by SCUFN and are included in the respective GEBCO Gazetteer entries for the noted features. The Secretariat's practices do recognize these toponyms. However, views expressed in the Note Verbale 139/23 will be reported to the next SCUFN-36 meeting (November 2023), with the recommendation that a guidance note be added to the additional information field in the GEBCO Gazetteer indicating that the Argentine national toponymy designations for those features should be included in local maps/charts.

As mentioned earlier, future printouts of the GEBCO General Bathymetric Chart of the Oceans will present the dual nomenclature for the features in question. Concerning the request to add a footnote referencing the dispute and in line with the United Nations Editorial Directive ST/CS/SER.A/42, the IHO and IOC will recommend the use of the dual nomenclature in the new digital publications/printed maps produced or circulated within the scope of the Organization. However, the use of such a footnote is not practicable since the GEBCO General Bathymetric Chart of the Oceans does not depict national maritime boundaries as declared under the United Nations Convention on the Law of the Sea (UNCLOS). Instead, the circulated General Bathymetric Chart of the Oceans takes sole orientation on the limits of the oceans as given by IHO S-23 and amending IHO Resolutions.

Finally, regarding the request to include a disclaimer in the cartographic representations produced or circulated within the scope of UNESCO and its IOC and IHO, the IOC Secretariat fully concurs with this approach and thanks you for this proposal. This request will be reported to the next SCUFN-36 meeting (November 2023) with the recommendation to add this disclaimer to any future cartographic product derived from the GEBCO data bases containing bathymetric information, in combination with the entries of the GEBCO Gazetteer of Undersea Feature Names.

The IOC Secretariat hopes that these actions will address Argentina's concerns and reaffirms the assurances of its highest consideration.

Paris, 20 September 2023

