

**12TH MEETING OF THE IHO-INTER REGIONAL COORDINATION COMMITTEE
IHO IRCC12**

VTC, 6-7 OCTOBER 2020

IHO RHC Reports Secretariat Summary

Submitted by:	IHO Secretariat
Executive Summary:	This paper provides a summary report of the important parts of the reports of the RHCs submitted to the A-2, regarding the achievements, challenges faced and lessons learned.

RHCs reports status

1. Out of the fifteen RHCs and the HCA, eight confirmed the reports sent for the A-2 in February 2020, whilst eight – ARHC, BSHC, SWPHC, MACHC, SAIHC, SEPRHC, SWAtHC and USCHC updated their reports for the IRCC12 meeting.
2. This report, including the inputs received by the RHCs Chairs during the IRCC12, will be used by the Secretariat at A-2 to brief the audience on significant issues and updates raised by the RHC reports and refer to the application process of IHO Resolution 2/1997 as amended by A-2.

Achievements

3. Achievements

a. New technologies

Information and experiences with autonomous survey vehicles and satellite derived bathymetry have been shared and discussed, in order to raise the profile of HOs and the data that they acquire and hold.

Progress has been experienced on the establishment of vertical reference frames, including national chart datums, with ongoing efforts to understand the differences at national boundaries and how to reduce these to an acceptable level.

b. MSDI

MSDI initiatives are being synergized, and website portals will provide an inventory and make key data sets (bathymetry, shoreline and maritime boundaries) more accessible for non-navigation uses, such as a regional risk assessment for maritime accidents, management of marine protected areas and disaster response.

Adoption of UNGGIM Shared Guiding Principles is in progress in some Regions.

National bathymetric data contributions to the IHO DCDB and to the Seabed2030 Regional Data Assembly are increasing in some Regions, thanks to the establishment of regional coordinators.

c. Overlaps

Bilateral discussion is considered a prerequisite for the solution of ENC overlapping issues and, very often, is the only pragmatic way forward for getting ENC coverage and lowering the risk for safety of navigation.

Some Regions achieved significant reduction in ENC overlaps thanks to the high level of harmonization and quantity of training performed by their Member States.

d. Cooperation

Cooperation within the Regions is very productive, resulting in projects of joint databases.

There has been substantial cooperation between RHCs Member States, Regional Organizations and Stakeholders to share information and projects. A particular mention for the cooperation in case of a crisis affecting one or several Members of a Region, and the revitalisation of liaison between HCA Secretariat and COMNAP, IAATO, SCAR and the Executive Secretary of the Antarctic Treaty.

To further strengthen the regional activities and engagement, it is envisaged to extend the cooperation particularly between those Regions being adjacent and having few states already members of the adjacent RHCs.

In some Regions, the cooperation between navies offers good opportunities for hydrography and safety of navigation, as well as an excellent opportunity for charting coverage.

“Relevant Oceans Initiatives” are helping strengthen RHCs collaboration with several high profile initiatives.

e. Regional and IHO activities

A high level of industry participation has been experienced in RHCs meetings, with ample opportunities to share experiences and contribute to discussions.

Since A-1, much better exchange of information and an awareness of the activities and research campaigns between HCA Members has been noted.

Member states continued to contribute extensively to the work of the IHO, providing active participants to IHO working groups.

f. Capacity Building

Capacity Building plays a key role in many Regions either for the enlargement of the regional membership, or the enlargement of IHO membership, or for increasing the hydrographic awareness, or then as beneficial effect on the IHO Member States.

It is important to continue with the provision of intensive Capacity Building activities (i.e. courses, technical and high level visits, workshops), also to actively seek Capacity Building partnerships with other regional organizations and stakeholders who have common capacity building needs. Encouragements and collaborative activities need to be intensified so as to maintain the tempo.

The attendance at the Capacity Building activities sponsored by IHO has continued to improve from last year with the increase of participants.

g. Membership

The enlargement of the Hydrographic Commissions membership is considered beneficial.

Actions have been taken in some Regions to enlarge regional membership, and to facilitate the recruitment of new IHO Member States.

h. Standards of competence for hydrographic surveyors and nautical cartographers

It would be beneficial to establish a common set of criteria at regional level, on which an individual recognition scheme should be based on, to be then applied at international level.

Challenges faced/Difficulties encountered

4. Challenges faced/Difficulties encountered

a. Vastness of the covered area

The regions vastness, remoteness, and emergence as a unique operating environment present a challenge to some RHCs and the hydrographic offices making progress realizing the goals of the IHO to chart the ocean and protect the marine environment.

b. Surveys

The high cost of carrying out surveys and the limits on national budgets during the period continue to be a limiting factor on survey activity.

c. Participation at the RHCs activity

In some RHCs, some MS participate rarely at regional conferences and working group meetings, as well as at IHO working group meetings, due to the lack of involvement of the Governments in the Regions and the reduced resources available. This has often resulted in no submission of national reports, and therefore no information to improve the regional programmes.

Travel restrictions imposed by the coronavirus pandemic has postponed a number of meetings and other opportunities.

c. Crowd Sourced Bathymetry

The possibility to make available CSB, tide and current information requests to review national legislations.

d. Capacity Building programme appropriateness

Compared to a number of successful Capacity Building initiatives, there is no commensurate development in hydrographic practice within some Regions.

The impact of the current coronavirus pandemic potentially reduces key training opportunities and funding, if trainings cannot be held in person. This will cause the Member States in some Regions to encounter reduced CB activities, which are urgently required in order to promote the skills of the hydrographers in those Regions to the level of other RHCs.

Following the introduction of new standards such as S-100 series and their implementation in the near future, many Member States in some Regions will need proper training to prepare accordingly.

In order to be more eligible to receive support from IHO Capacity Building Funds, in some Regions it would be beneficial to propose training courses in conjunction with the neighbouring RHCs.

A difficulty encountered is the lack of qualified personnel available versus the increase in workload and shortage of Spanish speaking trainers.

f. Role and contribution of RHCs and IHO to Seabed2030

The role of the IHO and its RHCs in Seabed2030, as well as the contribution of Seabed2030 to the UN Decade of Ocean Science, societal goals are not well recognized. Concerted outreach efforts at the regional and international level are needed to ensure those linkages are made.

g. INT schemes and ENC overlaps

Difficulties are encountered in the coordination of the INT chart schemes and ENC coverage. Despite a consolidated small scale INT scheme and a growing large scale coverage, midscale schemes development have been slowed down by several long-lasting issues, including political influence.

Discrepancies between new ENCs and existing INT charts are raising new difficulties regarding consistency of nautical information provided by different producers, as well as the provision of survey data and reports of changes that may affect safety of navigation in national waters by coastal states to INT Chart producer nations.

The seamless delivery of S-100 products and services in the trans-boundary areas need more work.

Lessons learned

5. Lessons Learned

It is well recognized the value of increased collaboration across RHCs (especially adjacent RHCs) and regional partnerships for Capacity Building training, Seabed2030, MMSDIWG and other, requires concerted efforts to identify the specific activities of common interest and sustain those connections. A merger between adjacent RHCs could even strengthen the regional activities and engagement, since the regions are adjacent and a few states are already members of both RHCs.

The importance of IHO membership was highlighted and Associate Members reported their progress with regards to in-country processes.

The awareness and provision of survey data to INT Chart producer Nations remains paramount.

Following recent disasters some Regions are developing a Disaster Response Framework to aid future disasters with ease of communication/liason between the Regional States to greatly enhance the response times to disaster.

Preparation of the Second session of the IHO Assembly

6. Due to the persistence of the COVID-19 pandemic, following the Secretariat's proposal, IHO Member States approved the forthcoming Assembly Session and Council meeting to be held as a series of remote events with altogether three Assembly Sessions to take place from 16 to 18 November preceded by a preparatory event on 12 November and followed by the Council meeting on 19 November.

7. Similarly to the main organs of the IHO, the main subordinate bodies such as HSSC and IRCC, including their associated Sub Committees and Working Groups, will adapt their respective schedules and working arrangements originally assigned to them in the IHO Work Programme 2020. The Secretariat has therefore proposed to accept updates on their respective reports pertaining to the relevant Agenda items of the Assembly. A detailed draft Agenda of the 2nd Session of the Assembly and the logistic arrangements (registration, webinar information, access) will be issued very soon with the next ACL31.

IHO Centenary Celebrations (IHO-100)

8. The years 2019 and 2021 have been and will be important in the history of the International Hydrographic Organization. 2019 marked the centenary of the 1st International Hydrographic Conference, which was held in London in 1919 and 2021 will be the centenary of the establishment of the International Hydrographic Bureau (IHB) in 1921 in Monaco as precursor of the modern IHO.
9. The IHO Secretariat has already organized an exhibition on "Historical Nautical Charts and Mediterranean" which was displayed at the Monaco Yacht Club from 1 to 14 April 2019, an international Symposium on "A Historical Approach for Measurements and Protection of Oceans and World Waters" at the Oceanographic Museum of Monaco from 20 to 21 June 2019 (in conjunction with the World Hydrography Day), and has published an IHO Prestige Book on "100 Years of International Cooperation in Hydrography" (English and French versions have already been delivered to H.S.H. Prince Albert II of Monaco). The "Peak-of-the-peak" will be World Hydrography Day (WHD) on 21 June 2021. There will also be an opportunity to present IHO's achievements at the United Nations General Assembly in September 2021 and at the IMO Assembly in November 2021. The centenary events could also be linked with the United Nations Decade of Ocean Science for Sustainable Development (2021-2030) which has been coordinated by the IOC of UNESCO.

Action Requested of IRCC

10. IRCC is invited to:
- **Note** this report,
 - **Take any actions** as considered appropriate.