

CSBWG paper on raising the awareness of CSB within RHCs and proposed actions within RHCs to support the IHO CSB initiative

Submitted by:	CSBWG Chair/Vice-Chair
Executive summary:	This document provides details on the proposed inclusion of CSB activity among the topics described in National Reports to RHCs, for discussions during RHC meetings and the establishment of a RHC CSB Coordinator. It also provides a list of suggested CSB topics to be included in a revised RHC National Report.
Related Documents:	CSBWG8 (2019) List of Actions – Action 18 CSBWG9 (2020) List of Actions - . Action 13 Resolution 2/1997 (amendment 8/2019) – Establishment of Regional Hydrographic Commissions
Related Projects:	IHO Strategic Plan (draft) Seabed 2030 project and GEBCO

Introduction/background

Resolution 2/1997 (amendment 8/2019) describes, among other things, the structure of **National Reports** and the topics to be discussed during Regional Hydrographic Commission (RHC) meetings. Currently, the GEBCO project is listed under “Oceanographic activities,” while “Crowdsourced Bathymetry” (CSB) and “Seabed 2030” are not mentioned at all.

Typically, the IHO Secretariat covers CSB activities, GEBCO and the Seabed 2030 project through an “administrative and information update” that provides a general overview about the status of these projects. As such, while it is part of the RHC’s agenda it does not necessarily invoke discussion, action or support from RHC members.

During CSBWG9 (2020), the need for Hydrographic Offices’ (HOs) support of the CSB initiative, along with support of the wider NF-GEBCO Seabed 2030 Project, was carefully discussed. It was determined the best way to engage HOs is during RHC meetings by (1) adding CSB as an official agenda item and (2) broadening the current Seabed 2030 Coordinator role to include CSB. CSBWG9 Action 1, “a list of topics for inclusion could be developed and submitted to the Secretariat” has been included below.

It is also worth noting that the IHO draft strategic plan to be discussed for approval at Assembly (A-2) established the following **IHO Strategic Goal** (Goal 3): *“Participating actively in international initiatives related to the knowledge and the sustainable use of the Ocean”*. One of the targets to be achieved in accordance with this goal is to *“Improve knowledge of the world’s seafloors”*; it was proposed by the Council that RHCs could be tasked to report annually on the percentage of ‘Seabed 2030 compliant’ bathymetric coverage achieved within the region. This target is perfectly in line with objectives of the CSB and Seabed 2030 initiatives. RHCs have an important role in the monitoring, managing and increasing the percentage of total sea area that is Seabed 2030 compliant (see IHO draft Strategic Plan). An empowerment effort on that is necessary.

Analysis/Discussion

Acknowledging the standing RHC agenda item to discuss GEBCO/Seabed 2030/CSB initiatives, typically covered by the Secretariat, the CSBWG feels strongly that these topics should be given a significantly higher profile and by a designated CSB/Seabed 2030 Coordinator who also serves as a member of the CSBWG.

Moreover, the National Report represents an opportunity for the HOs to formally state their positions on these initiatives. Specifically, **information on coastal states activities in support of CSB, Seabed2030 and GEBCO**, details of data collected and made available (to whom via whom), increased % coverage, planned engagement, legal/political/physical challenges for which assistance/guidance is requested, and cooperation with adjacent coastal states are all requested.

The CSBWG therefore strongly believes a **HOs active posture** is needed which will fundamentally make HOs responsible for some results and reporting progress. This means taking greater ownership of the completeness of seabed coverage within their region and being aware of CSB initiatives.

The modification of the current “RHC Seabed 2030 Coordinator” to **“RHC CSB/Seabed 2030 Coordinator”** would represent a fundamental step forward for achieving this awareness and spreading the “CSB message”, it would also demonstrate harmonization between the two initiatives. The Coordinator would have the essential role in supporting the RHC Chairs providing a clear picture on the regional knowledge of the seafloor in accordance with the Goal 3 of the IHO Strategic Plan. Finally, the Coordinator could act as the regional point of contact for the Seabed 2030 project and specifically for the respective Seabed 2030 Regional Data Acquisition and Coordination Centers (RDACC).

In addition, the current National Report structure could be revised (see Resolution 2/1997) in order to specifically include the CSB and Seabed 2030 initiatives.

8	Oceanographic activities	General GEBCO/IBC's activities Tide gauge network New equipment Problems encountered
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Figure 1 – Item of the “Structure of National Reports to RHCs” (see Resolution 2/1997)

The CSBWG proposes the following list of topics for inclusion in the National Report:

- Is CSB data used nationally? If yes, in what products and/or services?
- What type of vessels obtained this CSB data?
- Has the wider international use of this CSB data been considered?
- Could this CSB data be used by GEBCO to improve the GEBCO grid?
- Would it be acceptable to share the data where it can be accessed by any organization (scientific, academic, industry (research/planning), charting authorities)?
- Would it be acceptable for the CSB data to be stored in the IHO DCDB?

Additional considerations provided

CSBWG proposals detailed above should be coordinated with the Seabed 2030 project director that likely shares similar concerns and/or may have additional requests.

Action required by IRCC

The IHO Crowdsourced Bathymetry Working Group requests IRCC to:

- (1) Note the information provided
- (2) Support the modification of the current “RHC Seabed 2030 Coordinator” to a joint “RHC CSB/Seabed 2030 Coordinator.” This figure would also serve as a member of the IHO CSBWG and as the point of contact to the relevant Seabed 2030 regional centers and be charged with leading the discussion of the future tasks for RHCs that will be formalized with the new IHO Strategic Plan (to be discussed during A-2).

- (3) Consider CSB and Seabed 2030 initiatives be permanently added as an agenda item at future RHC meetings.
- (4) Consider amending resolution 2/1997 in order to change to the template of the National Reports to include specific mention of the GEBCO Seabed 2030 Project and the IHO Crowdsourced Bathymetry Initiative. In particular:
 - "GEBCO/IBCs activities" bullet be changed to "GEBCO & Seabed 2030" ;
 - A new bullet be added titled: "Crowdsourced Bathymetry Activities"
 - Consider the list of topics provided for CSB's National Report paragraph
- (5) Take any other actions deemed appropriate.