

15TH MEETING OF THE IHO INTER-REGIONAL COORDINATING COMMITTEE
IHO-IRCC15
TOKYO (JAPAN), 12-14 JUNE 2023

Report of the IHO Secretariat

Submitted by: IHO Secretariat

Executive Summary: This paper provides a summary report of matters of interest related to the work of the IHO Secretariat.

Status of Membership of the IHO

1. One of the main changes resulting from the entry into force of the revised IHO Convention is that, for States wishing to join the IHO that are already Member States of the United Nations, there is no requirement to seek the approval of existing Member States of the IHO. Since the last IRCC14 meeting, the IHO Member States continue to be 98. Unfortunately, Serbia and Syria remain suspended from Member States rights.
2. The IHO Secretariat, in cooperation with the Department of External Relations of the Government of Monaco, stands ready to assist those non-IHO Member States with the application process for membership of the IHO, as currently underway towards several non-IHO Member States in several hydrographic regions, and stands ready to pay High Level Visits to those States not yet IHO Member States. All RHCs are kindly invited to encourage and propose to the IHO Secretariat High Level Visits to those States not yet IHO Member States.

Outcomes of the third session of IHO Assembly

3. The third session of the IHO Assembly (A-3) took place in the Grimaldi Forum in Monaco from Tuesday 2 May to Friday 5 May 2023. The meeting of the Finance Committee and the meeting of the Heads of Delegations took place on Monday afternoon, 1 May 2023 at the Grimaldi Forum in Monaco, as well as an event on the Empowering Women in Hydrography (EWH) project. The Opening Ceremony for the Assembly took place on Tuesday morning, 2 May 2023. During that Ceremony, seven new Member States that have joined the Organization since the Second Session of the IHO Assembly presented their flag. An Industry and a Member States exhibition took place in the same period of A-3 at the Grimaldi Forum in Monaco, and the USNS Bruce C. Heezen was present in the Port of Monaco during A-3.
4. The Assembly was attended by more than 450 delegates from 75 IHO Member States, Observers and Industry. The 120th GEBCO and the 100th International Hydrographic Review (IHR) anniversaries were celebrated, a Thematic Session on “*Future challenges for hydrography in the Ocean Decade*” moderated by IHO Directing Committee was held on the day 4 of A-3, the IHO Work Programme and Budget for the years 2024-2026 were discussed and approved, 15 proposals from the IHO Secretary-General, Council Chair and IHO Member States were discussed, 36 decisions were made by the Assembly, and the election of the Secretary-General and a Director was held on day 5 of A-3. All the documents and Summary Reports of A-3 are available at the following webpage: <https://iho.int/en/3rd-session-of-the-assembly-2023>.
5. With particular reference to the 15th IRCC meeting, it is worth highlighting some decisions of the A-3, which will have an impact on the work of the meeting and the future activities of the related Working Groups and Sub-Committees, as well as the Regional Hydrographic Commissions. In particular the following decisions:

- Decision 8: The Assembly: ... omissis ... c) directed IRCC to provide guidance to the MSDI Working Group on the implementation of Goal 2/Target 2.1 through supporting national and regional MSDIWG efforts via RHCs and the continued provision of global thematic layers by means of the existing IHO GIS infrastructure (trusted source, standardized, interoperable). Any proposed extension of the portfolio of global thematic layers by MSDIWG has to be brought forward to IRCC for endorsement and Council for approval. d) agreed to task the Secretariat, assisted by the HSSC and IRCC chairs, to continue to measure the effectiveness and the efficiency of the three Work Programmes implementation by means of the Strategic Performance Indicators as endorsed by the Council. ... omissis ...
- Decision 16: The Assembly endorsed the Report of the Work Programme 3.
- Decision 18: The Assembly approved and adopted the revised Capacity Building Strategy.
- Decision 19: The Assembly: a) approved the proposed IHO Resolution on the recognition of the Southern Ocean. b) took note of the consequences on the limits of some global sea areas as a result of recognition of the Southern Ocean. c) endorsed the fact that this new Resolution is without prejudice to or limitation of the views of the IHO, any other international body or any IHO Member State regarding the subject matter addressed.
- Decision 20: The Assembly: a) Recognized the important global maritime issues facing the hydrographic community worldwide and that addressing these issues will require expanded global hydrographic capacity. b) Approved the proposal to establish an ad hoc Project Team under IRCC to explore the possible establishment of reliable alternative funding for activities including capacity building and GEBCO. c) Authorized Council via IRCC to review progress reports from the Project Team at least annually and provide guidance to the Project Team in preparation to report out to 4th Assembly (A4).
- Decision 21: The Assembly tasked the Council to discuss the request from the SWPHC for the provision of mechanisms to ensure greater inclusion and participation of all Member States at IHO meetings, in particular the IHO Assembly and come up with solutions as soon as possible.

6. With particular reference to Decision 8 point d), IHO Publication P7 – IHO 2022 Annual Report, at Annex B reports also the “*Status Report on Performance Monitoring related to the Strategic Plan 2021-2026*”, via the approved Strategic Performance Indicators (SPI). Unless modified, such SPI will be used to measure the performances of the IHO Strategic Plan 2021-2026 till its natural expiration in 2026. The IRCC, through their subordinated bodies and with the support of the RHCs, will be engaged in measuring those SPI annually, and provide the related figures to the IHO Secretariat by December each year for the period 2024-2026.

Preparation of the 7th Meeting of the IHO Council

7. The seventh meeting of the IHO Council is scheduled to take place in Monaco, from 17 to 19 October 2023. The preparation of this meeting has already started with the Call for Nominations for the positions of Chair and Vice-Chair of the Third Council and Election Procedure (see CL 01/2023) and the Announcement of the Seventh Meeting of the IHO Council and Provisional Agenda (see CCL 02/2023). It can be noted that in accordance with the Rules of Procedures of the Council, the deadline for submission of proposals by IHO

Member States is 17 July 2022.

8. During C-7, attention will be paid to the implementation and discussion of adaptations of the IHO Work programme, other affected IHO instruments resulting from the Strategic Plan 2021-2026 and Decisions A3/08 (a) to (d), and the status report on the appropriateness and applicability of the Strategic Performance Indicators. Besides, an initial discussion and way forward (C-9 countdown) for the preparation of a Revised Strategic Plan in preparation of A-4 in 2026 (Decision A3/08 (e)) will be also discussed. The IRCC report to C-7 will coincide with the IRCC15 report.

IHO Outreach

7. The outreach of IHO themes is more than ever based on digital provisions. Social media such as linkedIn, facebook and twitter have become relevant communication channels in parallel to the IHO website. The website of the International Hydrographic Review underwent a full re-launch providing now substantially extended functionality. The use of VTC and hybrid formats for meetings hosted by the Secretariat have become common practice. Considering the impact of digital outreach, in 2022, the IHO website had a total of 863,322 page views, more than doubling the 2021 page views. The LinkedIn page had more than 7500 followers in May 2023, and saw a record of 245,573 views in June 2022.

8. There were also several actions to raise awareness about the IHO's work to a broader audience. The Secretariat has increased its presence on social media through articles and news about its working groups, committees and subcommittees, as well as the participation in regional and global initiatives that refer to Hydrography, especially in the framework of the UN Ocean Decade. In this regard, the active participation in the United Nation's Ocean Decade provides a unifying framework for scientists and stakeholders from diverse sectors to develop the scientific knowledge and the partnerships needed to accelerate and harness advances in ocean science. Being a longstanding partner of ocean scientists, it was clear from the beginning of the Strategy revision that the IHO would be among the stakeholders to proactively contribute to this initiative. In fact, the Secretariat took part at the 2022 UN Ocean Conference, planned in Lisbon on 27 June to 1 July 2022, with a proper event and it is preparing its participation to the United Nations Ocean Conference 2025 planned in Nice (France).

World Hydrography Day

9. As announced with IHO CL 01/2023, the theme for WHD 2023 is as follows:

“Hydrography – underpinning the digital twin of the ocean”

The digital twin of the ocean aims to develop a consistent, high-resolution, multidimensional and near real-time virtual representation of the ocean that could make ocean knowledge open-access, available to citizens, scientists and policy-makers around the world, and will provide a platform for global cooperation. The theme for WHD is designed to highlight the relationship between hydrography and oceanography, and how hydrography can play a key role in developing the digital twin of the ocean.

10. WHD provides opportunities to publicise the work and services carried out by national hydrographic offices, industry partners, expert contributors, and the scientific community. Organizations and IHO Member States are invited to forward to the Secretariat any materials they create in support of their WHD celebrations to post on the IHO online communication outlets. This can include pictures, videos, or even articles. The IHO Secretariat would like to create new videos highlighting these different aspects. Member States who are interested

and able to assist with the technical production of videos are invited to contact the Secretariat. In support of WHD 2023, the IHO Secretariat will feed the IHO Facebook page, Twitter account, LinkedIn account and YouTube channel. The IHO Secretariat will also organize a dedicated page on the IHO website, where papers and other materials relevant to the celebration will be posted. Member States are invited to forward to the Secretariat any materials that they may create in support of their national WHD 2023 celebrations for posting on any of these platforms.

International Hydrographic Review (IHR)

11. During the third session of the IHO Assembly, the 100th anniversary of the IHR was celebrated. A printed anniversary issue was provided to Assembly participants. It included a compendium of 13 reprinted articles chosen by the editorial board and showcased the new format for the review.

12. On day 4 of A-3, the IHR Editor – Dr Patrick Westfield from Germany presented on the history of the IHR and the achievements of the two latest years. He emphasized the value of the review in facilitating interdisciplinary knowledge exchange. As an applied science, hydrography encompassed fields such as geophysics, oceanography, geodesy, acoustics, cartography, remote sensing and others. The goal was that the International Hydrographic Review would become the go-to international journal for people with a hydrographic background as well as for those working in neighbouring disciplines. The Review published double-blind peer-reviewed articles, as well as event announcements, book reviews and so on, and so provided a platform for discussion to allow exchange within the hydrographic community. A number of changes had been made to make the journal more attractive to publish in, including a new and modern layout and the introduction of digital object identifiers, improvements to the 6 review process and to correspondence with authors and more effective use of social media. Key next steps included registering IHR for journal ranking lists and feeding relevant repositories with new International Hydrographic Review content, more frequent publication of special issues and further optimization of the website. The infrastructure was thus in place, but contributions still had to be chased up: he therefore encouraged participants to consider submitting or encouraging colleagues to submit contributions as a means of sharing knowledge. He thanked colleagues at IHO as well as the editorial board, whose members were representatives of hydrographic commissions

13. Twice a year, the IHR provides an opportunity for Member States to publicize technical and other achievements in their region. An editorial board comprising a representative from each region has been established. Papers for consideration for publication in the IHR should be forwarded directly to the editor (ihreview@iho.int, copy to ihr.editor@iho.int.com). The deadlines are:

- end of January for the May Edition
- end of July for the November Edition

Capacity Building Programme

14. 2023 CBWP continues to benefit from unused funds for activities planned but not executed in the previous 3 years (2020-2022) and from the support of funds from donors outside the IHO (ROK, Nippon Foundation and CANADA). The prospects for the IHO budget allocated to Capacity Building from 2024 onwards are not good, so much so that even the Council during the last C-6 noted the decrease of Capacity Building funds over the last few years and the not encouraging outlook for the next three years (2024-2026).

15. In this regard, following the USA (and others) proposal, the IHO Assembly in Decision 20 point b) above mentioned, approved the establishment of an ad-hoc Project Team under IRCC to explore the possible establishment of reliable alternative funding for activities including capacity building and GEBCO.

Empowering Women in Hydrography (EWH)

16. The EWH project continues to attract interest outside the International Hydrographic Organisation. The following two latest examples of cooperation worth mentioning are:

- A Letter of Intent (LoI) between the IHO and WMU, signed in March 2023, to provide a framework for active liaison and cooperation between the Parties and with the common objective to contribute to the United Nations Decade of Ocean Science for Sustainable Development. Following the LoI, the IHO Secretariat participated at *Empowering Women Forum: Meet-and-Greet*, organised on 23 May 2023 by the Empowering Women Forum, in collaboration with the Decade Coordination Unit (DCU) and the Decade Network, presenting on “*Working Towards Gender Balance in STEM Subject*” as result of the first two years of the EWH project;
- The IHO CL 19/2023, to announce the IC-ENC opportunity for a female candidate to be associated with the EWH project by leading on the continuous improvement of the IC-ENC Knowledgebase.

17. Two years after its launch, the time is ripe to lay the foundations to look to the future of the project, to further forms of funding and to turn the project into a multi-year programme, in the same way as similar programmes that have been in place in other international organisations for years.

IHO e-learning Center

18. Following the latest developments regarding the Guidelines, Governance and tools to access the e-Learning Centre, the Centre is now operational and the IHO Secretariat is ready to announce its full operability and functionality to the IHO Member States.

GEBCO programme, Nippon Foundation Seabed2030 project and Crowdsourced Bathymetry

19. During the third session of the IHO Assembly, the 120th Anniversary of GEBCO was celebrated, the new percentage of seabed coverage (24.9%) was announced by H.S.H. Prince Albert II of Monaco, and the first Block of the Thematic Session “*Future Challenges for Hydrography in the Ocean Decade*” was entirely devoted to “*Ocean Mapping*”. Great part of the new seabed coverage’s percentage was obtained thanks to the Nippon Foundation-GEBCO Seabed 2030 project, established to accelerate GEBCO’s mission and with the ambitious goal to complete the mapping of the seafloor by 2030. During the project’s first six years, data sharing and ocean mapping mobilization efforts have quadrupled the area covered by directly measured depth soundings. To put some perspective into how much has been done and made publicly available in recent years, we have gone from 22M km² of directly measured seabed knowledge in 2017, less than the North-American continent, to 90M km² in 2023, 3 times the African continent, 2 times Asia or 61% of all our planets land area together.

20. Crowdsourced data collection, or citizen science, has been around for a long time and is now a vital contributor to global ocean mapping efforts. Crowdsourced bathymetry is getting more widely accepted and recognized by the established mapping community, including hydrographic offices, and has the potential to be scaled up many times. The IHO

Crowdsourced Bathymetry initiative is gaining momentum and attracting more and more players. Research vessel operators, cruise ship operators, commercial survey ship operators, fisheries, super yacht owners, and leisure boat equipment manufacturers are growing more aware that they can contribute to seabed mapping and are increasingly willing to do so, and a new CSB work-plan will facilitate the inclusion of various potential contributors.

Action Requested of IRCC

21. IRCC is invited to:

- **Note** this report,
- **Take any actions** as considered appropriate.