

**16TH MEETING OF THE IHO INTER-REGIONAL COORDINATING COMMITTEE
IHO-IRCC16
SANTA CRUZ ISLAND, GALÁPAGOS (ECUADOR), 5-7 JUNE 2024
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 IRCC15 meeting, the IHO has reached the historic milestone of one hundred IHO Member States since the foundation in 1921, thanks to the joining of the Republic of Cabo Verde in November 2023 and the Republic of Kiribati in May 2024 as 100th IHO Member State. 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 some hydrographic regions (Mediterranean basin, Africa, Central America, Southern America and South West Pacific), and stands ready to pay High Level Visits to those States not yet IHO Member States, as the High Level Visit to The Commonwealth of The Bahamas conducted in April 2024.
3. IRCC, via the Regional Hydrographic Commissions, is kindly invited to support the IHO Secretariat in engaging coastal and landlocked States in the respective Regions, in order to facilitate the access to the IHO, proposing Technical and High Level Technical Visits to those States not yet IHO members, as well as joining the respective RHCs as Associate Members or Observers.

Preparation of the 8th Meeting of the IHO Council

4. The 8th Meeting of the IHO Council is scheduled to take place in Monaco, from 15 to 17 October 2024. The preparation of the meeting has already started with “*CCL 01/2024 - Announcement of the Eight Meeting of the IHO Council and Provisional Agenda*” and “*CCL 02/2024 - IHO Annual Report for 2023 and Approval of the Finance Report for 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 15 July 2024.
5. With reference to the C-8 Provisional Agenda (cfr. CCL 01/2024), the following items related to the subsidiary organs of the Council and the annual work program and budget deserve attention:
 - Update on the activities of the IHO Fund Generation Project Team
 - Update on the Empowering Women in Hydrography Project
 - Update on contributions to the UN Ocean Decade
 - Update on activities to acquire new IHO Member States

- Initial discussion on the revision of the IHO Strategic Plan based on inputs from subordinate bodies (HSSC, IRCC), Member States and IHO Secretariat
- Report on inclusive participation in IHO meetings and proposed Resolution.

In the Approval of the Finance Report for 2023 (cfr. CCL 02/2024), the following proposals of the Secretary-General – already endorsed by the Finance Committee Officers – to allocate the budget surplus for 2023 of 215k€, deserve attention:

- 50,000 Euro to the Assembly Fund,
- 15,000 Euro to the Special Project Fund,
- 40,000 Euro to the Capacity Building Fund,
- 10,000 Euro to the IBSC Fund,
- 40,000 Euro to the Renovation and Enhancement Fund,
- 60,000 Euro to the Relocation Fund.

IHO Strategic Plan (2021-2026) update and IHO Strategic Plan review

7. Following actions C7/36 – C7/38, the current structure of the IHO SP 2021-2026 is still relevant at conceptual level (vision, goals, targets, strategic performance indicators, etc.). Therefore, the IHO Secretariat proceeded to update the *Annex B to IHO Publication P-7 – 2023 Annual Report*, which is available under the IHO website. Following the inputs of HSSC and IRCC, and the respective subordinate bodies, the IHO Secretariat updated the SPI's figures for 2023, including – thanks to the questionnaire issued by the WENGGW – figure related to SPI 1.3.1 – Ability and capability of Member States to meet the requirements and delivery phases of the S-100 implementation plan.

8. In accordance with the Council acknowledgment that the current structure of the Strategic Plan (SP) 2021-2026 was still relevant at conceptual level, and that the objective for the next SP 2027-2032 should be limited to a revision of the current SP, the Strategic Plan Review Working Group (SPRWG) under the chairmanship of the Council Vice-Chair, started working via correspondence, establishing that the revised Strategic Plan will be developed using a bottom-up approach, involving HSSC and IRCC and the Regional Hydrographic Commissions. Terms of Reference (ToRs) and Rules of Procedures (RoPs) were drafted and a first revision of the Timeline for SPRWG was issued. The timeline includes the submission of the draft SP to HSSC17 and IRCC17 in April 2025, whilst the last step of the revision process is to submit a report on the work of the SPRWG and facilitate Council's submission of the revised IHO SP (final draft) to A-4 by December 2025.

International cooperation and initiatives of the IHO

United Nations Committee of Experts on Global Geospatial Information Management (UNGGIM)

9. The IHO Secretariat participates annually at the UNGGIM's works. At the last UNGGIM meeting in August 2023, the “*United Nations Operational Framework for Integrated Geospatial Information Management Part Two: The Strategic Pathways*” was endorsed by the Committee of Experts and both parts one and two of the UNIGIF-Hydro were adopted as the complete “*United Nations Operational Framework for Integrated Geospatial Information Management*” (UN-IGIF-Hydro)”. The document was preceded by a white paper and

accepted as an action of the Decade of Ocean Science over the past five years. The IHO and its Member States have participated extensively in the drafting of the UNIGIF-Hydro.

United Nations Division on Ocean Affairs and Law of the Sea (UN-DOALOS)

10. The IHO Secretary-General participated in a two-day international symposium hosted by the UN Division for Ocean Affairs and the Law of the Sea (DOALOS) in collaboration with the International Oceanographic Commission (IOC) of UNESCO aimed to the strengthening of the ocean science-policy interface. One item affecting IHO themes was the translation of data into policy-relevant information and knowledge. The permanent lack of data including bathymetric information was noted among others by representatives from small island states and less developed countries. Lastly, on request of UN-DOALOS, the IHO Secretariat is working on the future developments of S-121 and S-122, in the light of the recent approval of the BBNJ (Biodiversity Beyond National Jurisdiction) agreement.

United Nations Decade of Ocean Science for Sustainable Development (2021-2030)

11. The IHO Secretariat attended the *2024 Ocean Decade Conference - Building the Ocean Decade roadmap to 2030 for the ocean we want*, held in Barcelona in April 2024, co-hosting two satellite-events: one in partnership with the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD) on ocean mapping entitled “*The seabed data we need for the ocean we want*”, aimed to look at the importance of advancing our understanding of the ocean and fostering increased investment in related activities, and the second with IMO - World Maritime University (WMU) on “*Empowering Women for the Ocean Decade: Achieving Gender Equality in Ocean Sciences and Policy Making*”, looked at how to establish an environment that allows for the equal and fair participation of women. The participation at the Barcelona Conference reaffirmed the IHO’s intent to become a relevant stakeholder helping to deliver a qualitative and quantitative ocean knowledge, and to inform solutions that will contribute to the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development, as the IHO is promoting the essential role of bathymetry in underpinning ocean science and related activities, in accordance with the *Decade Challenge nr.8 – Create a digital representation of the ocean*.

United Nations Ocean Conference 2025 (UNOC25)

12. The aim of the IHO engagement in UNOC25 (and associated events) is to support the delivery of the Strategic Plan by ensuring international oceans policy is conducive, if not supportive of the broadest utilization and implementation of S-100, advocating for investment in primary data gathering and the sharing of existing data holdings, and protecting the domain expertise of hydrographic offices. Initial contacts have been tentatively taken with the Principality of Monaco and the Foundation Prince Albert II for identifying themes to be presented in joint events during the “*Blue Economy and Finance Forum*” (BEFF) that will be hosted in Monaco on 7-8 June 2025 and at UNOC25 (9-13 June 2025). An internal project team was established to set out the IHO Secretariat’s aims, objectives, specific activities and level of ambition for participation in the 3rd UN Ocean Conference in June 2025 (UNOC25), and to identify next steps. In order to provide an opportunity for the Chairs of the 15 Regional Hydrographic Commissions and subordinate bodies of the IRCC to participate in the aforementioned IHO-sponsored side-events and potentially participate as delegates of the respective national delegations participating in UNOC2025, the IHO Secretariat proposes to host the CBSC23 and IRCC17 meetings in Monaco at the Secretariat's headquarters back to back with the noted UN events in the period 28 May - 6 June 2025 (exact dates TBD).

Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD)

13. In November 2023 a workshop was organised jointly by the OECD the IHO, with the

objective to explore how the anticipated acceleration of seabed exploration, mapping and eventual improved monitoring could make a difference in key areas of the ocean economy and beyond. The workshop will allow for the first time a deep dive in the linkages between seafloor exploration and crucial trends for the ocean economy and ocean's health, assembling experts from diverse fields. The workshop formed a key milestone to support a longer-term vision for more sustainable uses of the ocean. A publication with key results and recommendations for the international community will be developed providing substance supporting the OECD foresight project on *The ocean economy in 2045* (to be presented at UNOC25) and IHO's strategy.

Intergovernmental Oceanographic Commission of UNESCO (IOC-UNESCO)

14. The IHO and IOC cooperates closely as parent Organizations of the General Bathymetric Chart of the Oceans (GEBCO), contributing to the GEBCO Guiding Committees and the six GEBCO Sub-Committees. In June 2023, during the IOC 32nd Assembly, the 120th Anniversary of GEBCO was celebrated at the IOC-UNESCO HQs at the presence of the Ambassador of Monaco to UNESCO. After two years of work, the GEBCO Strategy (2024-2030) and the report on GEBCO Governance Review will be presented at the next IOC-UNESCO Executive Council in June 2024. The IHO Secretariat continues the active participation in the UN Decade initiatives (e.g. Calls for Actions, Conferences, UN Decade Vision 2030 White Paper, etc.) and the cooperation with the Global Ocean Observing System (GOOS) and how the integrated system can support a wide range of applications, including GEBCO, through a network of regional and national alliances.

International Maritime Organization (IMO)

15. The IHO Secretariat participates annually in the meetings of the main IMO Committees / Sub-Committees as follows:

- A. *Technical Cooperation Committee (TCC)*: to share best practices and research synergies in the field of Capacity Building / Capacity Development related to Maritime Safety Information (MSI) and how the IHO and its Capacity Building (CB) program is committed to contributing support for the initiatives related to safety of navigation and the hydrographic responsibilities attributed to the States in the SOLAS Convention, with reference to all RHCs. The IHO is also collaborating with the IMO in the areas of MSI and the development of the new S-100 Standard through joint activities in those regions/geographical areas that need more investment in terms of capacity development, in order to optimize the use of financial and human resources for the benefit of the International Maritime Community;
- B. *Maritime Safety Committee (MSC) and Navigation, Communications and Search and Rescue (NCSR) Sub-Committee*: following the adoption resolution MSC 530(106) on Performance Standards for electronic chart display and information systems (ECDIS), the IHO Secretariat provided an update on the progress of S-100 implementation and availability of printed nautical charts. It was noted that the IHO is working hard to progress the implementation of S-100 based products by aiming to complete the operational versions of Phase 1 standards, including Electronic Navigational Charts, Bathymetry, Water Levels, Surface Currents, and Under Keel Clearance Management by the end of 2024. As presented in CL 43/2023, the Hydrographic Offices, Standards Committee and S-100 Working Group put forth a 2024 the following timeline for advancing Phase 1 product specifications, to meet with IHO and IMO expectations for 2024:

TASK	IHO CL issue date	MS Response due
S-100 Edition 5.2.0	January 2024	May 2024
S-100 Phase 1 Endorsement	October 2024	December 2024

Then, as S-100 compatible ECDIS enter service, starting in 2026, Hydrographic Offices will work to produce S-100 products, anticipating S-100 systems to become increasingly beneficial over time. Future progression on the implementation of the S-100 Roadmap will be regularly reported by IHO to IMO (NCSR). These reports will be based on respective IHO Member States and Regional Hydrographic Commissions reports and will provide the geographic coverage of S-101, other S-1xx products, ENDS schemes, and production plans per Charting Regions by digital means. In addition to that, the continued maintenance of the printed nautical chart has the full attention of IHO, despite the need for this format of nautical charts will continue to decrease. On this regard, the IHO recognizes that printed nautical charts will be needed for the foreseeable future by certain ships. For this reason, the IHO will continue to support paper chart standards and coordination efforts around the world;

- C. And cooperate with *IMO-WMU (World Maritime University)* through a Letter of Intent (LoI) signed in 2023 between IHO and IMO-WMU. The purpose of the LoI is to provide a framework for active liaison and cooperation between the Parties and contribute to the United Nations Decade of Ocean Science for Sustainable Development, in order to find synergies in their actions to empower women and promote gender equality. The cooperation has started with areas such as hosting joint events and participating in each other's events, a mentorship programme, external peer review of findings, gender equality training, participating in the High Level Advisory Group, gender action plan and strategy review, and exchange relevant experience on issues of mutual interest, including capacity building and training, as well as to cooperate towards the provision of research-based advice so as to rapidly inform the development of gender diversity policy in relevant international bodies and conventions.

World Meteorological Organization (WMO)

16. Co-operation with WMO is through the WWNWS Sub-Committee for the revision of the joint IMO/IHO/WMO manual on Maritime Safety Information and the S-124 Product Specification on Navigational Warnings, through the Standing Committee on Marine Meteorological and Oceanographic Services (SC-MMO) for the participation in the development of the global Multi Hazard Early Warning System (EW4ALL) by 2025/2026, the development of S-41x products to contribute to EW4ALL by 2026/2027 and the acknowledgement of the role of bathymetry in coastal warning/modelling systems, and then through the Expert Team on Maritime Safety (ET-MS). This latter oversees and coordinates the work on S-41x.

International Association of Marine Aids to Navigation and Lighthouse Authorities (IALA)

17. Co-operation with IALA is mainly developed along three lines: development of S-200 series' products and services and Digitization of the safety of navigation, and cooperation in the field of Capacity Building. Cooperation between the two International Organizations is important to proceed with marine digitization, inform the shipping domain of the cooperation efforts between the two bodies and achieve globally harmonized solutions for S-100/S-200 development and portrayal, with particular attention to the S-201 that should be the update source data transfer standard for AtoN data for use by hydrographic authorities. On this regard, the IHO Secretariat is taking part at the Digital@Sea conferences to share maritime

digital technology and discuss cooperation among Europe, North America, and the Asia-Pacific countries in the international maritime digital sector, as well as new policies and cutting-edge technologies. On Capacity Building, IHO and IALA cooperate closely focusing on training and capacity building through joint activities (e.g. Technical Visits, seminars, workshops, etc.) and collaboration projects with several Coastal States of hydrographic regions.

European Union (EU)

18. The Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) between the IHO and the European Commission (EC) signed in 2012 and renewed in 2022, established a cooperative framework between the cooperative sides in some specific areas, such as surveillance activities, maritime spatial planning, integrated coastal zone management, marine observation and data network (e.g. GEBCO and EMODnet), and implementation of EU Directives, through the IENWG – IHO EU Network Working Group. Lastly, with the aim to contribute to the IHO Fund Generation Project Team recently established as IRCC's body to identify opportunities for recurring funding based on existing and short-term options and long-term strategic options, an *"IHO and EC Cooperation in Third Countries for Hydrographic Capacity Development"* was discussed by the IENWG for the following submission to the EU DG MARE by the beginning of 2025, as a strong example to demonstrate that IHO priorities and EC international development priorities are synergetic. The proposal will offer potential for mutual benefits by intensifying cooperation and affirming the need of a resilient network of Sea Line of Communications (SLoCs) between Europe and East Asia and Africa as a fundamental for the world economy, and the need of reliable nautical charts (INT, S-57, S-1XX) to enable safe navigation and investments in hydrographic capacity development elsewhere to assure global maritime accessibility.

International Maritime Pilots' Association (IMPA)

19. A Letter of Intent (LoI) was signed in April 2024 by the IHO and IMPA. Amongst the others, the main purpose of the LoI is to particularly focus on the implementation of the S-100 Universal Hydrographic Data Model and the experimentation and test-bed of its derived products at regional and national level, through the involvement of the national Hydrographic Offices and Regional Hydrographic Commissions from the IHO, and the pilots' organizations within the membership of IMPA. The IHO Secretariat presented on "The S-100 standard: the new digital approach to representing the marine environment" in the panel "Ship handling and Operations: Opportunities and Challenges" at the 26th IMPA Congress in April 2024.

Joint IHO/IMO/WMO/IOC/IALA/IAEA/FIG/IMPA Capacity Building Coordination Meeting

20. The 13th joint meeting held in May 2024 marked the restart of the joint CB coordination meetings after four years of interruption caused by the COVID Pandemic, bringing together representatives from eight organizations: IHO, IMO, WMO, IALA, IOC, IAEA, IALA, FIG and IMPA. The eight Organizations / Associations will start to share the plans of their own activities, trying to identify those activities that can be delivered jointly. IHO, IOC and IALA expressed the interest in participating in the elaboration of the concept notes to participate in some IMO big projects. It was unanimously decided to discuss on the possible ways to launch and fund joint activities of interest for all organizations (e.g. MSI, S-100 implementation, e-learning, etc.). The final objective of the meeting is to coordinate the efforts of international organizations for building and developing capacity in the maritime and marine communities in line with the United Nations concept of *"Delivering as One"*. A meeting focused on the discussion of the projects will be held in next September by VTC.

Empowering Women in Hydrography (EWH) project

21. In second half of 2023 and 2024, thanks to the generous support from Belgium, Denmark, France, Norway, USA, UK, IC-ENC and Canada, IHO CLs 40/2023, 41/2023, IHO CLs 9/2024, 11/2024, 22/2024, 23/2024 and 25/2024 provided the new current and future opportunities under the project, in line with the Action C7/24. Discussions are currently in place with Canada for the 2024 fund that will be allocated to the project, to better understand how to support participants from the Indo Pacific region. In addition to that, and always in line with Action C7/24, the IHO Secretariat has started a selection for contracting an EWH Assistant for a period of 1 year (renewable for a second year), to assure the continuation of the project until the next IHO Assembly in 2026, (to the recruitment announcement made on LinkedIn, 50 applications were received). The new position will be covered by July 2024.

IHO Outreach

22. The outreach of IHO themes is more than ever based on digital provisions. Social media such as LinkedIn, Facebook and X (ex-Twitter) have become relevant communication channels in parallel to the IHO website. The IHO website had a total of 921,575 views in this calendar year 2023. The LinkedIn page grew to 9,650 followers by May 2025 and reached total post impressions of 322,413 in 2023. The website of the International Hydrographic Review underwent a full re-launch providing now substantially extended functionality. The IHO 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 and in view of the UN Ocean Conference in 2025. The IHO Secretariat is updating the IHO website with the implementation of a new IHO Portal which will be discussed at the 8th meeting of the IHO Council.

World Hydrography Day

23. As announced with IHO CL 01/2024, the theme for WHD 2024 is as follows:

“Hydrographic Information - Enhancing Safety and Efficiency in Marine Activities”

This theme is proposed to highlight that - as per Decision 8 of the 3rd Session of the IHO Assembly in May 2023 - Goal Number 1 of the Strategic Plan and its targets shall have the highest priority in the implementation of the 2024–2026 Work Programme, which means priority in application of material and human resources, liaison with public sector and industry partners, promotion of concerted regional approaches including increased collaboration with the RENCs, and support of test beds delivering best practice examples for the production, maintenance and distribution of all prioritized S100 derivatives. The Secretariat would welcome any comments and suggestions aimed at improving the impact and the organization of annual WHD celebrations. In support of WHD 2024, the IHO Secretariat will feed the IHO Facebook page, X 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 2024 celebrations for posting on any of these platforms.

International Hydrographic Review (IHR)

24. Dr Patrick Westfield from Germany was confirmed for additional 2 years as IHR Editor. The Review is focused in facilitating interdisciplinary knowledge exchange in applied science, as hydrography encompasses fields such as geophysics, oceanography, geodesy, acoustics, cartography, remote sensing and others. The recent IHR Vol.30 Ed. May 2024 covers some

of these different perspectives and includes articles on oceanography, geodesy, geology and of course hydrography, with contributions on crowdsourcing water depth data.

25. 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.

Action Requested of IRCC

26. IRCC is invited to:

- **Note** the report,
- **Consider** to support the IHO Secretariat in enlarging the IHO membership,
- **Provide** input to the SPRWG in accordance with the timeline,
- **Discuss** the opportunity to meet in Monaco in 2025,
- **Encourage** the RHCs to increase the participation in the EWH project using the financial and in-kind opportunities provided by the IHO Member States,
- **Take any actions** as considered appropriate.