

11th Meeting of the Arctic Regional Hydrographic Commission (ARHC) Video teleconference, 9 – 10 November 2021

Contribution to the IHO Work Programme 2021	
Task 3.2.1.1	Prepare for and report meetings of the Regional Hydrographic Commissions (RHC) / ARHC

The 11th Meeting of the Arctic Regional Hydrographic Commission (ARHC) was held in a virtual format, consisting of two four-hour sessions, on 9 and 10 November 2021.

Around thirty participants representing four ARHC Members (Canada, Denmark, Norway and the USA) and three Associate Members (Finland, Iceland and Italy) participated in the meeting. The Russian Federation informed the Chair of the impossibility to join remotely because of administrative reasons.

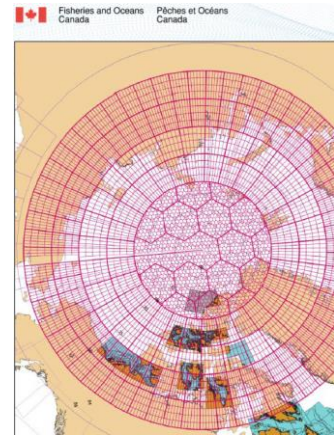
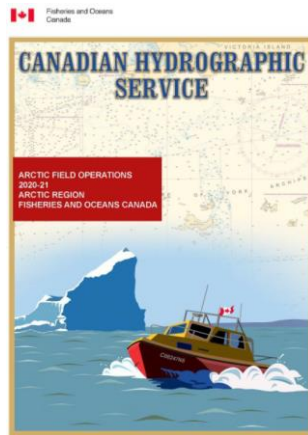


The meeting was chaired by Dr. Geneviève Béchard, Director General, Canadian Hydrographic Service (CHS, Canada) and Acting Chair of the ARHC since the tragic passing of RDML Richard Brennan on 13 May 2021 (NOAA, United States of America). The IHO Secretariat was represented by Secretary-General Dr. Mathias Jonas and Assistant Director Yves Guillam.

Due to the time limitation, the Secretary-General focused his intervention on the main outcome of the recent 5th meeting of the IHO Council. He confirmed in particular that the S-100 ecosystem is taking shape while the road to S-100 ECDIS is now paved, thanks to the IHO commitments to contribute to the revision of the ECDIS Performance Standard and other IMO instruments such as MSC.1/Circ. 1503 – *ECDIS - Guidance for Good Practice* in particular. The Secretary-General also made some practical suggestions for the implementation of some Strategic Performance Indicators (SPIs) of the IHO Strategic Plan 2021-2026 that are under the remit of Regional Hydrographic Commissions and Member States through the IRCC. On this subject, ARHC agreed to consider a methodology derived from the one adopted by the SWPHC¹.

National reports, technical presentations on new technologies (uncrewed survey vessels, drone-borne and airborne bathymetric lidar, chart production systems, custom paper chart production, etc.) provided an excellent overview of the outstanding momentum of hydrographic activities in the region. A significant number of proposals, recommendations and tasks were identified by the Members that could not be discussed in depth this time, unfortunately, due to the format of the event. One of which is the impressive development by Canada of the digital foundation for future S-100 services in the Arctic.

¹ South West Pacific Hydrographic Commission.



Looking ahead – Canadian Hydrographic Service Strategy

Denmark also shared its new strategy in support of the digital transformation. Norway explained the marine base maps project in support of spatial planning with authoritative data, as well as the Port Data 2021 initiative covering 9 major ports in Norway. The US and Iceland highlighted their progress on surveys and charting in the region. Finland reported on the strategy for Arctic Policy 2021-2030 and on the national coordination led by Traficom and the Finnish Hydrographic Office for the S-100 implementation. Italy provided a brief on the outcome of their High North campaign 2021.

During the meeting, several converging comments were raised to request some support from the ARMSDIWG² (or even the MSDIWG): for instance for SPIs automated measurements, Arctic Planning Voyage Guide, General Arctic Hydrographic Data, etc. The Chair of ARMSDIWG reported that this working group was unfortunately not structured for such operational tasks and a reassessment of the objectives and resources was necessary beforehand. In light of the many developments and demands discussed throughout the meeting, all ARHC working groups were tasked to review their TOR and ensure they encapsulate the current challenges.

The meeting addressed the issue of the practical implementation of the Arctic Council – ARHC Joint Statement on Hydrography in the Arctic Region as a follow on of the MoU signed with the Arctic Council’s Working Group on the Protection of the Arctic Marine Environment (PAME) in 2020. A number of options were proposed to move forward. The IHO Secretariat drew a parallel on the efficient procedure in place with ATCM³ by the IHO Hydrographic Commission on Antarctica.

Following significant efforts since ARHC-9 (2019), the meeting endorsed a major revision of the Statutes of the ARHC, providing more flexibility for business between plenary sessions, and also clarifying the process of becoming and remaining Associate Member of the ARHC, while reflecting the desire of the full Members for ARHC to maintain its close-knit and collegial nature.

At the end of the meeting, Dr. Geneviève Béchard offered to host ARHC-12 in St. John’s, Newfoundland and Labrador, Canada, from 12 to 16 September 2022.

² Arctic MSDI Working Group.

³ Antarctic Treaty Consultative Meeting.



Some of the participants in the ARCH-11 VTC Meeting