

16th Conference of the Eastern Atlantic Hydrographic Commission Lisbon, Portugal Hybrid conference, 29 September – 1 October 2021

Contribution to the IHO Work Programme 2021	
Task 3.2.1.4	Prepare for and report meetings of the Regional Hydrographic Commission: EAtHC

The 16th Conference of the Eastern Atlantic Hydrographic Commission (EAtHC-16) was held from 29 September to 1 October 2021, in Lisbon, Portugal, hosted by the Hydrographic Office of the Portuguese Navy (IHPT). The Conference was the first real IHO event held in hybrid format since the beginning of the pandemic. It was chaired by RAdm Carlos Ventura Soares, Director General of the IHPT. Simultaneous interpretation French - English was provided.

The Conference was attended by about 60 delegates: 30 (in-person) plus 28 (through video teleconference -VTC). Seven IHO Member States of the Region out of 8 (Democratic Republic of Congo, France, Ghana, Morocco, Nigeria, Portugal, Spain), 2 Associate Members out of 9 (Cabo Verde, Guinea-Bissau) and 4 Observers out of 9 (Gambia, São Tomé e Príncipe, United Kingdom and United States of America) were represented. Representatives of the Sub Commission for Africa of the Intergovernmental Oceanographic Commission (IOC) of the UNESCO, International Association of Marine Aids to Navigation and Lighthouse Authorities (IALA), RENCs (IC-ENC and PRIMAR) also attended the meeting together with 4 industry stakeholders. Dr Geneviève Bécard (Council Chair, Canada) participated in some sessions as Observer. Director Abri Kampffer and Assistant Director Yves Guillam represented the IHO Secretariat.



In-person participants of the hybrid 16th Conference of the EAtHC.

The Conference was opened by the Chair who highlighted the importance for this Commission to commit for a larger and extended use of hydrographic data and knowledge in the Region. He thanked the Hydrographic Offices and partners for all the efforts made in networking for keeping reliable links between members throughout the years beyond formal Conferences. Director Kampffer made reference to the spirit of our predecessors who, 100 years ago, putting aside their political differences, set up the foundations of the IHO and paved the way until now. He encouraged the EAtHC Members to participate actively in the work of IHO committees and working groups to follow their example.

The representative of the Democratic Republic of Congo (DRC) signed the Statutes of the Commission as an IHO Member State and thereby became the 8th Member of the EAthC.

Following the adoption by the 2nd Session of the Assembly of the revised IHO Resolution 2/1997 – *Establishment of Regional Hydrographic Commissions*, the EAthC proposed various amendments to its own Statutes, which were adopted unanimously.



Very comprehensive and educative reports covering the activities of the HSSC, IRCC and their working groups (WENDWG, MSDIWG) were delivered by some subject matter experts of the EAthC. The Commission agreed to set up a working group on MSDI. Some Members raised their concerns on the workload, while the Secretariat suggested that there was an opportunity with such a working group to implement and assess some Strategic Performance Indicators of the new IHO Strategic Plan, for the Region. Significant concrete actions to be assigned in the work plan for the EAthC MSDI Working Group were presented for discussion, such as the support to be provided to Seabed2030 and the crowd-sourced bathymetry initiative.



Ms Jennifer Jencks, Director of the IHO Data Centre for Digital Bathymetry of NOAA and Ms Vicki Ferrini, Head of the Atlantic and Indian Oceans Regional Data Assembly and Coordination Center for Seabed2030 delivered a status report on their activities covering the Eastern Atlantic region.

A new EAthC Disaster Response Framework, developed in application of the IHO Resolution 1/2005 as amended by the Assembly, was adopted. It provides a very efficient contingency plan and various templates for possible assets, key infrastructure and port damage assessment information and possible country/company response capabilities.

The EAthC also addressed the bilateral and regional cooperation agreements in force (with MOWCA¹ and PMAWCA² in particular) to assess whether they need to be denounced or reinvigorated. Some actions to establish dialogue with MOWCA and PMAWCA will be undertaken under the Chair's leadership.

The Members and Associate Members presented their national reports which were very informative to identify the efforts already made in the region thanks to the support already provided by primary charting authorities in particular, but also efforts still to be made for meeting the basic requirements under the IHO responsibility. A couple of Members reported on the low appreciation of the value of hydrography by State actors. With regard to Capacity Building and Training, the Chair strongly indicated that time had come to rethink the strategy in the Region. Based on technical visits and providing it remains compliant with CBSC procedures, one option could be to offer on-site-training courses, or support, with the existing equipment available in the country: a challenge for supporting and supported nations for sure and much depended on bi-lateral activities.

The Commission welcomed the offer made by Cabo Verde, supported by Portugal and France, to host the 17th Conference of the EAthC in September 2022. RAdm Carlos Ventura Soares

¹ Maritime Organization of West and Central Africa.

² Ports Management Association of West and Central Africa.

closed the Conference expressing his gratitude to all participants and his thanks to the IHPT team for the secretariat of the Conference.