

22nd Conference of the Mediterranean and Black Seas Hydrographic Commission Video-conference, 27 – 28 May 2021

Contribution to the IHO Work Programme 2021	
Task 3.2.1.6	Prepare for and report meetings of the Regional Hydrographic Commission: MBSHC

The 22nd Conference of the Mediterranean and Black Seas Hydrographic Commission (MBSHC) was held in virtual format, from 27 to 28 May. The Conference was preceded on 25 May by the 6th meeting of the Region F International Charting Coordination Working Group (Region F ICCWG). The Conference was chaired by Captain (Dir) José Daniel Gonzalez-Aller Lacalle, Director of the Instituto Hidrográfico de la Marina (IHM), the Spanish Hydrographic Office. A total of 49 registered participants from 19 Member States of the MBSHC (Algeria, Bulgaria, Croatia, Cyprus, Egypt, France, Georgia, Greece, Italy, Lebanon, Malta, Monaco, Morocco, Romania, Slovenia, Spain, Tunisia, Turkey and Ukraine) and two Associate Member States (United Kingdom and United States of America) attended the Conference. Dr. Geneviève Béchar d (Canada) as Chair of the Council, the International Association of Marine Aids to Navigation and Lighthouse Authorities (IALA), IC-ENC and PRIMAR, as the two Regional ENC Coordinating Centres (RENC) and one stakeholder from industry participated as observers. The IHO Secretariat was represented by Director Luigi Sinapi and Assistant Director Yves Guillam.



Some of the participants of the virtual 22nd Conference of the MBSHC.

The Conference was opened by the Chair who highlighted important issues for the Commission. He also took the opportunity to share the condolences of MBSHC Members to the family and relatives of RDML Richard Brennan (US, NOAA) who passed away recently.

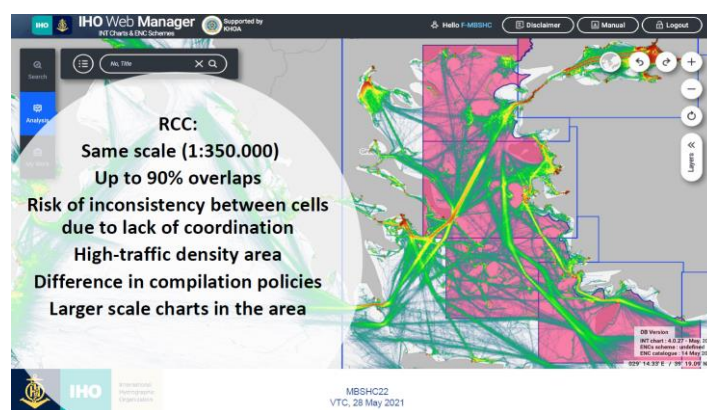
In his introduction, Director Luigi Sinapi gave an outline of the most important topics to be addressed during the Conference, one of them being the implementation by the Commission of the decisions and actions resulting from the 2nd Session of the Assembly (A-2) and from the 4th meeting of the Council (C-4). The other one, more structural, was to ensure business continuity of the MBSHC and its subordinate working groups. He also reported on the recent renewal of the agreement between the IHO and the CIEM¹. Together with the activities handled by the IHO-EU Network Working Group (IENWG) and reported by Greece, these two bodies, CIEM and IENWG, play an important networking role in the region.

In the absence of any candidate and designation for the position of Vice-Chair at the beginning of the Conference², Spain kindly offered to keep the chairmanship of the Commission until an in-person MBSHC-23 is hopefully held before May 2022. Deviation from the Statutes in force was agreed by the Members and an election of a Vice-Chair will be arranged by correspondence between September and December 2021. Croatia indicated that they were considering to nominate a candidate for the Vice-Chair position. Continuing on corporate matters, the Chair suggested that two ad hoc working groups be established, one to revise the MBSHC Statutes, as a matter of priority to implement A-2 and C-4 decisions including the new IHO Resolution 2/1997 as amended, the second to consider the possible evolution of the responsibilities for the Region F ICCWG Coordinator with the development of S-100 services and its consequences on the corresponding workload for the Region F ICCWG Coordinator. This should be addressed in the revision of the Region F ICCWG Terms of Reference. At the end of the Conference, with Italy stepping down from two positions, Lebanon kindly offered to assume the role of Crowdsourced Bathymetry/Seabed 2030 Ambassador, while the position as Region F ICCWG Coordinator remained vacant, the first time since the establishment of this Commission.

The Lebanese Navy Hydrographic Service (LNHS) representing Lebanon, the 94th IHO Member since December 2020 and new full Member of the MBSHC, gave an overview of its strategy, plans and activities. Lebanon warmly thanked Italy (IIM) for their support in the development of the LNHS under a technical arrangement for the next decade signed in July 2020 and for their cooperation in the development of the Lebanese National Nautical Charting Plan in particular. Lebanon also commended France and the United Kingdom for their rapid response deployment plan in the survey of Beirut Port, after the tragic explosion that occurred on 4 August 2020: a direct and positive application of the IHO Resolution 1/2005 – *IHO response to disasters* - that was just revised by the Assembly in 2020.

Including both ENC's and INT charts, the Chair of the Region F ICCWG gave a very comprehensive situation report of the achievements and progress made since MBSHC-21, making the best use of INTGIS various overlays. Following non-convergent statements made by Greece and Turkey, it was noted that the situation has not improved in the Aegean Sea.

Arguments were provided by one party rejecting the adoption of the minutes of the previous Conference MBSHC-21.



¹ The Mediterranean Science Commission.

² As planned in the Statutes in force.

Noting that no constructive dialogue was possible, in particular through such a VTC Conference, Director Luigi Sinapi announced that the IHO Secretariat was obliged to take the measures by which the Aegean Sea in S-11 Part B will become a “blank” area, with no approved ENC and INT chart scheme until a bilateral agreement is reached between interested parties. The MBSHC Chair was also invited to report on these issues to the next IRCC meeting, in particular in application of IHO Resolution 1/2018 - *Elimination of overlapping ENC data in areas of demonstrable risk to the safety of navigation*.

The RENCs and the representative of IALA provided very educative presentations on their activities, future developments and support to IHO activities. Members of the MBSHC were invited to approach their national authorities in order to support the transformation process of IALA to become an Intergovernmental Organization. This was followed by two presentations from US (NGA), one on the current ongoing development towards a new World Port Index webservice, the second on the Global Marine Density Service, both of them being interoperable with INTToGIS to support charting schemes planning and coordination (coverage, adequacy).

The report provided by the MBSHC Capacity Building (CB) Coordinator (Turkey) showed that despite the Covid pandemic, activities are progressing in the region and that the scope of CB is extending to many topics other than the traditional ones such as: airborne lidar bathymetry, underwater photogrammetry, oil spill detection with remote sensing. Thanks to the support provided by the RENCs, as well as the establishment by A-2 of the IHO e-Learning Center, it is likely that transition to S-1xx will also become a key topic in the next coming years.

After the review of actions at the end of the Conference and the identification of key items to be reported to IRCC-13 meeting in June, the Commission welcomed the offer made by Slovenia to host the 23rd Conference of the MBSHC in 2022, if possible. Captain (Dir) José Daniel Gonzalez-Aller Lacalle, Chair of the MBSHC, closed the Conference expressing his gratitude to all participants and his IHM team for the secretariat of the Conference.