

24th Conference of the Mediterranean and Black Seas Hydrographic Commission (MBSHC)

Constanta, Romania
2-4 July 2024

Chair's report

1. Scope of the report

This report covers the main activities of the MBSHC since its 23rd conference in Ljubljana (Slovenia) in March 2022.

2. Membership

Members: Albania, Algeria, Bulgaria, Croatia, Cyprus, Egypt, France, Georgia, Greece, Italy, Lebanon, Malta, Monaco, Montenegro, Morocco, Romania, Russian Federation, Serbia (suspended), Slovenia, Spain, Syria (suspended), Tunisia, Türkiye, Ukraine.

Associate member(s): Israel, Palestinian Authority, United Kingdom, United States of America.

Observers: CIESM, Germany, IALA, IC-ENC, IOC, PRIMAR.

Chair: Vinka KOLIĆ BUBIĆ, Croatia, from April 2022

Vice-Chair: Romania, from September 2022

3. Meetings attended by the Chair of the MBSHC:

- 3rd Session of the Assembly (2023)
- 7th Council Meeting (2023)
- 6th Council Meeting (2022)
- IRCC16 (2024), only with the report and presentation
- IRCC15 (2023), only with the report and presentation
- IRCC14 (2022), only with the report and presentation
- HSSC15 (2023)

4. MBSHC Working Groups activities:

International Charting Coordination WG for the charting region F (Region F ICCWG)

In the period after MBSHC23, as it was agreed during MBSHC23, Greece has been continued its role as Region F ICCWG Coordinator and Türkiye as Vice-Coordinator. Transfer of the Region F ICCWG coordinator role to Türkiye will be during the forthcoming MBSHC24 Conference in accordance with Decision MBSHC23/07.

In two year period there were numerous activities concentrated mainly on conducting process for adoption new INT Chart schemes strictly in accordance with relevant IHO and MBSHC regulation in force. Several new INT Charts was approved as submitted by Lebanon (MBSHC CL [07/2023](#)), Greece (MBSHC CL [13/2023](#)) and Egypt (MBSHC CL [06/2024](#)).

Member States in generally agreed about the future role that regional cartographic coordination in the coming years regarding data products and services based on IHO S-100 Product Specifications. The role of F ICCWG Coordinator has been expanded to include coordination of S-101 in the F region. In order to formalize this approach additional two draft of text of revised ICCWG Terms of Reference (ToRs) and Rules of procedures (RoPs) was circulated, which includes the scope, governance for coordination of S-101 production (Region F CL [07/2023](#) and [08/2024](#)). It is expected to be agreed during a separate the ICC WG meeting on the first day of the next 24th conference of the MBSHC, and if agreed to be formally approved during 24th MBSHC Conference.

FICC CL [04/2024](#) invited member states to participate in a survey regarding their readiness to provide

S-101 products and data services. Eight MS provided feedback (FICCWG CL [09/20224](#)).

By two separate Coordinator FICC CL ([05/2024](#) and CL [06/2024](#)) member states invited to update of the list of ports of the region and complementary information and provide the ENC overlap risk assessment in accordance with methodology developed by the UKHO.

Black and Azov Seas WG (BASWG)

Türkiye is the Chair of the Black and Azov Seas Working Group. The main objectives of the WG are: 1) to coordinate the hydrographic, cartographic, navigational, and maritime safety information needs (MSI) and requirements of the States in the Black and Azov Seas, 2) to coordinate the actions & resolutions in the region in accordance with the outcomes of the MBSHC meetings. Five members of BASWG are present Bulgaria, Georgia, Romania, Türkiye and Ukraine. Also, IHO Director, Region F Coordinator and NAVAREA-III Coordinator attended the meeting. National reports were presented with an accent on promulgation navigational warnings, need for capacity building and S-100 Implementation Plan. Ukraine's request for technical support and assistance were present and consequently it was formulated in IHO [CL 21/2024](#). Türkiye presented two papers respectively: "Consideration of the definition of Hydrographic Interests" and "Involvement of BASWG Representative in the Composition of the Council". Both documents has been updated and presented for the MBSHC consideration. List of actions and decisions were revised and updated. The all BASWG documents are available on MBSHC/[BASWG](#) website.

MBSHC S-1xx WG

Following decision MBSHC23/08, a working group MBSHC S-1xx dedicated to the S-100 roadmap implementation within the MBSHC region has been established.

A call for membership to the MBSHC S-1xx Working Group was issued by MBSHC circular letter No. [04/2022](#) in May. Ten applications were received (Croatia, France, Greece, Italy, Romania, Slovenia, Spain, Türkiye, United Kingdom, United States of America) and MBSHC circular letter No. [06/2022 Rev1](#) provided the list of members and points of contact, and announced the selection of France (SHOM) as chair of the working group.

The terms of reference and rules of procedures of the MBSHC S-1xx WG were drafted by the Chair of the WG in November 2022 and circulated among its members. Due to objection of one member state ToRs and RoPs are still under consideration, expected to be agreed during a separate the S-1xx WG meeting/workshop on the first day of the next 24th conference of the MBSHC.

The objectives of the MBSHC S-1xx WG are (but not limited to):

- Experience sharing between WG members on the implementation of the S-100 roadmap in their country/organisation (general policies, governance, tools, calendar);
- Coordinate the capacities in the region for a seamless development and production of S-1xx products in the area through the nine IGIF pathways (See Reference Action WENDWG12/33);
- Identify common axes and priorities for the MBSHC for the development of the S-1XX products and to set up actions to support MBSHC Members (presentation of technical specifications, training, assistance to Members to prepare the S-1XX production in compliance with the IHO S-100 roadmap);
- Coordinate the cooperative actions with Region F ICCWG and MBSHC CB Coordinator.

This WG is not intended to coordinate the S-101 production in terms of scheme, as this role has been given to the Region F ICCWG by the MBSHC.

5. Other activities

MBSHC Statutes

The new MBSHC Statutes was adopted during the MBSHC23, and in force as from 1 April 2022.

Cooperation with Member States

During the MBSHC23, IHO invited Albania to sign the MBSHC Statutes at the end of the meeting to become Full Member of the MBSHC. On June 19, 2023, the Albanian Hydrographic Service submitted the signed Statutes of the MBSHC to the IHO Secretariat, thereby becoming a member of this regional hydrographic commission. The member states of the MBSHC were informed about this by the MBSHC [CL05/2023](#)). Expanding MBSHC membership is beneficial. Considering geographical position of Albania and their hydrographic capacity this will certainly contribute to the improvement of the hydrographic service in the Adriatic Sea region and beyond

Two Member States (Israel, Libya) are still non-members of the IHO and two Member States were suspended (Serbia and Syria).

Related to IRCC13 Recommendation 10, to apply Resolution 1/2005 in case of disasters occurred to support the affected States in their Regions, MBSHC created Disaster Response Framework (DRF) and it was approved at the MBSHC23 (March 2022). The Disaster Action Plan, as a part of DRF was updated in accordance the MBSHC Permanent Action No. 38 and published on the MBSHC web site MBSHC CL [11/2023](#) and [01/2024](#).

MBSHC CL [08/2023](#) member states drew attention to the estimated risks of navigation provided by UKHO in connection with the terrible flooding that occurred in Libya and to consider some proposals to reduce them.

Cooperation with the European Union

MBSHC Member States are active in participating to the IHO-EU network working group (IENWG). Greece is the MBSHC focal point for the IENWG and has provided an updated list of maritime related events, projects and tenders of interest for the MBSHC, as requested. Several MBSHC Member States took part in European Commission's flagship maritime projects EMODNET.

Maritime Safety Information (MSI)

The NAVAREA III Coordinator for this region is Spain. The NAVAREA III Region covers the Mediterranean Sea from the meridian 005° 45' W, and the Black Sea, including the Azov Sea. Since May 2020, NAVAREA III navigational warnings are broadcast on SafetyNET II of IMARSAT system and on Safety CAST from January 2023 through IRIDIUM system have been stabilized. Most of them about 75% of the messages are from the Aegean Sea, the Eastern Mediterranean and Black Seas Very important NAVAREA III warnings on the period even in force are about: drifting mine in Black Sea - Northwestern Part, navigational hazards in the coastal waters of Libya and grain corridor declares by Ukrainian authorities for entry or departure of Ukrainian ports.

The number of Inoperative Stations is growing clearly since last conference. Therefore, NAVAREA III Coordinator has encouraged NAVTEX Coordination States proceed to repair them to cover their responsibility NAVTEX areas. It is concluded that is crucial for the NAVAREA III Coordinator Centre that all the NAVTEX Coordinator States developed S-124 NW following OHI/IMO recommendations until 2026. NAVAREA III Coordinator ordinary participate in the relevant IHO and IM meetings and as a speaker in realization the capacity building activities.

Maritime Spatial Data Infrastructure (MSDI)

The MBSHC ambassador on the MSDI WG is Italy. The MBSHC ambassador participated at:

- MSDI WG13 in Singapore (9–13 May 2022, which was incorporated with the annual meeting of the OGC Marine Domain Working Group,
- MSDI WG14 in Genova (30 January-3 February 2023, which was held in conjunction with the meeting of the OGC Marine Domain Working Group and the fourth expert meeting of the UN-GGIM WGMG,
- MSDI WG15, Bali, Indonesia (4 to 8 March 2024).

Regular updates between MBSHC and MSDI WG have been exchanged through the ambassador. Workshop on MSDI Development & Implementation funded by IHO CB Fund. was held in İstanbul, Türkiye (07-09 May.2024) The workshop was attended 13 participants from ten countries Bulgaria,

Romania, Ukraine, Georgia, Lebanon, Malta, Türkiye, Montenegro, Croatia, and Italy. Participants received a great benefit to develop their MSDI. MSDI is becoming more and more relevant due to marine spatial data integration and new standard S-100.

There is a constant need to cooperate with MS, to encourage training, awareness of the importance of the integrated geospatial information framework and involvement of the MS in the MSDI initiatives and challenges in the region.

Capacity Building Activities

The Capacity Building (CB) Coordinator role of the MBSHC has been carried out by Türkiye.

Capacity-Building activities, which are based on assessing the development and capacities of each coastal state within the region, play a key role in providing and maintaining a fundamental level of understanding and capability in related fields. This base makes it possible for the coastal states to cooperate, exchange information and experience. Another essential objective of these activities is to help the Member States fulfilling their obligations with respect to the SOLAS Convention.

Related to the approved and adopted revised Capacity Building Strategy at the A3 (decision 18) CB activities within the MBSHC region should be focused on the S-100 with the aim to have ability and capability of the MS to meet the requirements and delivery phases of the S-100 implementation plan.

Türkiye, as the MBSHC CB Coordinator represents the Commission at the CB Sub-Committee and is responsible for updating the MBSHC three-year CB plan, which is mostly shaped by the feedback of the Member States. A three-year CB plan was approved during MBSHC23.

Since the last MBSHC23 three workshops were carried out successfully:

1. Workshop on Cartographic Data Management (05.–07.12.2022) and workshop on MSDI development & implementation (07.–09.12.2022). Both workshops funded by the CBSC were carried out successfully in Istanbul, Türkiye. Fifteen trainees from 10 different countries joined the workshops under the supervision of two trainers from the USA.
2. Workshop on MSDI Development & Implementation (07-09 May.2024, İstanbul, Türkiye) funded by IHO CB Fund. The workshop was attended 13 participants from ten countries Bulgaria, Romania, Ukraine, Georgia, Lebanon, Malta, Türkiye, Montenegro, Croatia, and Italy.
3. Workshop on ENC Quality Assessment & Conversion Course (20-24 May 2024), İstanbul) funded under the IC-ENC "Opt in Fund". The workshop attended 11 participants from ten countries Bulgaria, Egypt, Georgia, Greece, Lebanon, Romania, Slovenia, Tunisia, Türkiye, and Ukraine.

The challenge faced in terms of the CB activities is mainly related with the limited funds available each year. This situation has the potential of causing more severe repercussions as revised Capacity Building Strategy at the A3 was approved and adopted (decision 18) which states that S-100 is the priority related to CB activities. IHO should find ways to increase alternate sources of funding and partnerships for capacity building, as the demand far outweighs IHO CB funds. In this sense, the way in which the IC-ENC ("Opt in Fund") made funds available is certainly worthy of attention.

Worldwide ENC Database (WEND) matters

Following MBSHC23, a working group dedicated to the S-100 roadmap implementation within the MBSHC region has been established (ES, FR, GB, GR, HR, IT, RO, SI, US, TR). The terms of reference and rules of procedures of the MBSHC S-1xx WG were drafted by the Chair of the WG in November 2022 and circulated among its members, still under consideration. A first version of the IGIF Matrix has been implemented by the WG Chair, very low interest, and participation from the MS in the MBSHC

region. MBSHC CL [09/2023](#) Member States were requested to participate in a survey initiated by the WEND WG to assess the readiness status of MBSHC to provide S-lxx datasets by 2026 per MBSHC. The results of the survey were presented during WEND14 ([WENDWG14-05.3C Rev1](#)).

6. MBSHC cooperation with stakeholders (organizations, industry, etc.):

Cooperation with the Mediterranean Science Commission (CIESM)

During the MBSHC23, CIESM presented the joint IHO/CIESM initiative Mapping Marine Geological Risks in the Mediterranean Region. IHO reminded that in March 2021 the MoU was renewed to be updated with current global initiatives for the oceans, and that the IHO worked closely with the CIESM. IHO invited all the Member States of the Commission to participate in this development.

The importance was stressed of tide-gauge reporting in real time for the tsunami warning and of managing disaster hazards in the region, and the need was underlined for circulations models based on high-resolution bathymetric data. It was announced that the workshop on disaster response would take place in 2023. As it was not funded, this workshop was added to the 2024 CBWP pending IHO funding.

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

To facilitate the process for IALA to achieve the status of an intergovernmental technical consultative organization like the IHO, MBSHC Chair issued CL [10/2023](#) asking Member States about national status of Parties of the Convention. MS requested to declare their intention to contact a national competent authority asking them about the status of signing of the Convention and/or expected date of signing. The introduction to the MBSHC Chair's circular letter explained the purpose of the letter by referring to the discussion and the action (MBSHC23/08) taken during MBSHC23 conference.

Four member states were replied (MBSHC CL [15/2023](#)): Croatia, Cyprus, Greece, United Kingdom. The answers can be summarized from those who said that there is no (or little) indication of the status and interest of states to sign (ratify) the Convention, to those who said that the ratification process is at a certain level of realization. In any case, with this activity, the member states, addressing the competent national authorities, expressed and confirmed the importance of close cooperation between two international organizations, IHO and IALA, in the safety of navigation and beyond. A list of countries with the date of ratification of the IALA Convention is available at the link <https://www.iala-aism.org/the-igo-project/>.

Industry and RENCs

Both RENCs and Industry took part in the last MBSHC conference and are invited to participate in the next one as well (MBSHC [Chair Letter 03/2024](#)). Members states have been instructed to use excellent, simple and user-friendly RENCs overlap tools in the process of assessment of ENC overlaps as it was initiated with Region F ICCWG Coordinator CL [08/2024](#). Good cooperation with both RENCs was continued and confirmed.

Industry participants are invited to participate at the next 24th MBSHC conference (MBSHC Chair letter [03/2024](#)). One session was planned for six Industry representatives who confirmed their participation.

7. Status of IRCC15 (2023) actions and recommendations relevant for the MBSHC

Based on the results of the 15th meetings of the Inter-Regional Coordination Committee (IRCC15) and the IHO Council (C-7), the Chair of the MBSHC, acting in accordance with the MBSHC Statutes was sent the list of actions, recommendations and decisions that require the attention of each Member State (MBSHC [CL 02/2024](#)). MBSHC Member States were requested to review the listed actions and submit comments and views (if any) to the MBSHC Chair. Member State also was advised to take the necessary measure if they deemed applicable and appropriate regarding a specific actions, recommendations or decisions. This procedure is expected to be applied on the IRCC16 actions and recommendations relevant for the MBSHC.

8. Status of MBSHC23 Actions and Recommendations and MBSHC Permanent Action

After about half the period between the two conferences had passed, it was time to present to Member States what had been realized from the final list of decisions, actions and recommendations taken during MBSHC23, also including status of list of the permanent actions as they were updated during the 23rd MBSHC Conference. As most of the actions from MBSHC23 have been completed, the circular points out that the emphasis in the period leading up to the 24th MBSHC Conference will be on the implementation of numerous Permanent Activities. This was communicated with member states with three MBSHC circular letters, MBSHC CL [12/2023](#), [03/2024](#) and [05/2024](#). Final status report on the progress made on the List of Actions and Recommendations and Permanent actions from the MBSHC 23 was shown in the MBSHC CL 13/2024.

9. Difficulties encountered and challenges yet to be addressed

a) Difficulties:

- A key challenge is to get more active participation from most MBSHC MS in the Committee/Working Groups of the MBSHC and IHO
- The main difficulties faced by the MBSHC are in the coordination and blocked negotiation between interested parties of the INT chart schemes and ENC coverage. The only way forward is to continue the discussion and bilateral negotiation between interested parties and find a way to provide external independent expert (legal aspect) advisory support in the process of bilateral negotiations that would lead to conclusion of a technical agreement to resolve the ENC overlap and INT paper charts schemes.
- The escalated tension due to the ongoing military confrontation in the region (Black and Azov Seas) currently undermines the coordination between the Member States, especially 'ENC Overlap' issues have remained unresolved.
- Insufficient funds for capacity building programs.
- Difficult and slow adaptation of most of the MS in the MBSHC region to the process of digitalization in the whole maritime sector which starts with S-100 as a base line data model for IMO's e-navigation programme.
- Collaborative ecosystem to develop and apply S-100 based products – interoperability and reliability of the data of different kind of stakeholders.

b) Challenges:

- A major challenge is the implementation of S-100 products in the region because it is demanding in organizational, technical-technological, and financial sense. The most important strategic issue will be related to dual standards regarding the transition from S-57 to S-101 ENCs, or even triple mode because most of the MS in the MBSHC region will have paper chart production, S-57 and S-101.
- Key role of the RHC for harmonized production and distribution of future S-100.
- Awareness raising among MS – it is necessary to create an environment where many stakeholders such as maritime administrations, industry and other professional organizations can be involved and cooperate to facilitate widest possible implementation of S-100.
- Main challenge will be the establishment of the national S-100 Committee in each country. The National S-100 Committees should be composed of various national stakeholders that are involved in the development of S-100 standards especially significant end users such as Maritime administrations, Pilot services, Navy, Vessel Traffic Service, research institutes and industry in the fields of nautical publications, aids to navigation, e-Navigation and marine weather to allow varied participation.
- Improving cartographic coordination in the region is an ongoing task and permanent challenge.
- Improve capacity building programs. MBSHC region needs to develop e-learning capabilities which in turn will enable capacity building activities to reach a wider audience in a more cost-effective way. The main activities in the CB programme should be focused

on S-100 Universal hydrographic model and MSDI.

- In order to enhance better results and ensure continuity of the work and implementation of the assigned tasks to the MS in the region, IHO/MS need to find a better way to motivate MS for the positions of Chair and Vice-Chair of the MBSHC (other RHC) – funds/sponsorship on a yearly basis for the chairmanship.

10. Achievements and lessons learned:

- The new MBSHC Statutes was adopted during the MBSHC23, and in force as from 1 April 2022.
- New Member States and the enlargement of the MBSHC membership is beneficial.
- Following decision MBSHC23/08, a working group MBSHC S-1xx dedicated to the S-100 roadmap implementation within the MBSHC region has been established.
- The role of F ICCWG Coordinator has been expanded to include coordination of S-101 in the F region, waiting implementation.
- The coordination role of the IENWG is a great example of the cooperation between European HOs in large EU funded projects.
- MBSHC MS are active contributors to EMODNet Bathymetry portal and EMODNet bathymetry data is used in the IHO-IOC GEBCO global grid.
- Capacity building activities play a key role in the Region, CB funds should be raised.
- Disaster Response Framework for the MBSHC region was approved and regularly updated on yearly basis.
- Progress has been made in the Region F concerning the solution of some ENC overlaps, INT and ENC charting schemes. Bilateral discussion and negotiation are the only way for the solution of ENC overlapping issues and the only way for the step forward. Independent the third party professional legal advisory support is recommended to speed up the processes of bilateral negotiation.

11. Conclusions:

During the two years of Croatian chair-ships of the MBSHC main efforts was put into the implementation of decisions, actions and recommendations adopted during 23rd MBSHC conference through close cooperation with the members of MBSHC, especially with the chairs and coordinators of the working groups of MBSHC and MBSHC representatives in various IHO bodies and working groups. The cooperation within the MBSHC in generally was good. The main challenge in the MBSHC region still remains the implementation of the S-1xx framework data product and services, and for that reason additional effort, capacity building activities, education, trainings, and cooperation among Member States in the region are required. MBSHC S-1xx working group should coordinate activities related to S-100 roadmap implementation within the MBSHC region. MSDI is becoming more and more relevant due to marine spatial data integration and new standard S-100. There is a constant need to cooperate with MS, to encourage training, awareness of the importance of the integrated geospatial information framework and involvement of the MS in the MSDI initiatives and challenges in the region.

11. Actions required of MBSHC:

The MBSHC Members, Associates Members and Observers are invited to:

- Note this report.
- Make additions as may be necessary.
- Take any other action as deemed appropriate.

Chair
Vinka KOLIĆ BUBIĆ, MSc

Vinka Bubić