INTERNATIONAL HYDROGRAPHIC ORGANIZATION

Strategic Plan 2021-2026

IHO International Hydrographic Organization

Hydrography is the branch of applied science which deals with the measurement and description of the physical features of oceans, seas, coastal areas, lakes and rivers, as well as with the prediction of their change over time.

The International Hydrographic Organization (IHO), which was established in 1921 and now has 93 member States, is an intergovernmental consultative and technical organization. It supports the safety of navigation and the protection of the marine environment, and coordinates the setting of hydrographic standards. It also facilitates capacity building of national hydrographic services. The IHO provides an international forum for the improvement of hydrographic services through the discussion and resolution of hydrographic issues and assists member Governments to deliver these services through their national hydrographic offices.

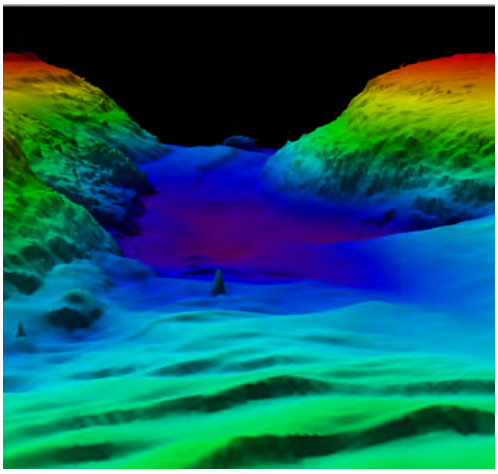
Hydrographic offices are facing significant challenges that shape the context in which the IHO builds the strategy to fulfil its vision:

- Growing needs for hydrographic knowledge, for increasingly diversified customers
- Progress in sensors, carriers and IT technology
- Data revolution, transforming the hydrographic ecosystem of gathering, processing and provision
- Increasing environmental, societal and economic attention to the Ocean

GOAL 1

Evolving the hydrographic support for safety and efficiency of maritime navigation, undergoing profound transformation

On-going transformation in navigation, such as e-navigation, autonomous shipping, reduction of emissions, lead to a profound evolution of hydrographic services, in a context of high demands for digital data.



Target

- Deliver standards for hydrographic data and specifications of hydrographic products; support their regular production; and coordinate regional and global services for their provision
- Develop standards, specifications and guidelines in the areas of data assurance, including cyber security and data quality assessment
- Use capacity building and training to develop and increase the ability of Member States to support safety and efficiency of maritime navigation

Strategic Performance Indicator

- Percentage of Member States having operationalized production and distribution of hydrographic data products and services based on IHO Universal Hydrographic Data Model (S-100), under an implementation framework of coordination and agreed timelines (2026: 100%)
- Number of hydrographic data products and services based on the Universal Hydrographic Data Model that cater for the new requirements: autonomous shipping, reduction of emissions
- Percentage of hydrographic data products and services based on the S-100 model that are covered by IHO standards, specifications and guidelines on cyber security (2026: 100%)
- Percentage of navigationally significant areas (e.g. charted traffic separation schemes, anchorages, channels) for which the adequacy of the hydrographic knowledge is assessed through the use of appropriate quality indicators (2026: 100%)
- Ability and capability of Member States to meet the requirements and delivery phases of the S-100 implementation plan (2026: 50%)

GOAL 2

Increasing the use of hydrographic data for the benefit of society

The ever-growing applications of marine data entails that IHO takes a more prominent role in cultivating the use of hydrographic data through cooperative and collaborative efforts and identifying the need for collecting more data.

Target

- Build a portal to support and promote regional and international cooperation in marine spatial data infrastructures (MSDI)
- Promote new tools and methods to accelerate and increase coverage, consistency, quality of surveys in poorly surveyed areas
- Apply UN shared guiding principles for geospatial information management in order to ensure interoperability and extended use of hydrographic data in combination with other marine-related data

Strategic Performance Indicator

- Number of hits downloading data/information from the portal
- Percentage of adequately surveyed area per coastal state
- Number of new applications of the new version of Standards for Hydrographic Surveys (S-44)
- Number of HOs reporting success applying the principles in their national contexts (2026: 70%)

GOAL 3

Participating actively in international initiatives related to the knowledge and the sustainable use of the Ocean

IHO's ambition is to be an effective and recognized contributor to the major Ocean related challenges identified by the international community.

Target

- Collaborate with other bodies who deliver capacity-building and training to improve effectiveness of capacity-building activities and programmes
- Improve knowledge of the world's seafloors
- Implement a comprehensive IHO digital communication strategy in order to enhance its visibility and accessibility to its work

Strategic Performance Indicator

- Percentage of Coastal States that are capable to provide marine safety information (MSI) according to the joint IMO/IHO/WMO manual on MSI (2026 90%)
- Percentage of Coastal States that are able to provide marine safety information (MSI) according to the joint IMO/IHO/WMO manual on MSI (2026 90%)
- Number of contributors to DCDB who are not hydrographic offices
- Percentage of total sea area that is Seabed 2030 compliant for incorporation into the GEBCO dataset and services
- Number of visits, likes, re-postings, etc. associated with the IHO social media sites
- Volume downloaded from the IHO website and Geographical Information System (GIS)

MISSION

The mission of the IHO is to create a global environment in which States provide adequate, standardized and timely hydrographic data, products and services and ensure their widest possible use.

VISION

The vision of the IHO is to be the authoritative worldwide hydrographic body which actively engages all coastal and interested States to advance maritime safety and efficiency and which supports the protection and sustainable use of the marine environment.

The object of the Organization is to bring about:

a) The coordination of the activities of national hydrographic offices
b) The greatest possible uniformity in nautical charts and documents
c) The adoption of reliable and efficient methods of carrying out and exploiting hydrographic surveys
d) The development of the sciences in the field of hydrography and the techniques employed in descriptive oceanography

HISTORY AND CONVENTION

International cooperation in the field of hydrography began with the first International Maritime Conference held in Washington in 1889, followed by two others in Saint Petersburg, in 1908 and 1912. In 1919, twenty-four nations met in London for a Hydrographic Conference, during which it was decided that a permanent body should be created. The resulting International Hydrographic Bureau began its activity in 1921 with eighteen Member States.

At the invitation of H.S.H. Prince Albert I of Monaco, a noted marine scientist, the Bureau was provided with headquarters in the Principality of Monaco where the IHO has resided since.

In 1970, an intergovernmental Convention entered into force which changed the Organization's name and legal status, creating the International Hydrographic Organization (IHO). In 2016, several amendments to the Convention came into effect to adapt to the common working methods of UN special organizations.

LOCATION

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MEMBER STATES AND SECRETARIAT

The IHO has 93 Member States. The official representative of each Member Government within the IHO is usually the head of the hydrographic office. The Secretary General and two Directors, together with a small international staff of technical experts in hydrography and nautical cartography as well as locally recruited administrative support staff make up the IHO Secretariat in Monaco. The Secretariat of the IHO coordinates and promotes the IHO's programmes and provides advice and assistance. The Secretariat represents the IHO in fifteen Regional Hydrographic Commissions covering all oceans and acts as Chair of the Hydrographic Commission of Antarctica.

PRINCIPAL COMMITTEES AND WORKING GROUPS

- IHO Assembly
- IHO Council
- InterRegional Coordination Committee
- Hydrographic Services and Standards Committee

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