



Dear Mr Chairman, WEND-WG

Re: WEND-WG Circular Letter 01/2010

You invited comment on the WEND-WG's report for submission to IRCC2, and on the paper from the Region F INT coordinator.

In the absence of any formal activity of the working group to date, it would seem sensible to limit our submission to a simple work plan at this stage to give us the structure and mandate for our activities before IRCC3.

Reading the terms of reference of the WEND-WG, I am struck by the noticeable focus on the development of adequate ENC coverage. This is an issue which is already under consideration in some detail by the relevant RHCs and IHB, and who have traditionally submitted their own reports. I therefore think we need to clarify the exact role the WEND-WG should play in this regard to avoid unnecessary duplication of activity. It would seem logical for the RHC Chairmen who are also members of this working group to define this.

I would recommend that the working group could more usefully address other associated issues which, from a broader user perspective, can be considered as prerequisites to "adequate ENC coverage to meet SOLAS V/19 requirements" – especially where we do not believe they have appropriate visibility at the IHO level.

In my mind, these can be broadly segmented between:

- ENC quality (accuracy and up-to-datedness of content; proper encoding)
- ENC utility (seamless coverage; consistent and sensible product design)
- ENC distribution (consistent pricing and licensing rules; open access at consistent price to all ENC service providers).

In this regard, the working group should take account of the ongoing work within the ENC updating working group which will cover some of the aspects of ENC quality. In addition, the working group should monitor the current cooperation between the two RENCs who are trying to define "best practice"

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in their current activities which cover many of these issues, and so develop a new unified RENC concept and joint database.

The WEND-WG can then review the conclusions of these work items, and as appropriate recommend their wider adoption. It is expected that the RENC cooperation work will deliver proposals to its RENC members within the next 4 months.

The proposal WEND-WG-01-10 addresses one of the more pressing ENC utility issues, and therefore sits perfectly within a programme of work structured as described above. With respect to overlapping data, this is a common occurrence within IC-ENC whose policy was tightened following the last WEND Committee meeting.

In most cases, when overlapping data is identified by IC-ENC quality assurance checks, it is corrected promptly by the producer nations involved. Increasingly we see this is done through simplified cartographic boundaries as per the advice in the WEND Principles, rather than more complex delineations of territorial boundaries. This is an encouraging trend.

However, the problem arises where there is no agreement of territorial boundaries, and this political issue transfers across to the technical matter of the limit of ENC production responsibility. Whilst the current IC-ENC release policy limits the expansion of this problem, it does not solve the problem, and we have several intractable cases in our database. Similarly there are no similar controls amongst non-RENC members, where in some cases their own data overlaps itself.

When this was discussed at the last WEND meeting, all proposals for resolving the problem, whilst generally supported by those for whom resolving overlaps is not an issue, were not supported by those who currently fail to address the problem. This therefore left us no further forward.

Based on our experience within IC-ENC, I find it difficult to believe that this situation is likely to change significantly, despite the best intentions and efforts of RHC / IHB / RENCs. If my assessment proves true, the proposal then recommends a report to IMO for any irreconcilable areas. I think that such an approach would be tantamount to admitting failure, and so would only serve to damage the reputation of IHO in the eyes of IMO, and so have the potential to jeopardise ECDIS.

I would advocate that instead, the WEND-WG takes a broader approach and attempts to define the minimum quality standard for an ENC. This will therefore not only encompass overlapping and consistency issues (i.e. ENC utility), but also the range of ENC quality and distribution issues as well. The IHB, through its Professional Assistants, can then help in drafting this definition based on commonly agreed technical principles and standards.

The WEND-WG can then make proposals for how to handle examples where producer nations are unable to meet such minimum standards, and who/how this assessment is made. Two ideas which come to mind (not recommendations) are:

- Amend WEND Principles to allow for overlapping data (so that ECDIS manufacturers put in suitable routines to handle such instances safely), and then implement internationally coordinated mechanism whereby the existing data which does not meet the standard is supplemented by data developed by another producer nation which does meet the standard, and which is distributed by RENCs to meet international shipping requirements. Appropriate royalties are then paid based on source data used.
- Retain WEND Principle, but IHB only issues producer codes within S-62 to nations who meet these standards. Nations who do not meet the standard can still produce S-57 data, but it will not be recognised as SOLAS compliant ENCs within an ECDIS.

This approach recognises that the WEND Principles place a level of responsibility on producing nations which must be met if the attendant rights are also to be enjoyed. It also does not single out just overlapping data, which is often a politically charged issue, but makes it only one of a number of user safety oriented quality criteria. This is therefore less likely to be as contentious.

In conclusion, I would recommend the WEND-WG work plan submitted to IRCC should cover:

1. Review of WG role in coordinating reporting of status / conclusions from existing RHC/IHB activities in developing adequate ENC coverage
2. Review scope and current extent of issues related to ENC quality, utility and distribution, with a view to drafting a definition for a minimum acceptable ENC standard and proposals for monitoring compliance to this standard and actions to be taken when the standards are not met.
3. Monitor the development of the RENC cooperation work, and review the conclusions for input into item 2 above and to determine any specific concepts which merit wider adoption by IRCC.
4. Report on conclusions to items 1-3 by March 2011

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