

TERMS OF REFERENCE
For the Advisory Board on the Law of the Sea (ABLOS)
of the
International Hydrographic Organization (IHO) and
the International Association of Geodesy (IAG)
(as endorsed at HSSC18 in May 2026)

Ref: 1st HSSC Meeting (Singapore 2009)
11th HSSC Meeting (Cape Town 2019)
14th HSSC Meeting (Indonesia 2022)
31st ABLOS Business Meeting (Niterói 2024)
17th HSSC Meeting (Stavanger, Norway 2025)
32nd ABLOS Meeting (Doha, Qatar 2025)

OBJECTIVE:

To provide information and advice on technical aspects of the Law of the Sea.

1. Terms of Reference

- 1.1. To provide information and advice with regard to the technical aspects of the Law of the Sea to:
 - a) The parent Organizations (IHO / IAG) or to other organizations; and
 - b) To their Member States.
- 1.2. To review State practice and jurisprudence on Law of the Sea matters which are relevant to the work of ABLOS so as to be in a position to provide expert advice when needed.
- 1.3. To study, promote and encourage the development of appropriate techniques in the application of the technical concepts contained within certain provisions of the United Nations Convention on the Law of the Sea.
- 1.4. To review and update IHO Special Publication C-51 “A Manual on Technical Aspects of the United Nations’ Convention on the Law of the Sea – 1982” (TALOS Manual).
- 1.5. To prepare, review and update other ABLOS publications as required by the parent organizations (IHO and IAG).

2. Rules of Procedure

- 2.1. ABLOS shall be composed of eight voting Members, preferably chose with wide geographic representation. Each parent Organisation (IHO / IAG) shall appoint four members. The Division for Ocean Affairs and the Law of the Sea of the United Nations Office of Legal Affairs (DOALOS), and the IHO Secretariat shall have representatives in an ex-officio capacity without voting rights.
- 2.2. ABLOS should normally take decisions by consensus. Should a vote be necessary then a simple majority of those present and voting is required, subject to a minimum of 4 voting members being present. In the case of a tied vote the Chair shall have a casting vote.

- 2.3. The Member States of the IHO, the IAG and ABLOS through its Chair may appoint observers to ABLOS. Observers may participate in correspondence and attend meetings but may not vote.
- 2.4. Appointed Members and Observers shall serve for a term of four years, renewable by a recommendation of the Board for one additional four-year term and with the approval of the corresponding parent organization. Observers may be reappointed with the approval of the ABLOS for further terms. The Chair shall inform the relevant parent organization of any foreseeable vacancy in a timely manner. Members and Observers are expected to attend every meeting of ABLOS. Where a Member or Observer fails to attend two consecutive meetings the Chair should raise the matter with the parent organization (IHO / IAG) with a view to rectifying the situation.
- 2.5. All terms, for appointed Members and Observers, start on completion of the Business Meeting immediately after the individual's appointment and complete at the end of the Business Meeting four years after appointment. If a vacancy is created inter-sessionally, the new appointed individual's membership will be effective immediately but dated from completion of the next Business Meeting.
- 2.6. Whilst Members of ABLOS are appointed by their parent Organizations (IHO / IAG), to whom they are accountable, Members are expected to serve as individual experts in their own right. No statements or publications may be issued in the name of ABLOS without ABLOS' prior approval.
- 2.7. The Chair and Vice-Chair shall be elected by ABLOS and should normally come from different parent Organizations (IHO / IAG) on a rotational basis. They will serve for a two-year period, after which the Vice-Chair becomes Chair and a new Vice-Chair is elected. If the Chair is not present or available, the Vice-Chair shall act in this capacity until the next meeting. Should the Vice-Chair not be available to take office as Chair when required, a new Chair and Vice-Chair should be elected.
- 2.8. IHO / IAG ABLOS may invite guests to business meetings and seminars where they or their organisations may support the delivery of work by ABLOS. The guests can be proposed by any member of ABLOS. Acceptance will be as for "decisions" above in 2.2.
- 2.9. ABLOS may work with other appropriate organisations to deliver specific tasks as working groups, seminars or conferences. Decisions will be taken by the ABLOS Board and notified to the parent organisation.
- 2.10. ABLOS may establish Working Groups to carry out specific tasks.
- 2.11. ABLOS has its permanent Secretariat at the IHO Secretariat, Monaco. The Secretariat publishes the documents and publications produced by the Board as required.
- 2.12. Members and Observers of ABLOS are expected to be supported by their own host organizations or governments for travel expenses and work. Exceptionally, an ABLOS Member may be supported by the ABLOS fund for a specific task.
- 2.13. ABLOS normally meets once a year at a venue and time that minimizes cost and conducts business by correspondence between meetings.
- 2.14. ABLOS may organize conferences and seminars. A biennial technical conference is normally held in Monaco in conjunction with an ABLOS meeting. ABLOS may operate a fund to cover the receipts and expenses of running such a conference. Guidelines for the operation of this fund are appended to these terms of reference.

- 2.15. The Chair or Chair's nominated representative shall report on the activities of the Board to the annual meeting of the IHO Hydrographic Services and Standards Committee (HSSC) and to each ordinary session of the Assembly through the Council. The Chair or Chair's nominated representative shall also provide an annual report on ABLOS' activities to the IAG and a report covering the inter-sessional period to the General Assembly of the IAG.
- 2.16. Technical questions and requests for capacity building support should be submitted to the IHO Secretariat. For further administrative consideration by IHO and IAG.
- 2.17. These TOR should be reviewed by ABLOS as required and not less frequently than every 4 years. Amendments, recommended by ABLOS, are to be submitted to the parent Organizations (IHO / IAG) for approval.
- 2.18. Should other organisations wish to become co-parent of ABLOS the decision will be discussed at ABLOS and if favourable referred to the governance processes of current parent bodies.

ABLOS CONFERENCE FUND GUIDELINES
(As amended 27 October 2017. Reviewed 8 October 2024)

Reference: IHO resolution 1/2014, as amended

1. Introduction

1.2. The Advisory Board on the Law of the Sea (ABLOS) is formed by four representatives from each of the following bodies: The International Hydrographic Organization (IHO) and the International Association of Geodesy (IAG). Secretarial support for ABLOS is provided by the IHO Secretariat. The parent organizations (IHO / IAG) approve the Terms of Reference (TOR) for ABLOS. The Division for Ocean Affairs and the Law of the Sea of the Office of Legal Affairs of the United Nations (DOALOS) and the IHO Secretariat attend ABLOS meetings in an ex-Officio capacity.

2. Biennial Conference

2.1 The TOR invite ABLOS to organise seminars and technical conferences and permit the operation of a fund to support such activities.

3. Income

3.1 The primary source of income for the fund will be from the registration fees of delegates attending such seminars / conferences. ABLOS should set the level of registrations fees in order to provide a modest excess of income over expenditure given an estimated attendance.

4. Expenditure

4.1 The primary expenditure for the fund will be to cover the costs of running the seminars / conferences. Expenditure may include but is not limited to: assistance to speakers / tutorial leaders, conference equipment, documentation, proceedings, staff overtime, reception and tea breaks.

4.2 ABLOS may use any funds, in excess of 3,000 Euros remaining after all expenses for a seminar / conference have been settled, to fund other activities conducted by ABLOS. Limited support for travel / subsistence in connection with production of a new edition of C-51 'A Manual on Technical Aspects of the Law of the Sea' might be considered such an activity. Such expenditure must be approved by a simple majority of the ABLOS Membership.

4.3 Exceptionally, an ABLOS Member may be supported by the ABLOS fund for a specific task.

4.4 Routine expenditure in support of a seminar / conference may be transacted by the IHO Secretariat and reported in the fund accounts.

5. Operation

5.1 The fund will be operated by the IHO Secretariat on behalf of ABLOS. A copy of the fund accounts will be provided to the Annual Business Meeting of ABLOS and immediately after finalising the accounts following a seminar / conference.

6. Review

6.1 This guidance should be reviewed, and amended as necessary, by ABLOS at intervals not exceeding 4 years.