

IHO File No. S3/2546

CIRCULAR LETTER N° 40/2026
17 July 2026 2026

CALL FOR THE APPROVAL OF THE NEW IHO RESOLUTION ON THE GEBCO SECRETARIAT

References:

- A. IHO A4 Decision 21 – GEBCO Secretariat
- B. IHO A4 proposal 3.4
- C. IHO Publication M-7 – Staff Regulations (Edition 10.0.0, 2026)
- D. IHO Resolution 1/2014 (As Amended)
- E. IHO C10 Paper 07.3A – Update on the GEBCO Secretariat
- F. IHO Rules of Procedures M1

Dear Hydrographer,

1. In reference A, the 4th Session of the IHO Assembly tasked the IHO Secretariat, in consultation with the GEBCO Guiding Committee to develop a dedicated new IHO Resolution addressing the operational and functional (including staffing, administration and finance) aspects of the new entity.
2. As set out in reference B, the GEBCO Secretariat will support the implementation of the GEBCO Strategy, coordinate delivery of the GEBCO Programme portfolio, develop policy and funding partnerships, and ensure effective governance and reporting to the IHO and IOC. The GEBCO Secretariat's core responsibilities include:
 - Administering the GEBCO Work Plan and Fund;
 - Overseeing delivery of strategy and governance review recommendations;
 - Shaping a conducive policy environment for seabed mapping;
 - Coordinating global mapping initiatives;
 - Identifying new partnerships and funding opportunities; and
 - Provide key linkage with the related and complementary activities of the Parent Organizations (IHO and IOC);
 - Coordinate strategic communication and outreach.
3. The proposed IHO Resolution on the *GEBCO Secretariat* has been drafted in consultation with the GEBCO Guiding Committee and is provided in Annex A. Where necessary, the proposed resolution makes reference to specific provisions set out in reference C (for matters relating to employment of dedicated staff), and to the principles set out in reference D (for matters relating to financial management).

4. The development of a dedicated IHO Resolution on the *GEBCO Secretariat* is a key step in the implementation of reference A. A full update on the other steps undertaken is provided at reference E.
5. Member States are invited – in accordance with reference F – to consider the adoption of this new IHO Resolution on the *GEBCO Secretariat* by providing their reply at their earliest convenience and **No later than 28 August 2026** by email (cl-lc@iho.int when using the Voting Form in Annex B), but preferably using the IHO Online Form System by accessing the following link: https://iho.formstack.com/forms/cl_40_2026

On behalf of the Secretary-General

Yours sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Luigi Sinapi', with a stylized flourish at the end.

Luigi Sinapi
Director

Annexes

- A. Proposed IHO Resolution on the *GEBCO Secretariat*
- B. Voting Form

TITLE	Reference	Last amendment (CL or IHC/A)	1 st Edition Reference
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GEBCO Secretariat	X/2026		
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1. It is resolved that IHO shall establish a GEBCO Secretariat, embedded within the IHO Secretariat.

Role

2. The GEBCO Secretariat provides the professional coordination, governance, programme management, policy engagement, and partnership development needed to deliver against the GEBCO Strategy and strengthen GEBCO's role as the global coordinating body for ocean mapping.

Scope

3. The GEBCO Secretariat shall provide specific technical and administrative services required to support the work of GEBCO, such as:
 - Administering the GEBCO Work Plan and associated Fund;
 - Overseeing delivery of strategy and governance review recommendations;
 - Shaping a supportive policy environment for seabed mapping;
 - Coordinating global and regional ocean mapping initiatives;
 - Identifying and developing new partnerships and funding opportunities;
 - Providing key linkages with the related and complementary activities of the Parent Organizations (IHO and IOC); and
 - Coordinate strategic communication and outreach.
4. These support services shall encompass management of associated processes, information, technology, communication and support.
5. The exact scope of these support services shall be defined in the GEBCO Guiding Committee's three-year and annual work plans and may be extended to accommodate the needs of externally financed projects and initiatives.

Organisation and Governance

6. The GEBCO Secretariat will operate within the existing GEBCO governance framework, reporting to the IHO Inter-Regional Coordination Committee (IRCC) and the IOC Executive Council via the

GGC.

7. The Terms of Reference and Rules of Procedure of the GGC set out how the GEBCO Secretariat interacts with the GGC and other GEBCO Bodies and partnership activities.
8. The GGC, guided by the GEBCO Strategy will develop the three year and annual work plans, together with the associated budgets. These work plans will set out where the GEBCO Secretariat will lead on specific activities.
9. The day to day management of the GEBCO Secretariat will normally be undertaken by an IHO Assistant Director acting as the GEBCO Secretary and the nominal Head of the GEBCO Secretariat.
10. The staff of the GEBCO Secretariat shall be employed under the IHO Staff Regulations (M-7). The oversight of the GEBCO Secretariat falls under the responsibilities of the Secretary-General but shall normally be delegated to one of the IHO Directors who will act as the Senior Responsible Owner (SRO).
11. In matters related to the role, scope and function of the GEBCO Secretariat, the Head of the GEBCO Secretariat will report to the GEBCO Guiding Committee. In matters related to the internal organisation of the GEBCO Secretariat, human resources and finances within its allocated budget, the Head of the GEBCO Secretariat will report to the SRO, who will consult with the IHO Secretary General and the IOC Executive Secretary as required.
12. The GEBCO Secretariat will benefit from a Sponsors Board comprised of the IHO Secretary-General, The IOC Executive Secretary (or their nominated representative) the SRO and the Chair of the GEBCO Guiding Committee. The primary role of the Sponsors board will be to assess and guide the long-term financial viability of the GEBCO Secretariat, as well as to provide a consultative guidance and strategic advice and support to the Head of the GEBCO Secretariat.

Location

13. The GEBCO Secretariat shall be co-located within the IHO Secretariat, located in Monaco in accordance with the Host Agreement between the IHO and the Principality of Monaco (Annex to the IHO Convention M-1).

Budget

14. The budget of the GEBCO Secretariat shall be managed separately from the regular budget according to the principles laid down in the IHO Resolution 1/2014 (as amended) for the specific GEBCO and GEBCO Secretariat Funds.

IHO RESOLUTION XX/2026 – GEBCO SECRETARIAT

VOTING FORM

*(to be returned to the IHO Secretariat **by 28 August 2026**)*

E-mail: cl-lc@iho.int - Fax: +377 93 10 81 40)

Note: The boxes will expand as you type your answers.

Member State:

Contact:

E-mail:

Do you approve the adoption of the IHO Resolution on the GEBCO Secretariat?

YES

☐

NO

☐

If you answer 'NO', please explain your reasons in the comment section below.

Comments:

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Signature:

Date:
