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On behalf of the International Hydrographic Organization (IHO), the International Hydrographic Bureau (IHB) welcomes the opportunity to provide comments on the draft document pertaining to the regular reporting and assessment of the state of the marine environment and suggestions for specific issues to address in the first assessment.

As addressed in previous correspondence, we believe the status of hydrography and nautical cartography to be an essential component in the assessment of the marine environment. An assessment of the adequacy of nautical charts for safe navigation will, in some measure, determine the character, volume and costs of shipping commerce. In this context, such an assessment would be a factor in evaluating the driving forces of shipping and port development cited in paragraph 24 of the draft document and is key in evaluating the sustainable development of the region. This assessment also provides an indication of the risk imposed by maritime operations on a particular ecosystem. Maritime operations and the resulting potential for groundings, collisions and other incidents are stressors that should be included in paragraph 23 of the draft document.

Additionally, hydrographic data should be an essential component in evaluating coastal zone development beyond port development. The scope and fidelity of hydrographic data constitute the spatial framework for other measurements to be referenced and an important boundary layer for dynamic modeling of ocean and coastal processes. Coastal and offshore engineering and pollution response plans require hydrographic data for sound management decisions.

With regards to the regional structure envisaged for the GMA process, the IHO has fourteen Regional Hydrographic Commission (RHC). The IHO Resolution regarding RHCs is provided at Annex A and the list of RHCs, their members, and their geographical coverage is provided at Annex B. The GMA secretariat is welcomed to use this model as it finds applicable.

The IHO is engaged in a comprehensive revision of its Special Publication No. 55, *"The Status of Hydrography and Nautical Cartography, Worldwide."* This assessment will aid the IHO in prioritizing its capacity building efforts and will provide the decision makers of IHO Member States an indication where their resources should be directed. The results of this revision will be available for the "Assessment of Assessments" and as a continually updated topical assessment contributing to the GMA.

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Because of the fundamental and pervasive importance of hydrographic data and products, especially as the spatial framework for the marine environment, the ability of developing States to collect and maintain adequate hydrographic data should be included in capacity building considerations in Section V of the draft document. The fourth United Nations Open-ended Informal Consultative Process on Oceans and Law of the Sea (ICP) featured capacity building for the production of nautical charts as one of its two specific agenda items. The IHO welcomes this focus and encourages its extension by including the assessment of hydrographic data and products as an integral part of the GMA.

On behalf of the Directing Committee

, Yours sincerely,

Rear ~~Admiral~~ Kenneth BARBOR
Director

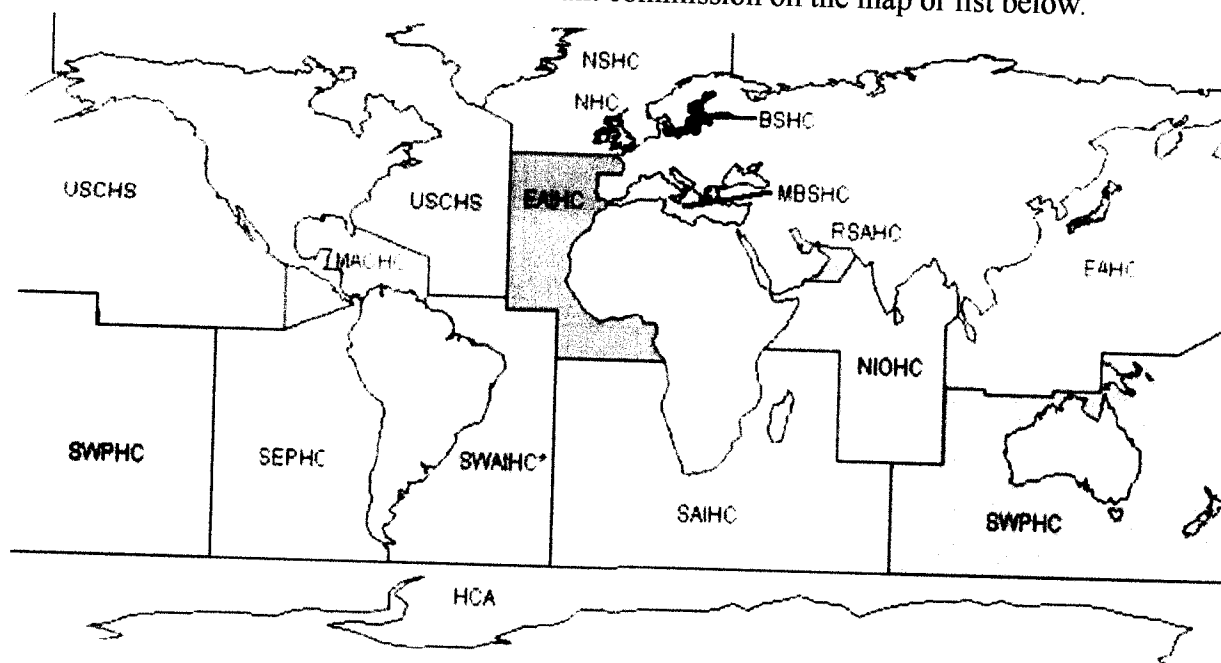
Annex A: The IHO Resolution regarding RHCs
Annex B: List of RHCs

T 1.3 ESTABLISHMENT OF REGIONAL HYDROGRAPHIC COMMISSIONS (RHC)

1. It is resolved that the IHB shall encourage Member States having common regional interests in data collecting or nautical charting to form Regional Hydrographic Commissions (RHC) to cooperate in the undertaking of surveys and other projects. As part of IHO, the RHC shall complement the work of the Bureau.
2. RHCs are intended to provide, in pursuance of the resolutions and recommendations of the IHO, regional co-ordination with regard to nautical information, hydrographic surveys, production of nautical charts and documents, training, technical cooperation and hydrographic capacity building projects. They (RHC) should enable the exchange of information and consultation between the hydrographic services concerned. Geographically adjacent RHCs should liaise with each other.
3. RHCs shall be properly constituted and have activities in line with the objectives of the IHO as described in Article II of the Convention on the IHO and in accordance with the approved IHO Work Programme. Geographical areas of the RHC will normally coincide with INT chart regions, modified as appropriate to meet regional requirements and special circumstances. There are special provisions for Region M (Antarctica) because of its special status.
4. RHC membership may include full members, associate members, and observers, all willing to contribute to the safety of navigation in the fields of hydrography, nautical charting, nautical information or navigational warnings in the region concerned. The roles of full members, associated members and observers will be defined by each RHC.
 - Full membership is reserved for IHO Member States within the region who sign the statutes of the RHC.
 - Associate membership is available to other IHO Members States or States of the region who are non-IHO members, both being signatories of the statutes of the RHC.
 - Other States and International Organizations active in the region concerned may be invited by the RHC to participate as observers. The invitation procedures should be established by each RHC.
5. The working languages used by the RHC shall be agreed upon by their members and designated to ensure the best communication between participants. The reports and IHO documents relating to RHC activities shall be in at least one of the official languages of the IHO. For correspondence with the Bureau, one of the official languages of the IHO shall be used.
6. A representative of the Bureau shall be invited to attend meetings of RHCs.
- 6bis. RHCs shall assess regularly the hydrographic capacity and requirements within their region.
7. Chairs of RHCs shall report to the I.H. Conference on RHC activities, hydrographic capacity and requirements within their region, future plans and the agreed key targets that support RHC tasks detailed in the IHO Work Programme. The Chairs of RHC's shall also submit an annual report to the IHB indicating progress made against the agreed key targets in the IHO Work Programme for general dissemination. Between sessions of the IHC, reports of studies or other activities, which may be considered of general interest to all IHO Member States, shall be sent by Chairs of RHCs to the Bureau for general dissemination.

REGIONAL HYDROGRAPHIC COMMISSIONS

The IHO encourages the establishment of Regional Hydrographic Commissions (RHC), and offers advice on their formation. To date, 15 such Commissions, have been established, and meet at regular intervals to discuss issues mutual hydrographic interest. To access (RHC) meeting pages select the relevant commission on the map or list below.



- **Nordic Hydrographic Commission (NHC) Members:**
Denmark, Finland, Iceland, Norway, Sweden.
- **North Sea Hydrographic Commission (NSHC) Members:**
Belgium, Denmark, France, Germany, Iceland, Netherlands, Norway, Sweden, UK .
- **East Asia Hydrographic Commission (EAHC) Members:**
China, Indonesia, Japan , Malaysia , Philippines , Republic of Korea , Singapore , Thailand .
Observers: Brunei Darussalam, Cambodia, UK, USA.
- **US/Canada Hydrographic Commission (USCHC) Members:**
USA, Canada
- **Mediterranean and Black Seas Hydrographic Commission (MBSHC) Members:** Algeria, Croatia, Cyprus, Egypt, France, Greece, Italy, Monaco, Morocco, Russian Federation, Spain, Syria, Tunisia, Turkey, Ukraine, Yugoslavia, Slovenia.
Associate Members: Bulgaria, Georgia, Israel, Malta, Palestinian Authority, Romania.
Observers: Albania, Germany, Lebanon, UK, USA, DINMA, IMA, IOC, PRIMAR.
- **Baltic Sea Hydrographic Commission (BSHC) Members:**
Denmark, Estonia, Finland, Germany, Poland, Russian Federation, Sweden.
Associate Members: Latvia, Lithuania.
- **Eastern Atlantic Hydrographic Commission (EAtHC) Members:** France, Morocco, Nigeria, Portugal, Spain, Associate Members: Benin, Cameroon, Cape Verde, Republic of Congo, Ivory Coast, Guinea, Guinea Bissau, Mauritania, Senegal.
Observers: UK, USA.

- **South-East Pacific Hydrographic Commission (SEPHC)**
Members: Chile, Colombia, Ecuador, Peru .
Observers: Panama
- **South-West Pacific Hydrographic Commission (SWPHC)**
Members: Australia, Fiji, France, New Zealand, Papua New Guinea, Tonga, UK, USA.
- **MESO American & Caribbean Sea Hydrographic Committee (MACHC) Members:** Colombia, Cuba, France, Guatemala, Jamaica, Mexico, The Netherlands, Trinidad and Tobago, United Kingdom, United States of America, Venezuela.
Associate Members: Guyana, Haiti, Honduras, Nicaragua and Panama.
- **Southern Africa and Islands Hydrographic Commission (SAIHC) Members:** France, Norway, Mozambique, Republic of South Africa, UK.
Associate Members: Angola, Kenya, Madagascar, Mauritius, Namibia, Portugal, Seychelles, Tanzania.
- **North Indian Ocean Hydrographic Commission (NIOHC)**
Members: Bangladesh, India, Myanmar, Sri Lanka, Thailand, United Kingdom.
Associate Members: France, Seychelles, USA.
Observers: Malaysia, Oman, Saudi Arabia.
- **ROPME Sea Area Hydrographic Commission (RSAHC)**
Members: Bahrain, Iran, Kuwait, Oman, Pakistan, United Arab Emirates.
Associate Members: Qatar, Saudi Arabia, United Kingdom, United States of America.
Observers: Regional Organization for the Protection of the Marine Environment (ROPME), Middle East Navigation Service (MENAS).
- **IHO Hydrographic Committee on Antarctica Members:** Argentina, Australia, Brazil, Chile, China, Ecuador, France, Germany, Greece, India, Italy, Japan, Korea (Rep. of), Netherlands, New Zealand, Norway, Peru, Poland, Russian Federation, South Africa, Spain, Ukraine, UK, Uruguay, USA (NIMA & NOAA).
Observers: Antarctic Treaty Consultative Meeting (ATCM), Council of Managers of National Antarctic Programmes (COMNAP), Standing Committee on Antarctic Logistics and Operations (SCALOP), International Association of Antarctic Tour Operators (IAATO), Scientific Committee on Antarctic Research (SCAR), International Maritime Organization (IMO), Intergovernmental Oceanographic Commission (IOC), General Bathymetric Chart of the Oceans (GEBCO), International Bathymetric Chart of the Southern Ocean (IBCSO), IHO Data Center for Digital Bathymetry (DCDB), Australian Antarctic Division, Antarctica New Zealand.