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**Statement of**

**The INTERNATIONAL HYDROGRAPHIC ORGANIZATION  
to the SMALL ISLAND DEVELOPING STATES  
Mauritius, 10 January 2005**

Presented by  
Rear Admiral Kenneth BARBOR  
Director, International Hydrographic Bureau

Mr. President, Your Excellencies, Distinguished Delegates; it is an honor as a Director of the International Hydrographic Bureau to make the following statement on behalf of the seventy-five member states of the International Hydrographic Organization (IHO). The IHO is an Intergovernmental, technical and consultative organization founded in 1921 to contribute to and to promote maritime safety by assisting States in meeting their obligations to safety of navigation. As an Organization with a rich maritime heritage, we know fully the power of the ocean. We take this opportunity to convey our deepest sorrow to those that have suffered as a result of the tsunami and pledge our assistance in addressing the safety of navigation issues resulting from the earthquake and subsequent tsunami.

The IHO is appreciative of this opportunity to address this gathering. Few amalgamations of States can claim a greater dependence on or dominance by the ocean than this group of Small Island Developing States (SIDS). The area of the sea under your responsibility, as delineated by the United Nations Convention on the Law of the Sea (UNCLOS), dwarfs the terrestrial land you possess. The ocean dominates your trade, tourism, food supply, health, natural resources, heritage and culture. Your future is dependent on the good stewardship and sustainable development of the ocean. The Barbados Plan of Action (BPoA) is a reasonable map to accomplish this sustained development. However, the IHO notes that the BPoA and the strategy for further implementation currently under discussion do not address hydrography as an essential enabler of a maritime State's sustainable development.

The United Nations General Assembly, in Resolutions A/53/32 (November 1998) and A/58/240 (December 2003), invited states to cooperate in carrying out hydrographic surveys, in providing maritime safety information services and in building capacity for the production of nautical charts. The International Maritime Organization (IMO) in the International Convention for the Safety of Life at Sea (SOLAS) obligates "Contracting Governments to undertake to arrange for the collection and compilation of hydrographic data and the publication, dissemination and keeping up to date of all nautical information necessary for safe navigation."

Ensuring efficient and safe maritime operations is fundamental to sustainable economic development. The IHO provides standards and recommends practices and procedures for the collection, processing, distribution and display of hydrographic data. The data are fundamental to protecting the marine environment, as the availability of accurate, up-to-date and understandable nautical information is critical to safe navigation and the prevention of accidents at sea. Additionally, modern hydrographic surveys collect sufficient information to delineate action plans for coastal zone management and for Special Areas or Particularly Sensitive Sea Areas requiring extraordinary environmental monitoring and enforcement. When, unfortunately, a maritime incident does occur and pollution is discharged into the sea, hydrographic data is the all-important boundary layer whereby pollution flow models predict the path of the pollutant and on which response teams base their tactics to control the emergency.

It is also important to note that with the adoption of UNCLOS the delineation of maritime boundaries has markedly changed. The drawing of baselines is largely an exercise in map making. As Territorial Waters and Exclusive Economic Zones are simply linear measurements from this baseline, a country only needed an adequate map of their land to determine these oceanic boundaries. However, the provisions under Article 76 of UNCLOS to claim the economic benefits and management responsibilities for the area of the continental shelf beyond the EEZ requires that a State determine water depth, bottom slope and/or sedimentation thickness. These are hydrographic measurements and best done by a hydrographic service with the rigor and standards established by the IHO.

While I am pleased to announce that our newest Member State is the Republic of Mauritius, of the thirty-seven SIDS, only nine are members of the IHO. The IHO advances many of its initiatives through its fourteen regional hydrographic commissions. Membership in these commissions is open to all States of the region and there are no fees associated with this membership. An additional five of your SIDS participate, to some degree, in the IHO's regional commissions. Our regional commissions are integral to the development and execution of the IHO Capacity Building Program. In this past year the IHO funded seven of your members, only one of which was an IHO Member State, to attend capacity building workshops. The IHO Capacity Building Program has a strong focus on SIDS in the South Pacific, Eastern Atlantic and the Caribbean.

The IHO is prepared to assist you in addressing your obligations with respect to safety of navigation and would welcome your active participation in our regional commissions and your application for membership in the IHO. Thank you for this opportunity to address this important forum and we look forward to contributing to sustainable development of your members.