

IHO Hydrographic Commission on Antarctica 14th Conference, Tromsø, Norway 28-30 June

The IHO Hydrographic Commission on Antarctica (HCA) operates in a similar way to the other 15 Regional Hydrographic Commissions that encompass the world. It seeks to coordinate hydrographic activities so as to improve the quality, coverage and availability of nautical charting and other hydrographic data, information and services covering the Antarctic region. The 14th Conference of the HCA could not be held in Ecuador as planned because of the earthquake that struck that country in April. Instead the Conference was held at the Fram Centre in Tromsø, Norway from 28 to 30 June, thanks to an offer from the Norwegian Hydrographic Service (NHS) to arrange an alternative venue at short notice.

The Conference was chaired by IHB President Robert Ward, supported by Assistant Director Yves Guillam, Secretary (IHB). 21 delegates from 14 Member States (Argentina, Australia, Brazil, Chile, China, Colombia, France, India, Italy, Korea (Rep. of), Norway, United Kingdom, USA, Venezuela), four stakeholder organizations (COMNAP¹, GEBCO/IBCSO², IAATO³, IALA⁴), three expert contributors (Kongsberg Marine, Norwegian Polar Institute, Teledyne-Caris), attended the meeting. Apologies were received from Japan, New Zealand, Peru, the Russian Federation, South Africa and Spain, who were unable to attend.



Participants gathered nearby the Fram Centre, Tromsø, Norway
at the 14th Conference of the IHO Hydrographic Commission on Antarctica

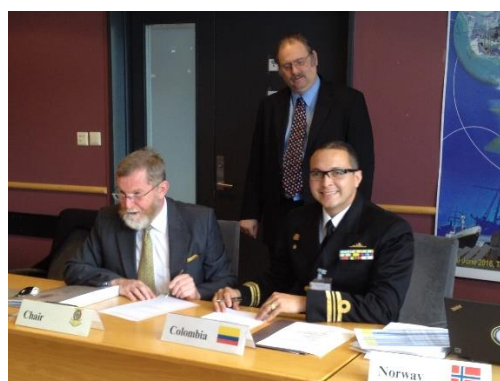
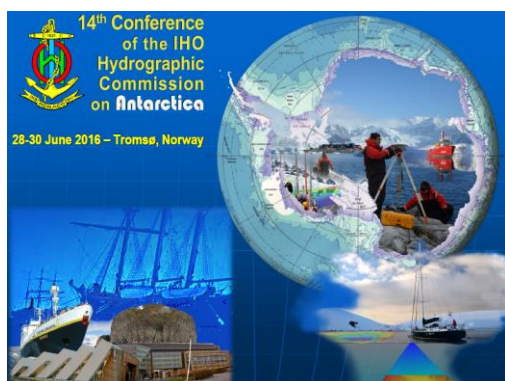
¹ COMNAP: The Council of Managers of National Antarctic Programs.

² GEBCO/IBCSO: The General Bathymetric Chart of the Oceans / The International Bathymetric Chart of the Southern Ocean.

³ IAATO: The International Association of Antarctic Tour Operators.

⁴ IALA: The International Association of Marine Aids to Navigation and Lighthouse Authorities.

Following the signature of the statutes of the HCA by the representative of Colombia at the opening of the Conference, the HCA now comprises 24 Member States that are also signatory nations to the Antarctic Treaty.



The Conference agreed to amend the Statutes of the HCA in order to provide greater flexibility in the timing of its conferences and to conform with the planning cycle of the IHO that will enter in to force when the revised Convention on the IHO enters into force, as expected shortly. The list of ATCM⁵ Resolutions that are relevant to the HCA and are annexed to the Statutes will also be updated.

The HCA reviewed progress since its 13th Conference held in 2013, and received reports from COMNAP, GEBCO/IBCSO, IAATO, IALA, as well as from the IHO Member States. National reports from the IHO Member States, who were not present, were noted. Presentations were also given by the expert contributors. Each focused their presentations on the Antarctic environment. Two presentations delivered by the representative of the Norwegian Polar Institute were well received and gave the opportunity to identify ways to strength links between the HCA and SCAR⁶ and other scientific institutes who collect bathymetric data in Antarctica. Participants agreed that the Secretariat of the IHO should investigate the possibility of engaging with SCAR's Standing Committee on Data Management (SC-ADM).

Discussions at the meeting centred not only on the need to obtain bathymetric data from all sources and observers in the region, but also on the need to improve and develop a coordinated approach across the HCA membership and its stakeholders by establishing a recognized and interoperable GIS-based repository that will enable existing data coverage to be identified. The HCA secretariat (IHB) will investigate enhancements to the HCA GIS on-line database portal by linking to certain HCA Member States, who already run operational maritime geoportals (Colombia, France, Republic of Korea, ...). In addition, it was also decided that the HCA Members will re-evaluate the existing data layers available in the IHO HCA GIS database, as well as the potential to extend linkages between the IHO INTtoGIS INT chart coordination system and other Antarctica geoportals (such as Quantarctica, led by the Norwegian Polar Institute, etc.).

The Chair of the HCA Hydrographic Priorities Working Group (HPWG) provided a comprehensive analysis of the charting coverage (INT paper charts and ENCs) in the region. Statistics and illustrations of recent vessel traffic patterns, provided by IAATO, and through access to AIS data were very useful in verifying the existing maritime shipping routes (MSR) used to set survey and charting priorities in the HCA and resulted in the identification of two new MSRs.

⁵ Antarctic Treaty Consultative Meeting.

⁶ SCAR: The Scientific Committee on Antarctic Research.



President Robert Ward interviewed by TV Norway,
and thanking Messrs. Evert Flier and Noralf Slotsvik (NHS), for their outstanding support

The representative of Chile reported on its representation of the IHO-HCA at the 39th session of the ATCM and indicated the possibility that the IHO might present a seminar on the status of hydrography in Antarctica back-to-back with the 41st session of the Antarctic Treaty Consultative Meeting (ATCM) due to take place in the Czech Republic in 2018.

Subject to confirmation by the host country, it was agreed that the 15th Conference of the HCA will take place in New Zealand in June 2017. The 16th Conference of the HCA is tentatively planned to take place in conjunction with the 41st session of the ATCM in the Czech Republic in 2018, thereby maximizing attendance and participation of HCA Members at both its own Conference and the proposed seminar on the status of hydrography in Antarctica.