

**5th Conference of the Caribbean Sea and Gulf of Mexico Hydrographic Commission
Biloxi, Mississippi, USA, 4 – 6 November 2002**

1. The 5th Caribbean Sea and Gulf of Mexico Hydrographic Commission (CGMHC) was held in the Beau Rivage Resort, Biloxi, Mississippi, USA, 4 – 6 November 2002, under the chairmanship of Rear Admiral Thomas Q. Donaldson V, Hydrographer of the United States Navy.

Opening Session

2. Rear Admiral Donaldson welcomed Captain Hugo Gorziglia, Director of the International Hydrographic Bureau (IHB), and delegates from 17 nations, territories and international organizations (see CGMHC 5/01/02). Admiral Donaldson's opening address is at Annex A.

Item 1: Administrative Details

3. Mr. Ken Cooper outlined the administrative arrangements. The list of Conference Documents is at CGMHC 5/01/01, and the Programme of Events is at CGMHC 5/01/03

Item 2: Approval of Agenda

4. The latest version of the proposed agenda, which was circulated prior to the meeting, was considered and accepted, with the following amendments/additions:
 - Item 4 was corrected to read, "Report from the International Hydrographic Bureau
 - Review of Actions from the 4th CGMHC Conference was moved to after the Country Reports.
 - A presentation by United States, Mainstreaming Adaptation to Climate Change (MACC), was added after the Review of Actions.
5. The final version of the Agenda is at CGMHC 5/02/01 Rev. 2.

Item 3: Chairman's Report and Developments since the 4th CGMHC Conference

6. A report, highlighting the activities of the Commission since the 4th Conference, was presented by Dr. Wyn Williams, CEO and Hydrographer of the United Kingdom, as the outgoing CGMHC Chair (see CGMHC 5/03/01). Two outstanding issues are the publication of the International (INT) chart scheme for Area B (CGMHC) and the implementation of Global Maritime Distress and Safety System (GMDSS) in the region.
7. Two main issues affected the region since the 4th CGMHC Conference; CGMHC input to the International Hydrographic Organization (IHO) Circular Letter 31/2001, study of the availability and compatibility of Electronic Nautical Charts (ENCs) to satisfy the worldwide requirements of shipping and the announcement of the CGMHC representative (United States) to the Strategic Plan Working Group (SPWG).

Item 4: Report from the International Hydrographic Bureau

8. Captain Hugo Gorziglia, IHB, presented a report (see CGMHC 5/04/01) which included a review of portions of the 2003-2007 IHO Work Program which directly affected Regional Hydrographic Commissions (RHCs). Captain Gorziglia also stressed that communication and participation between the IHO, RHCs and individual countries must increase to take advantage of emerging technologies and to meet the product requirements of our customers.
9. The Chairman applauded the IHB's call for increased participation by individual countries and challenged the delegates to increase their involvement within the Working Groups of the IHO.

Item 5: National Reports

10. Colombia (see CGMHC 5/05/01)
Lieutenant Ivan Castro Mercado tabled the Colombian National Report for all to consider.
11. Cuba (see CGMHC 5/05/02)
Although not able to attend, Cuba did provide a National Report.
12. France (see CGMHC 5/05/03, 5/05/04 and 5/05/05) *French*
Jean-Luc Deniel tabled the French National Report for all to consider.
13. Guatemala (see CGMHC 5/05/06)
Captain de Fragata Tyrone Hidalgo Caceres tabled the Guatemala National Report for all to consider.
14. Jamaica
Calvin Thompson pointed out that Jamaica is in the process of rebuilding their hydrographic capability. Their hydrographic program was significantly set back due to hurricane damage to their survey vessels. Jamaica plans to continue their cooperative efforts with the United Kingdom and the United States.
15. Mexico (see CGMHC 5/05/07 and 5/05/08)
Lieutenant Hugo Cardenas highlighted Mexico's Escalera Nautica project. The total focus of hydrography within Mexico is aimed at the support of this project which is the infrastructure development of the four northwestern states of Mexico; Baja California, Baja California Sur, Sonora and Sinaloa.
16. Netherlands (see CGMHC 5/05/09)
Captain Ruud Van Rooijen tabled the Netherlands National Report for all to consider. It was also noted that no new surveys have been completed since the last surveys by the Tydeman reported last Conference. Two new survey ships are under construction. Volunteers were also asked for to produce INT charts 400 and 402.
17. Nicaragua (see CGMHC 5/05/10)

Sergio Cordonero Gonzalez tabled the Nicaragua National Report for all to consider.

18. Panama (see CGMHC 5/05/11)

Denis Fuentes highlighted the establishment of the Hydrographic and Oceanographic Commission of the Republic of Panama (see CGMHC 5/05/12). This Commission will oversee the four agencies that are responsible for various aspects of hydrography and oceanography within Panama. Panama also pointed out the long-standing relationship they have had with United States, both National Imagery and Mapping Agency (NIMA) and Naval Oceanographic Office (NAVOCEANO), and requested assistance from NIMA in converting the existing Digital Nautical Charts (DNCs) to ENCs. Panama also announced they are working on establishing a cooperative venture with C-Map to produce ENCs.

19. NIMA advised Panama that to convert DNCs to ENCs is no simple matter. NIMA has been working closely with United Kingdom to map DNC features to ENC features but this is a very complicated procedure. They are, in conjunction with United Kingdom, attempting to create a roadmap for a way ahead but actual conversion of DNCs to ENCs is some years away.

20. Trinidad & Tobago

Clinton Stewart noted Trinidad & Tobago is in the midst of reconstructing their hydrographic unit due to the unexpected death of their Hydrographer. They are working closely with Mr. Francis Charles, former head of the Hydrographic Survey Unit, and Dr. Keith Miller, University of the West Indies, to do this. Trinidad & Tobago continues to look forward to working with the surrounding countries.

20. United Kingdom (see CGMHC 5/05/13, 5/05/14 and 5/05/15)

United Kingdom highlighted their new class of survey vessel. They also emphasized the training that is currently offered within the United Kingdom for all countries. In particular, there is a five week and a two week course available. All courses are offered for free and bursaries are available for travel and per-diem.

21. UNITED STATES (see CGMHC 5/05/16, 5/05/17 and 5/05/18)

Rear Admiral Donaldson presented highlights from the United States report and discussed how the four agencies within the United States that are responsible for hydrography; NIMA, Navy, NOAA and the Army Corps of Engineers; are working more closely than ever since the events of September 11, 2001. He also highlighted a new Navy hydrographic capability, the Fleet Survey Team (FST), and how it operates and the results it produces.

22. Captain Bermejo, IHB, inquired as to the current status of HYCOOP. Mr. Paul Cooper, NAVOCEANO, responded that the program has maintained a status quo with 25 active agreements around the world.

23. Venezuela inquired as to the availability of the Category A course. RDML Donaldson pointed out that CAT A course is available to all countries and that the current class, which is but the third convened, has 2 non-US students enrolled.

24. Panama asked about the United States oceanography program. The United States has established a National Oceans Commission to examine, evaluate and propose United States oceanographic policy. The sixteen commissioners were selected from industry, academia and government and are scheduled to make their report to Congress June 2003. It was noted that the last time United States reviewed their oceanographic policy was thirty three years ago and resulted in the formation of NOAA.

25. Venezuela (see CGMHC 5/05/19)

Captain de Corbeta Jonny Vera tabled the Venezuela National Report for all to consider.

Item 6: Review of Actions from the 4th CGMHC Conference

26. The status of actions agreed at the 4th CGMHC Conference was reviewed.

4.10: All nations consider potential contributions to ECWG project: Complete. However, all nations should continually evaluate their potential contributions to the project.

4.11: ECWG draft a plan for implementing SHARED: Complete. Further discussions to be held during Agenda Item 15.

4.12: United States to forward Coral Reef Initiative to the IHO: Complete. United States provided status paper (see CGMHC 5/06/01).

4.17, 4.18: Discussions on the inclusion of Guyana in the CGMHC: Complete.

4.19: United Kingdom/France to discuss Medium scale INT scheme: Complete.

4.21: United States to promulgate Medium scale INT scheme: Ongoing. Discussion was deferred to Agenda Item 13.

4.27: Establishment of National Coordinators for NAVAREA IV: Closed. NAVAREA IV Coordinator noted lack of desire on nations part to become involved. All countries are encouraged to contact the Coordinator and become involved within NAVAREA IV.

4.30: All nations to state their requirements for assistance to IHB: Closed. All countries are encouraged to make their requirements for charting, surveying, training and capacity building known.

Item 7: Mainstreaming Adaptation to Climate Change (MACC)

27. Mr. Doug Brown introduced this paper (see CGMHC 5/07/01). Project is a four year follow-on to CPACC whose purpose is to expand the knowledge of climate change and develop adaptation mechanisms. Twelve coastal states currently are participating. Further information can be obtained by contacting Clement Lewsey, NOAA, email: clement.lewsey@noaa.gov.

Item 8: Proposal 01

28. Captain Dave MacFarland presented a proposal sponsored by Cuba, Mexico and United States which consisted of three main points (see CGMHC 5/08/01 and CGMHC 5/08/02):
- Expand the current CGMHC boundary to include the Pacific coast of Mexico and Central America
 - Making provision to include El Salvador within the Commission
 - Change the name of the Commission to MesoAmerican-Caribbean Sea Hydrographic Commission.
29. Discussion centered primarily on the treatment of the Pacific water area to be added since this belongs to INT Chart Area A. It was pointed out that the INT Chart Coordinator for Area A was the United States and therefore would still be contained within the Commission. It was accepted to denote this as a sub-area of Chart Area A and denote this as A1.
30. Proposal was approved and a writing team consisting of United States, United Kingdom and Netherlands was appointed to make the appropriate changes to the statutes and present them prior to the end of the Conference.

Item 9: Status of IHO/CGMHC Membership

31. Captain Gorziglia presented the status of IHO membership within the region (see CGMHC 5/09/01). He also pointed out that the IHB is chartered to maintain the statutes of all RHCs with their respective signature sheets. He was sorry to report that in the case of the CGMHC this was not done well in the past. He encouraged all countries within the region to sign or re-sign, as appropriate, the amended statutes, once presented, in order for the IHB to have a clear accounting of Members and Associate Members of this Commission.

Item 10: Review of Statutes

32. Captain Gorziglia pointed out that, in addition to the changes resulting from the adoption of PRO 01, the current statutes must be further amended to replace the current Annex 1, Resolution T1.3 of the IHO, with the new version adopted during the XVIth International Hydrographic Conference. The final version of the statutes appear at CGMHC 5/10/01.
- Action:** All nations who have not yet signed the Statutes, or desire to re-sign the amended Statutes, are invited to sign.
- Action:** Notify IHO of designation of the Pacific water area of the Commission as A1.
- Action:** Invitation to El Salvador to officially join MACHC and sign statutes.

Item 11: CGMHC input to the IHO Strategic Planning Working Group (SPWG)

33. Mr. Ken Cooper presented the strategic issues facing the IHO, the goals of the IHO and the outcome of the most recent meeting of the SPWG (see CGMHC 5/11/01). He also emphasized that the SPWG desired increased involvement of the RHCs in the strategic process, hence Agenda Item 14; a full day devoted to SPWG issues. He encouraged all countries to take advantage of the opportunity to have their voice heard during that day.

Item 12: Report of the United States/Mexico Charting Advisors' Committee

34. Captain MacFarland, NOAA, reported on the recent Committee meeting that was held 1 November 2002. Current issues being worked by the Committee are:
- Horizontal and vertical datums
 - Harmonization of bordering ENC's
 - Exchange of personnel to conduct joint surveys
35. Next meeting will be held May or June 2002 in Mexico City.

Item 13: International Charts (INT Charts)

36. Rear Admiral(ret) Chris Andreasen, NIMA, gave a brief history of the INT Chart scheme. IHO developed this process to prevent duplication of efforts and promote cooperation between countries to produce the charts. It is important to note that this scheme is intended to support international shipping and may differ from national charting schemes. He also pointed out that producer countries are those who compile charts while printer countries are those who generate the products, they can be different countries.
37. The Medium Scale INT scheme is complete, however, there are 49 charts within the scheme but only 39 producer/printer countries identified (see CGMHC 5/13/01). Require countries to review the scheme, and if possible, accept responsibility for the outstanding charts.
Action: All nations update INT chart coordinator as to becoming producer nation.
Action: Publish the scheme by 31 Dec 02
Action: Supply scheme to IHB for inclusion in M-11
38. Verification of Ports to be included in the Large Scale Scheme is also required.
Action: Verify ports for inclusion in large scale scheme
39. As NIMA is moving completely into digital charting and away from paper chart generation, Rear Admiral(ret) Andreasen expressed his desire to step down as the INT Chart Coordinator for Area B, the CGMHC area. He indicated that Mexico had expressed an interest in this duty. Mexico accepted the responsibility as INT Chart Coordinator. This unanimously accepted by the Commission.
40. The United States and the United Kingdom applauded Mexico's acceptance and pledged their assistance in this matter.

Item 14: Global Maritime Distress and Safety System (GMDSS)

41. Lieutenant Commander Chris Pink, International Maritime Organization (IMO)/Navigation Text Messages (NAVTEX), presented a briefing on GMDSS (see CGMHC 5/14/01) to include:
- The WorldWide Navigational Warning Service (WWNWS)
 - The Commission for the Promulgation of Radio Navigational Warnings (CPRNW)

- Maritime Safety Information (MSI)
 - Enhanced Group Call (EGC or SafetyNET)
 - NAVTEX
 - MSI in the CGMHC Area
42. During the brief Lieutenant Commander Pink noted that there is not a close working relationship between Hydrographic Offices of CGMHC countries and their MSI authorities.
Action: Nations are highly encouraged to become more involved with their MSI authorities.
43. Mr. Peter Doherty, replacing Mr. Roy Soluri as NAVAREA IV Coordinator, noted that the United States has just digitally published NIMA Pub Number 117, Radio Navigational Aids (similar to Admiralty Pub 5).
Action: United States to supply digital copy of Pub Number 117 to Commission members.
44. At the close of day 1, Mr. Dave Pugh, Canadian Hydrographic Service, gave an overview of Canada's ongoing effort to establish a national geospatial data infrastructure with a focus on standards. It has seven major thrusts; Framework, access, education and training, and geoconnections.

Item 15: CGMHC Electronic Chart Working Group (ECWG)

45. Mr. Doug Brown, chairman of the ECWG, indicated that he has been the chairman of this working group for the past 3 1/2 years. He has since been moved into a new position within NOAA that disconnects him from the work of this group. He then introduced Ms. Katie Ries who will be replacing him as chairman for the working group. He recognized LCDR Rafael Ponce, Mexico, as the newly appointed Vice-chair for the ECWG and Dr. Lee Alexander, University of New Hampshire, as technical advisor to the ECWG.

Item 15.1: Approval of Minutes from Last Meeting

46. Minutes from the last ECWG meeting were presented. As no comments or corrections were submitted, the minutes were accepted.

Item 15.2: Background and Meeting Objectives

47. The evolution of the ECWG project was briefly reviewed (see CGMHC 5/15/01). Project objective is to improve regional capacity to produce electronic charts and to demonstrate their value for regional economic and environmental priorities; this will be accomplished by choosing a pilot area in the region to initially focus the effort and show results.
48. Objective of the meeting are:
- Decide on geographic focus of Pilot Project.
 - Determine next steps.
 - Establish Task Groups for follow-up actions.

Item 15.3: Current Status of Hydrography and Charting in the Region

49. Dr. Alexander provided a briefing on hydrography and charting in the region to include a review of shipping routes, priority ports, related regional projects and priority areas for chart production (see CGMHC 5/15/02).
50. ECWG Chairman applauded the presentation as a comprehensive review of activity within the region and proposed that the Gulf of Honduras be considered for the pilot area due to the environmental concern and the recreational activity.
51. United Kingdom believes the efforts must be pointed toward capacity building/sustainable growth and getting ENC's to market to improve economies. This is done by getting ENC's into the market and to do that we must get the big ships to use them. This pilot area will not accomplish that. United Kingdom also objected to the "environmental emphasis" of the presentation's conclusion.
52. It was pointed out that funding for the project is the major obstacle, and that aligning a project with potential sources of external funding, would ultimately lead to ENC production.
53. United States pointed out that consideration of the major ports is a necessity. The number of accidents that occur in these ports should be considered and how ENC availability could result in safer ports.

Item 15.4: Overview and Status of Plan Puebla Panama

54. LCDR Rafael Ponce presented an overview and status of Plan Puebla Panama (see CGMHC 5/15/03). The plan is aimed at promoting economic development and advancing intermodal transportation in Mexico and Central America. Paul Cooper (NAVOCEANO) asked if it was known if other countries have established a budget for this Project. Response: None that are known. Denis Fuentes (Panama) asked if the Mexican Hydrographic Office had identified the hydrographic needs for this Project. Response: this is a government initiative and the Hydrographic Office needs to convince the national government of the importance of hydrography.

Item 15.5: Overview and Status of COCATRAM

55. Captain Frederico Bermejo presented an overview and status of COCATRAM (see CGMHC 5/15/04). It was noted that the primary shortcoming of the COCATRAM project is that it does not provide for survey vessels.

Item 15.6: Overview of other Regional Projects and Funding Opportunities

56. Mr. Milen Dyoulgerov, consultant to the ECWG, presented this overview (see CGMHC 5/15/05, 5/15/06 and 5/15/07). This presentation emphasized the need to address environmental considerations, as well as, marine transportation issues and the need to

coordinate/complement other existing regional efforts, if the search for funding is to be successful.

Item 15.7: Overview of Training Opportunities

57. Dr. Lee Alexander (University of New Hampshire) briefly introduced the paper: *Some Considerations Related to ENC Training* (see CGMHC 5/15/08).

Item 15.8: Next Phase: Discussion of Options and Next Steps

58. Discussion of the various projects within the region; COCATRAM, Puebla Panama, Gulf of Honduras, MesoAmerican Barrier. Principle themes throughout were:

- Existing projects must be considered and complemented.
- Environment, transportation, communication and economic factors are all equally important.
- Several countries must be involved to establish data interchange

59. Caveats brought up by United States during this process:

- Mid-size project takes 1-3 years before implementation.
- Full-size project takes 3-5 years before implementation.
- Project areas being discussed are probably full-size in scope; therefore timeline will be long.

60. United Kingdom objects to the length of time that will be required to implement a project utilizing this strategy. Something must be done during the near-term to promote ENC production. Dr. Wyn Williams suggested a parallel track focusing on ENC production to support major ports and shipping routes. The United Kingdom offers training courses in hydrography, ENC production and distribution that could serve the region. Denis Fuentes (Panama) responded that training in UK would indeed be helpful. However, regional Hydrographic Offices still require funding (in addition to such training) for ENC production.

61. The Chair emphasized that the two project approaches were not mutually exclusive, rather they represented different means for accomplishing the same goal. The Chair proposes that two Task Groups be formed, one to pursue a MesoAmerican Pilot area and another to pursue ENC production and distribution. This strategy was adopted with the following results:

- MesoAmerican Pilot Area Task Group
 - Chair: Panama
 - Members: Guatemala, Honduras, Mexico, Nicaragua, United States
 - ENC Production and Distribution Task Group
 - Chair: Mexico (Tentatively)
 - Members: Colombia, Cuba, Netherlands, United Kingdom, United States, Venezuela
- Action:** Mexico to confirm chairmanship of ECWG Regional Task Group

Item 15.9: Options for Regional Distribution Services

62. Dr. Alexander presented a paper, ENC Distribution Options Based On Wend (see CGMHC 5/15/09)

63. Dr. Williams provided a presentation on the International Centre for ENCs (see CGMHC 5/15/10)

Item 16: Strategic Planning Working Group

64. Mr. Ken Cooper introduced the three member of the SPWG Chair Group present: Commander Frode Klepsvik, Dr. Wyn Williams and Captain Frederico Bermejo; Chairman, Co-chairman and Secretary respectively. He also pointed out the documentation packet for the Working Group, which had been circulated previously, the paper on Communication Strategy (*Spanish*) and a paper put forth by France “Promoting, producing and maintaining standards” are available (see CGMHC 5/16/01,CGMHC 5/16/02 and CGMHC 5/16/03).

Item 16.1: Background

65. Commander Klepsvik explained the origin of the new SPWG and its Terms of Reference decided at the XVIth IHC.

66. “Holistic approach” means that:

- Spirit in SPWG mandate is wide, non-prescriptive
- Analysis and deliberations must precede conclusions (nobody possesses the “objective” knowledge on what the MS wish at the outset of this process)
- Initially bold creative with a broad perspective
- Narrow quickly, identify and focus on the “vital few” areas for improvement
- Propose solutions that are “good enough” (for consensus) not “perfect”

66. The approach includes, as a minimum, the following steps:

- Establish an image of the future IHO we wish to see, through Vision and Mission
- Define (or verify/adjust) the Objectives of IHO commensurate with V&M
- Define (or verify/adjust) overall strategic plan, with IHO Goals, priorities and pertinent work programme
- Consider changes necessary to fulfil the above:
Define (verify/adjust/optimize) the structure best suited to fulfil the Goals
if necessary, change/adjust Convention and other Basic Documents

67. The SPWG work method and time schedule requires :

- The involvement of RHCs and individual MS
- The role of the Chair Group in ensuring that all regions have a possibility to take part and contribute

Item 16.2: Presentation of the definitions of IHO Vision and Mission

68. The definitions of the agreed IHO Vision and Mission were presented to the CGMHC:

**THE VISION
OF THE IHO IS TO BE:**

The recognized international hydrographic authority advancing maritime safety and efficiency and marine environmental sustainability

**THE MISSION
OF THE IHO IS TO:**

Create a global environment in which States provide adequate and timely hydrographic data, products and services and ensure their widest possible use.

69. The **Draft Objectives of the IHO** are:

- To improve global coverage, availability and access to hydrographic data, information, products and services.
- To advance global hydrographic capability and capacity and improvements in science and techniques.
- To establish standards for the quality and formats of hydrographic data, information, products, services and techniques.
- To give authoritative guidance on all hydrographic matters to governments and international organizations.
- To coordinate hydrographic activities of Member States.
- To foster cooperation amongst States on a regional basis.
- To manage central or joint services for the Member States.

70. Recommended **Communication Strategy** for RHC Representatives:

- To pro-actively encourage and motivate members of their Commissions to participate in the SPWG work process.
- To lead discussions within the RHC in order to bring out all the views of the Member States and attempt to reach a consensus.
- To represent the resulting views of their RHC at SPWG meetings.
- To explain (and promote) the decisions made at SPWG meetings to the RHC members.
- To participate fully in the SPWG meetings and work process.

Item 16.3: Strategic Questionnaire - group discussions and presentations

71. Two Groups were formed to identify the main strategic issues relating to the IHO. Each rendering the top strengths and weaknesses. The groups were to consider: SOLAS V, the

Vision, Mission, draft objectives and communication strategy, and the new definition of hydrography contained in S-32.

The following points were made by members of the CGMHC :

Weaknesses

- 1) Lack of global visibility of the Organization at governmental level and in the international fora
- 2) Lack of adequate communications, both among IHO members and not members
- 3) Low level objectives of the IHO
- 4) Facilitation of membership and system of contributions
- 5) Difficulties in identifying the real benefits from IHO membership
- 6) A certain inefficiency of the IHO Working Groups
- 7) Lack of means to adequately develop large size co-operation programs
- 8) Lack of an effective organisational structure
- 9) Slow implementation of initiatives- lengthy decision-making processes
- 10) Convention Articles XX, XXI
- 11) Lack of funding for Capacity building

Strengths:

- 1) International Organisation, acting regionally
- 2) International cooperation
- 3) Recognised as leading Int. technical body
- 4) Establishes standards
- 5) Capacity building

Item 16.4: Next steps. Future work

72. The future activities of the SPWG and the possible Sub-working Groups or Study Teams that may be formed to address specific matters can be as follows :
- IHO Objectives and Goals (work ongoing in SPWG), aligned with Vision, Purpose and Mission and aligned with new SOLAS V. To be tentatively completed at the 2nd SPWG Meeting (GOA, January 2003)
 - Working Group on Future Structure of IHO
 - TOR to be developed by the SPWG before next meeting
 - Based on responses to strengths&weaknesses
 - consider models/ elements (Assembly, Board, Committees)
 - consider decision making & voting powers
 - Revision of Convention and other Basic documents.
 - Define relations with industry/NGO's and consider formalization (policy level)
 - Consider
 - when swg/st should be established
 - when work is to be completed
 - who should (is willing to) participate

Item 16.5: Conclusion

73. The Chairman expressed his satisfaction about the development and progress of the SPWG meeting and stated that the experience had demonstrated the validity of the "model meeting" which should be applied to other RHC meetings as a way to ensure effective communications between the SPWG, RHCs and every IHO Member State.
Action: Countries provide Strategic Questionnaire responses to SPWG/representative.
Action: SPWG Representative report outcome of SPWG session of the MACHC.
[Post meeting note: Captain Bermejo has submitted a paper detailing the discussions held in the group he participated in (see CGMHC 5/16/03).]

Item 17: Location and Date of Next Conference

74. Lieutenant Ivan Castro Mercado, Colombia, offered to be the next Chair, and to host the next meeting of the Commission in Cartagena de Indias, Colombia, on a date to be determined.
Action: Colombia to confirm date and location of next Commission meeting.

Item 18: Closing Remarks

75. The Chairman thanked the delegates for their active participation in the discussions. This was a most constructive meeting as is borne out by the substantial decisions made during this conference and the list of decisions and actions which have been generated (see CGMHC 4/18/01).

Opening address by Rear Admiral Thomas Q. Donaldson V

Distinguished Delegates and Representatives, Ladies and Gentlemen:

It gives me great pleasure, as the new Chairman of the Caribbean Sea and Gulf of Mexico Hydrographic Commission, to welcome you to the United States' Gulf Coast for this 5th Conference of the Commission.

I would like to extend a particular welcome to CAPT Hugo Gorziglia, Director of the International Hydrographic Bureau, and CAPT Frederico Bermejo, the Professional Assistant for Technical Assistance, Training and Publications at the Bureau. Thank you for taking the time to attend the conference. I would also like to welcome Dr. Wyn Williams, CEO/Hydrographer of the UK Hydrographic Office – the outgoing Chairman of the Commission.

I am glad to welcome representatives from fourteen states, territories and organizations with an interest in hydrography in the region. I particularly wish to congratulate Guatemala for their recent re-instatement as a full member of the IHO. (Please join me in a round of applause.) I now urge Guatemala and all of the other states within the region, who have not done so, to consider signing the statutes of this Commission and becoming either full or associate Members. By doing this, you will add the weight of commitment behind your desire for cooperation and development within the region. I think you will agree, hydrography, more so than meteorology and oceanography, is the applied science which is best suited to bind nations together through its impact on waterborne commerce and Safety of Life at Sea.

We have a very full agenda before us. I see this as a strong indication of the way in which the IHO is growing – Active Regional Hydrographic Commissions – increasingly becoming an effective working arm of the IHO. I would encourage us all to be mindful of our limited time as we work our way through the Conference agenda. This first day, we will have the opportunity to review the strides that the Commission and each country have taken in the past two years. We will also consider expanding the Commission's geographic boundaries to include the Pacific waters of Mexico, Central America and Colombia and to add another country, El Salvador. I look forward to these discussions and presentations.

Tomorrow, the second day of the Conference, is completely dedicated to the Electronic Charting Working Group. I think a whole day dedicated to this Working Group is indicative of the times we find ourselves. Safe navigation has never been more critical to the economic vitality of this region than it is today. Waterborne commerce demands not only accurate and up-to-date charting but also an effective means of delivering navigation products to the user. Recognizing the high cost of data collection and management and product generation and dissemination, the need for cooperation amongst the countries of the region has never been greater. I look forward to tomorrow's session as an opportunity to explore and discuss possibilities for furthering this needed cooperation.

Wednesday presents a great opportunity for the Members of this Commission. We will be joined by Commander Frode Klepshvik, the Hydrographer of Norway and Chairman of the Strategic Planning Working Group, who will lead our discussions on strategic matters which will shape the future of the IHO. It is the aim of the Bureau and the SPWG Chair Group to engage every Member State individually and through Regional Commissions, to seek their views on these important issues and to encourage their maximum involvement and commitment with regard to the work of the SPWG. This is your opportunity to do so. This is your chance to influence the strategic direction of the IHO. Take this opportunity and ensure your views are presented in this forum.

Times of change require visionary and strong leaders. You are such leaders for your countries and for this Commission.