

IHB File No. S1/0900/Sp.

CIRCULAR LETTER 24/1999
26 May 1999

**STUDY OF THE IMPLICATIONS OF ADOPTING SPANISH AS AN OFFICIAL
LANGUAGE OF THE INTERNATIONAL HYDROGRAPHIC ORGANIZATION**

Reference : Decision N° 14 of the XVth I.H. Conference

Dear Sir,

The XVth International Hydrographic Conference tasked the Directing Committee to examine the question of adopting Spanish as an official language of the IHO and to report to Member States by Circular Letter.

A report on the subject is attached herewith. The IHB would be pleased to receive your comments, if any.

On behalf of the Directing Committee
Yours sincerely,

Commodore John LEECH
Director

Encl: (1)

**STUDY OF THE IMPLICATIONS OF ADOPTING SPANISH AS AN
OFFICIAL LANGUAGE OF THE IHO**

- 1. BACKGROUND**
- 2. ANALYSIS OF THE PRESENT SITUATION AT THE IHB**
- 3. FURTHER COSTS TO BE MET IF SPANISH BECOMES AN OFFICIAL
LANGUAGE**
- 4. PRIORITY TO BE GIVEN TO THE ISSUE**
- 5. CONCLUSION**

1. BACKGROUND

The XVth I.H. Conference approved Decision N° 14 reproduced here below.

DECISION 14 - STUDY OF THE IMPLICATION OF SPANISH AS AN OFFICIAL LANGUAGE (PRO 45)

It was decided to task the Directing Committee:

1. *to identify the options, together with their associated benefits and costs, of adopting Spanish as the third official language of the IHO and,*
2. *to assess the priority for the potential adoption and advise on the best way of minimizing the associated cost to the IHO and,*
3. *to communicate the findings of this study to all Member States through Circular Letter by December 1998.*

This Conference Decision corresponds to the approval of Proposal 45, submitted by Spain, Chile, UK etc.. after the rejection of the original proposal made by Spain of changing Article XII of the Convention to adopt Spanish as the third official language.

The voting which rejected Proposal N° 40 was carried out after consideration of a report on the future Work Programme which indicated that the adoption of the Spanish as official language would require an annual increase of 1 million francs to the IHO budget (Proceedings of the XVth I.H. Conference, Vol. 2, pp 58-62)

As this calculation did not fully satisfy the delegates from Spain, UK, Chile and other countries, a new proposal (N° 45) was submitted and approved by the Conference.

The definitions for “Official language” and “Working Language” are provided in the IHO Basic Documents. The former definition includes all documents, correspondence and publications originated by the IHB, while the latter refers exclusively to the simultaneous interpretation provided at the I.H. Conferences.

2. ANALYSIS OF THE PRESENT SITUATION AT THE IHB

Decision N° 7 of the XIVth I.H. Conference changed the text of Technical Resolutions T 1.4 and T 1.5, as follows :

T 1.4 DOCUMENTATION

1. *It is recommended that Member States provide the IHB with bibliographical notices for the books and principal articles issued in their countries. These notices should, as far as possible, be written in English, French and **Spanish** or at least in one of these three languages.*
2. *It is resolved that the IHB shall publish periodically an International Hydrographic Bibliography in English, French **and Spanish**, made up of the assembled notices, after having translated any which require it.*

3. *It is resolved that the IHB shall publish the reports and publications referred to in Articles 32 to 35 of the General Regulations in either bilingual (English/French) or in separate English and French versions. In addition, the Bureau should (without increasing for this reason the present number of Category B Staff) publish at least its Annual Report (Parts 1 and 2) and the monthly I.H. Bulletin in Spanish and should also seek the assistance of Spanish-speaking countries in the preparation and production of other IHO publications in Spanish.*

T 1.5 LANGUAGES USED IN CORRESPONDENCE WITH THE BUREAU AND AMONG MEMBER STATES

1. *It is resolved that the Bureau should publish its Circular Letters in English, French and Spanish.*
2. *It is recommended that Member States strive to use one of the two official languages of the IHO (English or French) in exchange of correspondence among themselves, unless bilateral agreements to the contrary exist.*
3. *It is further recommended that, should a language other than English, French or Spanish be used for an official text in correspondence with the Bureau, a translation in one of these three languages should be added.*

To implement the Conference decisions, an existing post at the IHB (that of Librarian) was converted into a post of a Spanish Translator and the Spanish-speaking PA was put in charge of the control, technical translation, proof reading and organization of all the documents and publications in Spanish, in addition to the other duties that he was carrying out. This was made without any compensation in salary for the workload assigned. Therefore, there was not any increase in the IHB expenditure as a result of this Conference Decision.

As a result of the implementation of the XIVth I.H. Conference Decisions, the following tasks are carried out at the IHB at present :

- 1) **Translation of correspondence in Spanish.** Correspondence from and to the Spanish-speaking IHO Member States (estimated by the Conference as being 15.5% of M.S.) increased spectacularly following the decisions of 1992. Current correspondence and relationships were established or re-established with many countries with which contact had been very limited, and also with other prospective Spanish-speaking Member States.
- 2) **All Circular Letters issued by the IHB** (as from 1st January 1993), some of them including long technical reports.
- 3) **Annual Report** . The XIVth Conference decided that the Annual Report Parts I and II *should be* translated into Spanish. Part I has been translated since 1993. Translation of Part II will commence with the Report of 1997, which will be issued shortly by the IHB.

4) Other IHO publications

The situation regarding the Spanish version of IHO publications is given here below:

N°	Title	Spanish version
P-1	Review	NO
P-3	Bulletin	YES
P-2	Index to the I.H.Review	Goes with P-1
P-4	Catalogue of IHO Publications	YES
P-5	Yearbook	NO. The translation required is minimal.
P-6	Proceedings Conference	This task is included in the Conference budget
M-3	Technical Resolutions	YES
M-4	Chart Specs.	YES
M-5	Standards of Competence	YES. Needs updating
M-6	List of reference books and journals	YES
M-11	Cat. INT Charts	NO. See NOTE 1
S-32	Hydrographic Dictionary.	YES
S-39	Precise Positioning Systems	Publication being considered for cancellation
S-44	IHO Standards for Surveys	YES
S-47	Training Courses	NO
S-49	Recommendations concerning Mariner's routeing guides	YES
S-50	Tidal Constituent Bank.	YES
S-51	TALOS Manual	YES
S-52	ECDIS Specifications. Appendices 1, 2 and 3	Master - YES (needs updating) App. 1- NO App. 2 - NO App 3 - YES.SEE NOTE 2.
S-53	World-wide Navigational Warnings Service	Translation in Spanish carried out by IMO, but NOT published by IHO.
S-55	Worldwide Status.	NO.
S-57	Standards for Digital Data Transfer	NOT REQUIRED
S-59	Status hydrog. surveys in Antarctica	NO. See NOTE 1.
S-60	Transformation datum	NO. See NOTE 1
B-2	Cat/Chart B. Plotting Sheets	To be cancelled
B-4	BT Cruise data	NO. See NOTE 1.
B-5	Chart Survey Adequacy	To be cancelled
B-7	GEBCO Guidelines	NO.

NOTE 1. *These are publications which have little text (a few pages), mainly consisting of Tables or Graphics which do not require any translation. Therefore, the IHB considers that their translation is not necessary.*

NOTE 2. *There is an offer from the Spanish H.O. to translate the Appendices.*

International Hydrographic Bulletin and International Hydrographic Review

Currently the I.H. Bulletin is translated into Spanish, but the I.H. Review is not.

Summary of present effort in support of publications

From this list it can be seen that the major task of translating the IHO publications into Spanish has been largely completed in recent years, and the remaining work is not very much. This has been possible thanks to the help provided by the IHO Spanish-speaking Member States.

It is to be noted that, with its small translation capacity, the IHB cannot normally carry out the translation of all technical publications. In some cases this is done (either in French or in Spanish) with the cooperation of IHO Member States. However, the IHB has carried out, with its Spanish-speaking staff, the translation into Spanish of the following publications :

P-4 (annually), P-7 (annually), M-1, M-4 (Appendix), M-5 (6th and 7th editions), M-6, S-47, S-52 Master document (3rd edition) and Appendix 3 to S-52.,

The IHB also carries out the updating of all Spanish publications.

International Hydrographic Conferences

Simultaneous Spanish interpretation has been provided as from the Vth I.H. Conference in 1947. However, Conference Documents, including working papers, précis and Reports of Proceedings are not provided in Spanish.

Summary of the present situation

From the preceding paragraphs, it can be seen that the present situation as regards the use of the Spanish language is exactly the same as if it was an Official Language, with the exception of the International Hydrographic Review, and some important Conference services.

3. FURTHER COSTS TO BE MET IF SPANISH IS TO BE ADOPTED AS AN OFFICIAL LANGUAGE.

In the previous pages it has been explained that Spanish is now effectively a working language of the IHO. If it is decided to make Spanish an official language it will only be necessary to make a few minor adjustments to the budget of the Organization. Details are as follows.

International Hydrographic Review

A Review in Spanish could not be translated at the IHB at the moment, as this is beyond the present IHB translating capacity.

If Spanish were to be adopted as an official language, the translation of the Review could be carried out externally by a contracted translator. The IHB is at present paying a retired English member of the staff to carry out translations into English of articles for the Review received in French. This system could be applied to the translation of the Review into Spanish, totalling an annual approximate cost of 80,000 FF.

However, it should be noted that the DC is preparing a report to the IHO Member States recommending that the Review be amalgamated with the Bulletin. If this is approved, the requirement for a Spanish translation of the Review will no longer exist and a smaller amount of about 25,000 FF will be required for additional translation work for the Bulletin.

International Hydrographic Conferences

Provision of a full document service for I.H. Conferences would require the presence of two or three extra staff for a short period. Based on previous experience, it is estimated that an increase of 2% would be required in the Conference budget, (approximately 40,000 Francs). However, it is possible that the cost could be absorbed by making economies in other Conference activities [e.g. entertainment!].

The contribution of the Spanish-speaking Professional Assistant.

It should be noted that the use of Spanish as a working language as required by the XIVth I.H. Conference has been possible because there is a Spanish-speaking Professional Assistant on the staff at the IHB. If, when he leaves the IHB, he were to be replaced by a non-Spanish speaker, it would be necessary to make other arrangements in order to continue this service.

Whilst it is not expected that this situation will arise in the near future, it is prudent to envisage a solution. It is suggested that a solution may be provided in the future by maintaining a translation fund for a variety of translation purposes. The money for this fund would be found by using the salary of one French translator, whose position might be left vacant upon his retirement, expected in 2005.

The contribution of the Spanish-speaking Member States

The translation of publications into Spanish has been made possible thanks to the assistance provided by the Spanish-speaking Member States. The adoption of Spanish as an official IHO language would require Spanish-speaking M.S. to commit themselves to continue to support this arrangement in the future.

Additional costs associated with the adoption of Spanish as an official language

It is considered that the additional annual cost, over a 5-year period, of adopting Spanish as the third official language of the IHO would be small (if the recommendation to amalgamate the Review and the Bulletin is accepted)

4. PRIORITY FOR THE ADOPTION OF SPANISH AS AN OFFICIAL LANGUAGE

Good communications between Member States are essential for the effective operation of an organization such as the IHO. This has been the underlying reason behind the ongoing efforts to have Spanish adopted as an official language.

In fact the objective has been almost totally achieved by the adoption of Spanish as a *working* language, as a result of the changes described in Part 2 of this document.

The incremental cost involved in the adoption of Spanish as an *official* language would appear to be relatively small, and it would be possible to build the cost into future 5-year budgets without disrupting existing programmes.

Previous debates on this subject have revealed the alternative view that all language activity has some cost, and that it is therefore undesirable to extend the number of official languages beyond the two provided in the Convention.

The decision appears to be one of principle, rather than of priority.

5. CONCLUSION

It is concluded that :

- i.* Spanish is in use as an effective working language at the IHO.
- ii.* The cost of progressing to the adoption of Spanish as an official language is not high, and could be absorbed without difficulty in future budget proposals.
- iii.* There appears to be no particular reason to allocate a priority. Rather it is a decision of principle.