

**PARTICIPATION OF THE IHO IN THE FIRST MEETING OF THE UNITED NATIONS
CONSULTATIVE PROCESS TO REVIEW THE DEVELOPMENTS IN OCEAN AFFAIRS**

- References:
- a) IHB CL 58/1998 dated 21 December 1998.
 - b) UN letter, dated 13 December 1999 from the Under-Secretary-General for Legal Affairs, to IHB.

Dear Sir,

1) On 24 November 1999, the United Nations General Assembly adopted Resolution A/RES/54/33, under Agenda item 40(c), *Oceans and the Law of the Sea - Results of the Review by the Commission on Sustainable Development of the Sectoral Theme of "Oceans and Seas: international coordination and cooperation"*. In this Resolution, the General Assembly decided to establish an open-ended informal consultative process in order to facilitate, in an effective and constructive manner, its annual review of developments in oceans affairs. This is a follow-up to the Secretary General's Report on Oceans and the Law of the Sea to enhance co-ordination and co-operation at the intergovernmental and inter-agency levels.

2) In paragraph 10 of the Resolution, the General Assembly underlined the importance of the participation of relevant organizations in the consultative process and of their inputs to the Report of the Secretary General on Oceans and the Law of the Sea. In this context, the IHO has been requested by the Secretary-General to participate in the above-mentioned meeting and to provide input to the Secretary-General's Report which will be submitted to the 55th Session of the UN Assembly. The IHO has also been invited to provide feedback to help improve co-ordination and co-operation and achieve better integration on ocean affairs. The first meeting, as part of the consultative process, will be held from 30 May to 2 June 2000 and the President of the Directing Committee will represent the IHO. The meeting will be co-chaired by H.E. Mr. Tuiloma Neroni Slade (Samoa) and Mr. Alan Simcock (UK).

3) It has been recommended by the United Nations that particular priority be given to :

- a) *a better scientific understanding of the oceans and seas and their resources, of the effects of pollution, and of the interaction of the oceans and seas with the world climate system.*

This will be aimed at :

- i) facilitating a proper assessment of the oceans and seas;
- ii) improving the understanding of socio-economic issues - in particular the effects of pollution;

- iii) developing better systems for the sustainable management and use of the resources of oceans and seas; and
 - iv) comprehending and responding to such phenomena as the El Niño and mitigating their impacts.
- b) ensuring that priority is given to initiate or further develop programmes, within the context of national plans, for building capacities related to, *inter alia*, marine environment science, the administration of fisheries and shipping, the control of activities likely to pollute or degrade the marine and coastal environment, and cooperation and coordination with other States on marine environmental matters, including development of early warning systems, so as to mitigate the impact of natural disasters, particularly those resulting from inter-annual climatic variability, such as the El Niño phenomenon. In this regard, it is also important that Governments, the organizations of the United Nations system and donors co-ordinate their actions. For the purpose of capacity-building, regional and national partnership meetings involving major groups can make a significant contribution to these activities.
- c) reviewing the priority given to building capacities required to manage regional seas organizations, intergovernmental regional fisheries organizations and arrangements (RFOs) and regional monitoring systems.

4) The IHB has already sent a note to the Under-Secretary General for Legal Affairs, confirming its participation in the meeting and requesting that discussions be held specifically on hydrography, oceanography and navigation. The Bureau has also sent the following summary :

- 4.1. The IHO actively cooperates with the UN for the implementation of the LOS and established in 1992 an Advisory Board on the Hydrographic and Geodetic Aspects of the Law of the Sea (ABLOS). ABLOS maintains close contacts with the UN Division for Ocean Affairs and the Law of the Sea (DOALOS).
- 4.2. In addition, the IHO is at the forefront in establishing methods for an adequate knowledge of the marine environment and in seeking co-operation to achieve an adequate global hydrographic data coverage.
- 4.3. We recommend that attention be drawn to the activities that are carried out in the interest of the safety of navigation and of the protection of the marine environment, which are part of the mission of the IHO. Namely:-
 - 4.3.1 Carry out hydrographic surveys (which include bathymetry and measurements of oceanographic parameters), in accordance with IHO standards in ports, harbour approaches and sensitive coastal areas, in territorial waters, the EEZ and on the continental shelf.
 - 4.3.2. Make available the hydrographic and oceanographic survey information related to the sea areas under the country's jurisdiction in the form of bathymetric maps, analogue and digital.
 - 4.3.3. Establishment of data bases and accurate evaluation of their quality and availability for Geographic Information System (GIS) applications involving the coastal zone, and for other purposes such as fishing, scientific studies etc.
 - 4.3.4. Publish and distribute the information derived from hydrographic surveys in the form of nautical charts (electronic and paper) and nautical books for the safety of navigation of all ships and for the prevention of accidents and resultant pollution.
 - 4.3.5. Establish/modify aids to navigation on the basis of the hydrographic survey results and of the use of the waters concerned. The International Association of Marine Aids to Navigation and Lighthouse Authorities (IALA), with which the IHO co-operates, looks after this latter aspect in particular.

- 4.3.6. Disseminate the Maritime Safety Information following the Global Maritime Distress and Safety System (GMDSS). This aspect is looked after by the IHO in co-operation with the IMO.
- 4.3.7. Organise adequate training courses for hydrographic surveyors, nautical cartographers and aids to navigation operators, in accordance with the standards established by the IHO and IALA.

5) While in developed countries the above activities are carried out by well established hydrographic services, there are many other countries which should be helped to do so, by providing training and equipment.

6) The Bureau believes that the general recognition of the role of Hydrography is a very important matter. The UN Assembly Resolution A 53/32 on Hydrography, which was approved in November 1998, is a good starting point.

Therefore you are invited to :

- 1) provide comments on the UN priorities (paragraphs 3.a), b) and c) and on the input indicated by the IHB (paragraphs 4, 5 and 6).
- 2) provide new specific input for your regions, and
- 3) brief your national UN representative, who handles Hydrographic issues, to support the IHO initiative.

The IHB would be very grateful if you could respond by **1st May 2000.**

On behalf of the Directing Committee
Yours sincerely,

Rear Admiral Giuseppe ANGRISANO
President

Copied to: - suspended IHO Member States
 - IMO
 - IALA
 - Chairmen of Regional Hydrographic Commissions