

IHB File No. TA-5/UN

**CIRCULAR LETTER 21/2001**  
**19 April 2001**

**PARTICIPATION OF THE IHO IN THE SECOND MEETING OF THE UNITED NATIONS OPEN-ENDED CONSULTATIVE PROCESS ON OCEANS AND LAW OF THE SEA (UNICPOLOS) -  
7-11 May 2001**

References: a) IHB CL 12/2000 dated 16 March 2000  
b) IHB CL 34/2000 dated 3 August 2000  
c) IH Bulletin, July-August 2000 issue

Dear Sir,

In the Circular Letter in reference b) above, the IHB informed you of the conclusions of the First Meeting of the United Nations Consultative Process to review the Developments in Ocean Affairs, later changed to be called the *United Nations Open-ended Informal Consultative Process on Oceans and Law of the Sea (UNICPOLOS)*.

The IHO, in its capacity as a specialized consultative agency, has been invited by the UN Secretariat to attend the Second Meeting of the UNICPOLOS. The IHO will be represented by the President of the Directing Committee, Rear Admiral Giuseppe ANGRISANO.

The two main topics which will be addressed by the meeting and by the Discussion Panels are :

- a) Marine Science and the Development and Transfer of Marine Technology, as mutually agreed, including Capacity Building in this regard.
- b) Coordination and Cooperation in Combatting Piracy and Armed Robbery at Sea.

The IHB has prepared a presentation, which is summarized in the Annex to this Circular Letter.

The IHB regrets the short time available until the Meeting, but the relevant documents were received very late at the Bureau. The complete documents for the meeting can be downloaded from the UN website: [www.un.org/Depts/los/index.htm](http://www.un.org/Depts/los/index.htm).

You are invited to :

1. provide comments on the topics mentioned and on the input prepared by the IHB (Annex A) and
2. brief your national UN representative, who handles Hydrographic issues, to support the IHO presentation.

On behalf of the Directing Committee  
Yours sincerely,

Rear Admiral Giuseppe ANGRISANO  
President

Encls: Annex A

## THE IHO IN THE MARINE SCIENCE ENVIRONMENT

**The International Hydrographic Organization is an intergovernmental organization which deals with Hydrography.**

**Hydrography is defined as that branch of applied science which deals with the measurement and description of the physical features of the navigable portion of the Earth's surface and adjoining coastal waters, with special reference to their use for the purposes of navigation, research, environment protection, coastal zone management, and exploration and exploitation of living and non-living resources.**

**Hydrographic surveys, Nautical charting and Maritime Safety Information dissemination are vital components of the safety of navigation and are the basic support for every activity, study and law implementation concerning the sea.**

### Reference Texts

- UN Assembly Resolution A.53/32/1998 (paragraph 21)

*The UN Assembly invites States to:*

*- Co-operate in carrying out hydrographic surveys and to provide nautical services for the purpose of ensuring safe navigation as well as to ensure the greatest uniformity in charts and nautical publications and to:*

*- Coordinate their activities so that hydrographic and nautical information is made available on worldwide scale*

- IMO SOLAS Convention new Chapter V, Regulation 9 (approved by the IMO Maritime Safety Committee in December 2000) which will enter into force in 2002.

*1. Contracting Governments 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.*

*2. In particular, Contracting Governments undertake to co-operate in carrying out, as far as possible, the following nautical and hydrographic services, in the manner most suitable for the purpose of aiding navigation:*

*2.1. to ensure that hydrographic surveying is carried out, as far as possible, adequate to the requirements of safe navigation;*

*2.2. to prepare and issue nautical charts, sailing directions, lists of lights, tide tables and other nautical publications, where applicable, satisfying the needs of safe navigation;*

*2.3. to promulgate notices to mariners in order that nautical charts and publications are kept, as far as possible, up to date;*

*2.4. to provide data management arrangements to support these services.*

*3. Contracting Governments undertake to ensure the greatest possible uniformity in charts and nautical publications and to take into account, whenever possible, relevant international resolutions and recommendations.\**

*4. Contracting Governments undertake to co-ordinate their activities to the greatest possible degree in order to ensure that hydrographic and nautical information is made available on a world-wide scale as timely, reliably and unambiguously as possible.*

\* Refer to the appropriate resolutions and recommendations adopted by the International Hydrographic Organization

- In articles 5, 16, 21, 22, 24, 40, 41, 75, 76, 84, 94, 134 of UNCLOS and UN Assembly Resolution A 53/32, Article 21, Hydrography and Cartography are specifically mentioned.
- Chapter 17 of Agenda 21 of the UNCED recognises that Hydrography and Charting are vitally important to navigational safety.

### The need for Hydrographic Services

- The establishment of Hydrographic Services in all maritime countries is necessary to achieve the capability to carry out the following activities in the field of marine science:
  1. The systematic and standardized collection of geo-referenced data related to coastal configuration, depth of the seas in areas of national interest, sea bottom composition, tides, currents and physical properties of the water column, aids to navigation, maritime traffic and fishing rules etc.
  2. The standardized processing of all that information to create data bases capable of providing (standardized) products to be used in marine navigation, coastal management, marine environment preservation, exploitation of marine resources, definition of maritime boundaries (LOS implementation) and scientific studies connected to the sea and near-shore zone.
  3. The updating of these data bases through new surveys.
  4. The standardized (in accordance with the resolutions of the IHO) production and distribution of products.
  5. The dissemination of maritime safety information in accordance with IMO and IHO standards.
- In particular, the Coastal States have to :
  - Ensure that systematic hydrographic surveys (which include bathymetry and measurements of oceanographic parameters) are carried out following the standards of the IHO in: ports, harbour approaches and coastal areas, the EEZ and the continental shelf.
  - Publish and distribute the information derived from the hydrographic surveys in the form of nautical charts (electronic and paper) and nautical books for the safety of navigation of all ships.
  - Make available the hydrographic and oceanographic survey data related to the sea areas under the country's jurisdiction in the appropriate form.
  - Establish/modify the aids to navigation on the basis of the hydrographic survey results and of the use of the waters concerned. The International Association of Lighthouses and Aids to Navigation Authorities (IALA), with which the IHO co-operates, looks after this latter aspect in particular.
  - Disseminate the Maritime Safety Information in accordance with the IMO Global Maritime Distress and Safety System (GMDSS).
  - Organise adequate training courses for hydrographic surveyors, nautical cartographers and aids to navigation operators following the standards established by the IHO and IALA.

### CONCLUSION

To adequately develop hydrographic activities, it is necessary to gain recognition and to secure appropriate resources. Many coastal nations lack even the most elementary tools to carry out their own charting and surveying operations, even in the most elementary forms. The IHO has a record of the countries that need assistance such as many African, Central American, South West Pacific, East Asia, Black Sea, some South American and others.

### RECOMMENDATION

**It is strongly recommended to include Hydrography in the appropriate developing projects proposed by the U.N. funding agencies, the European Commission and other participant donor agencies (national and international), in order to achieve an adequate hydrographic data coverage by means of the creation of national Hydrographic Services.**