

IHB File No. TA-5/UN

**CIRCULAR LETTER 34/2001
16 July 2001**

**GRANTING OBSERVER STATUS TO THE IHO
AT THE UN GENERAL ASSEMBLY**

Dear Sir,

The IHO is regularly invited to the meetings of the States Party to UNCLOS, the United Nations Open-Ended Informal Consultative Process on the Law of the Sea (UNICPOLOS) and the "open days" of the UN Commission on the Outer Limits of the Continental Shelf (CLCS). In addition, the IHO is invited to participate in the meetings of the Groups of Experts convened by the UN Division of Ocean affairs and the Law of the Sea. The contribution of the IHO to these meetings is significant and may be beneficial in the recognition of the role of the IHO and of individual HOs, and of hydrography in general.

The IHO is not a specialised agency of the United Nations (it was a part of the League of Nations), but it does, however, provide a unique service in the interests of safety of maritime navigation and of the protection of the marine environment.

In order to better implement Element 1.2 (co-operation with International Organizations) of the IHO Work Programme, the IHB Directing Committee believes that it would be advisable to establish a more formal relationship with the UN and its bodies. The IHB has consulted the Government of Monaco (depository of the IHO Convention) and it has been agreed that it would be an advantage to request Observer status for the IHO at the UN General Assembly as well.

The Government of Monaco, through its Permanent Mission at the UN, has considered the matter and has drafted a proposal (attached herewith), which could be submitted by the Government of Monaco to the UN Secretary General.

Obtaining such Observer status may imply travel costs for the IHB which could be included appropriately in the IHB travel budget without repercussions on the general budget.

Member States are requested to support the Government of Monaco's proposal and to provide comments, if they wish.

On behalf of the Directing Committee
Yours sincerely,

Rear Admiral Giuseppe ANGRISANO
President

Encl: Annex 1

**Request for an additional item to be included on the Agenda of the
fifty-sixth session (UN General Assembly)**

**Granting Observer Status to the International Hydrographic Organization
At the UN General Assembly**

Letter to be sent to the Secretary General by the Ambassador, Permanent Representative of the Permanent Delegation of the Principality of Monaco at the United Nations.

New York, xxx 2001

Dear Mr. Secretary General,

In accordance with Article 15 of the General Assembly Regulations and following the instructions of the Prince's Government, I have the honour to request the inclusion of an additional item on the Agenda of the fifty-sixth session of the General Assembly, which is "Granting Observer status to the International Hydrographic Organization at the General Assembly".

We, as representatives of the Member States of the IHO, send you this letter in accordance with Article 15 of the General Assembly Regulations, with a view to including...]*

In accordance with Article 20 of the said Regulations, please find attached herewith the explanatory note in support of this request.

I beg you to accept, Mr. Secretary General, the assurances of my highest consideration, etc.

Jacques Boisson

* These states would then be requested to co-sponsor the draft resolution which would be presented by the Monegasque delegation within the Sixth Commission.

Explanatory Note concerning the International Hydrographic Organization

Creation

The International Hydrographic Organization (IHO) is an intergovernmental consultative and technical organization which was established by a Convention signed in Monaco on 3 May 1967. This Convention was registered with the Secretariat of the United Nations Organization, in accordance with Article 102 of the Charter, on 22 September 1970. The IHO has 70 Member States from all regions of the world. The IHO has no authority over the hydrographic services of the Governments related to the Convention.

After the Conferences held in St. Petersburg in 1908 and 1912, 24 Member States met in London for a Hydrographic Conference during which it was decided that a permanent body should be created. At the invitation of H.S.H Prince Albert 1st of Monaco, an eminent marine scientist, premises were provided for the International Hydrographic Bureau (IHB) which began its activities in 1921 in order to render navigation easier and safer in the world by improving nautical charts and documents.

The 1970 Convention was a result of the desire of participating governments to pursue their cooperation in the field of hydrography on an intergovernmental basis.

IHO Activities

The IHO has the following objectives:

- The co-ordination of the activities of national hydrographic offices;
- The greatest possible uniformity in nautical charts and documents;
- The adoption of reliable and efficient methods for carrying out and exploiting hydrographic surveys;
- The progress of science related to hydrography and of the techniques used for oceanographic surveys;
- The development of sciences in the field of hydrography and the techniques employed.

To implement these objectives, the Organization has two main organs: the International Hydrographic Conference and the International Hydrographic Bureau managed by a Directing Committee.

The International Hydrographic Conference (IHC) is made up of representatives of the Member State Governments. The Conference meets in ordinary session every 5 years.

The main duties of the Conference are :

- To give general guidelines on the running of the Organization and its work.
- To elect the members of the Directing Committee and its President.
- To examine reports submitted by the Bureau.
- To make decisions on all technical or administrative proposals, submitted by the Member Governments or by the Bureau.
- To approve the budget.

The International Hydrographic Bureau (IHB) is responsible for the implementation of the mandates fixed by the Convention and the Conference. The IHB is composed of the Directing Committee made up of three Directors elected for 5 years, the President of which represents the Organization, and also technical and administrative staff.

The IHB is notably responsible for :

- Ensuring a close and permanent liaison between national hydrographic services;
- Examining any matter concerned with hydrography as well as any related science and techniques and to collect the necessary documents.
- Encouraging the exchange of nautical charts and documents between Member States' hydrographic services.
- Distributing all relevant documentation.

- Giving advice when requested, in particular to those countries whose hydrographic services are being established or developed;
- Encouraging the co-ordination of hydrographic surveys with connected oceanographic activities;
- Spreading and facilitating the application of oceanographic knowledge in the interest of mariners;
- Cooperating with international organizations and scientific institutions which have similar objectives.

The Organization also has a Finance Committee which controls the finances of the IHO. The Finance Committee meets during the Conference.

The IHO has a legal status and enjoys on the territory of each of its Members (subject to the agreement of the Member Government concerned) privileges and immunities which are necessary for carrying out its functions and for pursuing its tasks.

The day to day expenses of the Organization are covered by the annual contributions of its Member Governments, which are calculated according to a scale based on the tonnage of their fleet. Donations, legacies, grants and other financial resources may be accepted with the prior approval of the Finance Committee.

Technical Co-operation and Capacity Building

The IHO, as the “recognized guide” on all matters related to hydrography and nautical charting, often acts as a coordinating body for the promotion of projects aimed at establishing or strengthening the hydrographic capabilities of developing countries.

The IHO also regularly encourages the signing of bilateral and multilateral agreements for technical assistance whilst establishing closer contacts with international funding agencies. Consultative visits are organized in any country, in particular developing countries, which requests assistance. The International Hydrographic Organization encourages the creation of grants for hydrographers and nautical cartographers, such as those provided, for example, by JICA (Japan), by the hydrographic services of the USA, India, France, Spain, Chile, Italy, UK, Russia etc.. The IHO has also established an agreement with the IMO and the International Maritime Academy in Trieste (Italy) to provide training for hydrographers from developing countries.

Publications

The Bureau publishes and distributes about 40 publications , the most important of which are :

- *National Maritime Policies and Hydrographic Services*
- *IHO Resolutions*
- *Standards of Competence for Hydrographic Surveyors and Nautical Cartographers (adopted by all training institutions)*
- *Chart Specifications of the IHO (internationally adopted by governmental hydrographic services)*
- *IHO Standards for Hydrographic Surveys (adopted by governmental hydrographic services)*
- *IHO Standards for Electronic Navigational Charts (highly complex standards adopted by the International Maritime Organization (IMO)).*
- *Joint IMO/IHO/WMO Manual on Maritime Safety Information (MSI).*
- *Limits of Oceans and Seas (complex publication, a new edition of which is under preparation, which is a very important publication for cartographers)*
- *Manual on the Technical Aspects of the United Nations Convention on the Law of the Sea*
- *The General Bathymetric Chart of the Oceans and International Bathymetric Charts (GEBCO) (in co-operation with the International Oceanographic Commission of UNESCO). This work was initiated by Prince Albert 1st of Monaco in 1903 and is very useful for scientific research and administration of the sea bottom and of the coastal zone.*
- *Gazetteer of Geographical Names of Undersea Features (very useful for Cartographers)*
- *The International Hydrographic Bulletin, a monthly publication which contains subjects of current interest on a world wide level.*
- *The Year Book which contains a list of addresses and references of all the hydrographic services of the Member States and non Member States as well as important information concerning their staff and vessels.*

- *The IHO has created its own web site for the use of its Member States and the public.*

Reasons for requesting Observer status at the UN General Assembly.

At the invitation of the Deputy Secretary General in Legal Affairs, the Legal Advisor for the UN, the IHO has been regularly associated with the work of the meetings of the States parties to the UN Convention on the Law of the Sea. It has also participated in the work of the Consultative Process open to all established by the General Assembly in Resolution 54/33 in order to assist in the annual assessment of developments in maritime affairs.

Observer status allowing the IHO to participate in General Assembly sessions, would give the IHO the possibility of having closer contact with the various UN programmes and institutions so as to increase cooperation and coordination of different activities in the field of marine science and to develop its training programmes and capacity building in the fields described above.

Addendum

Draft Resolution

Granting Observer Status to the International Hydrographic Organization at the General Assembly

The General Assembly,

Wishing to promote cooperation between the United Nations and the International Hydrographic Organization,

- 1. has decided to invite the International Hydrographic Organization to participate in its sessions and its work as an observer.*
 - 2. requests the Secretary General to take the necessary measures to implement this resolution.*
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