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**CIRCULAR LETTER 52/2004
23 July 2004**

**MEMORANDUM OF UNDERSTANDING
BETWEEN
THE INTERNATIONAL HYDROGRAPHIC ORGANIZATION
AND
THE SOUTH PACIFIC APPLIED GEOSCIENCE COMMISSION**

Dear Hydrographer,

One of the obstacles to improving safety of navigation through accurate nautical charts and information is the lack of hydrographic data collected to modern standards in areas where the responsible Coastal States do not have the capability or capacity to collect such data. This problem is particularly acute with the Small Island Developing States of the South West Pacific Ocean. The South West Pacific Hydrographic Commission (SWPHC) has made great strides in encouraging mutual assistance programs but the area remains one of the largest, navigationally challenging areas relying on survey data collected, in many instances, centuries ago. In an attempt to mine sources of high quality data, the SWPHC has liaised with the South Pacific Applied Geoscience Commission (SOPAC).

SOPAC is an inter-governmental, regional organization dedicated to providing services to promote sustainable development in the countries it serves. An integral part of SOPAC's work involves mapping coastal and ocean seabed areas using multibeam echo sounding equipped vessels. These data form the foundation for numerous thematic projects, all focused on the sustainable development of the region. The key to maximizing the benefits of these projects is the effective distribution of these data to a wide range of stakeholders. Additional information on SOPAC can be obtained from their website at <http://www.sopac.org>.

Annex A is a draft Memorandum of Understanding between the IHO and SOPAC intended to foster closer relations between the two organizations and facilitate the exchange of hydrographic data for mutual benefit. It is envisaged that an improved understanding of data holdings, data requirements and data collection plans will optimize data collection activities. Access to the hydrographic data collected by SOPAC will increase the currency, quality and quantity of data available for compilation of nautical charts. The IHO Data Centre for Digital Bathymetry (DCDB) is intended as the archival and distribution mechanism.

You are kindly requested to review this draft and to provide your comments, if any, to the IHB **by 15 October 2004**. Subject to the concurrence of SOPAC Members

and comments received from IHO Member States, the IHB intends to sign the MoU, on behalf of the IHO, at the next meeting of the SWPHC in early November 2004, which will be attended by the Secretariat of SOPAC.

On behalf of the Directing Committee
Yours sincerely,

(original signed)

Rear Admiral Kenneth BARBOR
Director

Annex A: Draft Memorandum of Understanding

MEMORANDUM OF UNDERSTANDING
between
THE INTERNATIONAL HYDROGRAPHIC ORGANIZATION (IHO)
and
THE SOUTH PACIFIC APPLIED GEOSCIENCE COMMISSION (SOPAC)

1. Parties

This document constitutes a Memorandum of Understanding between the International Hydrographic Organization (IHO) and the South Pacific Applied Geoscience Commission (SOPAC).

2. Background

The International Hydrographic Organization (IHO) is an intergovernmental organization of a consultative and technical nature comprising over 70 Member States represented by their respective national hydrographic offices. IHO objectives include the coordination of national hydrographic offices activities, standardization of nautical charts and publications and the adoption of reliable and efficient methods to conduct hydrographic surveys, all aiming to contribute to safety of navigation and the protection of the marine environment. The IHO has several Regional Hydrographic Commissions to provide focus on regional issues as well as several Committees and Working Groups to deal with particular technical and policy topics. The South West Pacific Hydrographic Commission (SWPHC) provides a regional focus on the IHO objectives in the region of the South West Pacific Ocean. The SWPHC is comprised of Full Members who are IHO Member States within the SWPHC region and Associate Members who are non-IHO Member States within the Region or IHO Member States outside the region that contribute to safety of navigation through their activities in the fields of hydrography, nautical charting or nautical information in the region.

SOPAC is an inter-governmental, regional organization dedicated to providing services to promote sustainable development in the countries it serves. SOPAC's work focuses on providing assistance to its member countries in three key programme areas:

- An integrated programme focused on research, development and management of non-living resources in ocean and island systems addressing issues relating to seabed resources, energy, maritime boundary delimitation and monitoring of ocean processes.
- A diversified programme that strengthens national capacities in energy, water and sanitation, information and communications.
- A comprehensive programme aimed at reduction of community vulnerability through improved hazard assessment and risk management.

3. Purpose

The purpose of this Memorandum of Understanding is to provide a framework for a continuing liaison between the IHO and SOPAC to ensure the efficient and effective use of hydrographic data collected by the two organizations or their members.

4. Programme of Activities

In accordance with the background and purpose described above, both organizations agree to endeavour to intensify their co-operation for mutual benefit. The following steps will be taken, among others:

- a. Regular contact is to be established between the two organizations in order to institute and maintain a continuing liaison to address matters of common interest.
- b. Each organization should inform the other of its activities that may be of common interest and invite representation from the other where it is agreed that it would be appropriate.
- c. Both organizations should identify opportunities to maximize the efficient collection of hydrographic data by furthering the understanding of data requirements, data holdings and future collection plans.
- d. SOPAC should provide data from seabed mapping and other relevant cruises to the IHO Data Centre for Digital Bathymetry (DCDB) where IHO Member States may access it in support of their national and international projects. SOPAC will have access to the data archived at DCDB to support their regional projects.

5. Financial Commitment

It is understood that neither organization can commit the other to any expenditure, save that from administering this Memorandum, without the specific written consent of both organizations.

6. Legal Status

This Memorandum does not create a legal link between the two organizations which will maintain their mutual independence.

This Memorandum of Understanding is valid until IHO or SOPAC proposes changes to it. Each organization has the right to propose changes to this Memorandum at any time. Any changes shall be subject to the consent of both organizations.

This Memorandum of Understanding can be terminated at any time for any reason by one party writing to the other party, signifying its intention to withdraw from the terms of the MOU.

Date:

Date:

Signature:
On behalf of IHO

Signature:
On behalf of SOPAC