



IHB File No. S1/3000

**CIRCULAR LETTER 02/2008
04 January 2008**

**CONSULTATION BETWEEN THE IHB AND IHO MEMBER STATES
- LOW RESPONSE RATES TO CIRCULAR LETTERS**

Dear Hydrographer,

1. Article VI (6) of the IHO Convention indicates that between sessions of the Conference, "*the Bureau may consult the Member Governments by correspondence on questions concerning the technical functioning of the Organization*". Such consultation is primarily achieved through Circular Letters (CLs). Article 25 of the General Regulations, Article 8 of the Financial Regulations and Administrative Resolution T 2.1 contain additional details of the procedure.

2. CLs are issued to keep Member States informed on technical, financial and administrative issues of importance to the proper functioning of the Organization. In some cases, CLs propose initiatives put forward by our Committees or Working Groups or by the Directing Committee itself, seeking a decision of the Organization on the particular subject. Other CLs bring various matters to the attention of Member States and seek their views and comments.

3. Member States, in providing comments or votes in response to CLs, do not simply exercise their rights, but provide clear guidance to the Directing Committee on the way to proceed, according to the positions expressed. It follows that responses to CLs are therefore very important vehicles for registering the collective will of the Organization.

4. Therefore, it is with regret that the Directing Committee informs Member States that the number of responses that the Bureau generally receives to CLs, either as comments, votes or both, is a cause for concern.

5. A survey of the responses to CLs received during 2005, 2006 and 2007 indicates that:

- .1 On average, only 40% to 50% of Member States responded to CLs;
- .2 In some cases the response level was 25% to 30%;
- .3 When Member States were asked to provide comments only, the response level ranged between 0% to 20%.

6. Such limited levels of response means that feedback may not always be representative of the whole Organization. Equally importantly, these low levels of response make it impossible to achieve the necessary majority of all Member States needed for the approval of issues where voting is required.

7. On several occasions important, yet apparently non-controversial, proposals have struggled to obtain the appropriate majority, due to the low number of responses to CLs. In some of these cases, the Directing Committee has resorted to telephone calls, e-mails and faxes, to remind Hydrographers that they have not responded to various CLs. However, this cannot be done for all CLs and must not be considered a normal procedure. As well as being administratively difficult and time-consuming,

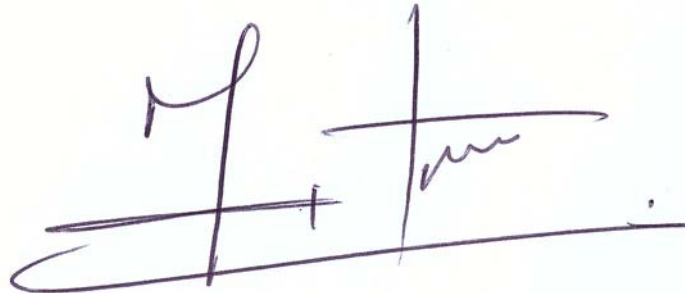
the Directing Committee is aware that such intervention might in some circumstances be interpreted as an inappropriate influence.

8. While the Convention clearly favours the decision-making process of the Conference, decision-making and feedback by correspondence assists the efficient running of the Organization during the inter-Conference period. It provides ample time to research, confer amongst Member States and seek government guidance or authorization where necessary. It is therefore not clear why many Member States do not respond to CLs.

9. Not responding to CLs affects the efficiency and effectiveness of the Bureau and the Organization. The Directing Committee brings this important issue to the attention of Member States in the hope that the situation will improve in the future. Any comments or suggestions are welcome.

On behalf of the Directing Committee

Yours sincerely,

A handwritten signature in dark ink, appearing to be 'A. Maratos', written over a horizontal line. The signature is stylized and cursive.

Vice Admiral Alexandros MARATOS
President