



IHB File N° TA 005-01

**CIRCULAR LETTER 14/2008  
14 February 2008**

**MEMORANDUM OF UNDERSTANDING BETWEEN THE  
IHO AND THE EUROPEAN UNION COMMISSION**

Dear Hydrographer,

1 During the last meeting of the North Sea Hydrographic Commission (NSHC) concerns were raised by participants, that initiatives of the European Union Commission (EC) on important maritime issues were lacking proper hydrographic input. In particular it was identified that Member States were not being consulted by the EC. On some occasions there were national responses on specific topics but it was agreed that there was a need to coordinate responses and influence the EC from within the IHO structure. The NSHC decided to establish a Working Group on "European Union (EU) Marine and Maritime Policies" to be Chaired by France.

2 On Friday 25 January, France organized a meeting in Brussels with the EC officials on maritime issues in order to examine the relationship between the EU institutions and HOs through the IHO. The following participated in the meeting: Ingenieur General Gilles Bessero and Ingenieur en Chef Yves Guilliam (France), Mr Paul Canham (UK), Mr Thomas Dehling (Germany), Captain Floor de Haan (Netherlands), Mrs Nathalie Balcaen (Belgium) and Vice Admiral Alexandros Maratos (IHB). The objectives of the meeting were:

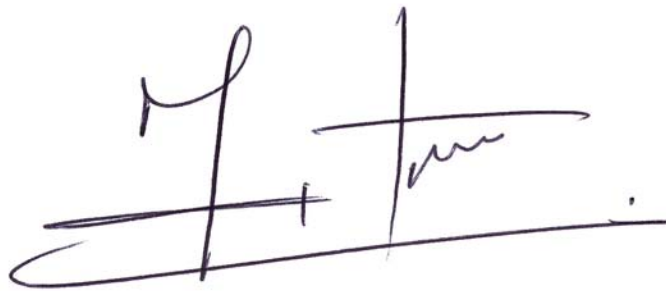
- To raise awareness on HOs capabilities, missions and responsibilities and existing networks;
- To give an insight on the IHO and its activities;
- To provide an overview of the IHO contribution to the establishment of the EU Maritime Integrated Policy;
- To improve EU institutions/agencies-EC-IHO partnership;
- To identify any actions that could benefit from initiatives during the French presidency of the EU Council.

3 With most of the references made to the strength of the existing IHO networks and capabilities versus the "Blue Book" action plan (An Integrated Maritime Policy for the European Union), the meeting was very fruitful for both sides, allowing the opportunity: to highlight the

importance of hydrography on all issues concerning safety at sea, pollution of the marine environment, security and development; to understand the specific maritime initiatives and needs of the EC and; to discuss how future cooperation can be better organized and the need for expert participation in meetings on specific topics of interest to both parties. It was decided to formalize this cooperation through a Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) between the IHO and the EC so that Member States could be better informed on developments concerning cooperation with EC.

4 Member States are requested to examine the attached draft MoU between the IHO and the EC and send their comments to the Bureau not later than 20 March, noting that the IHO may examine nominating a Hydrographic Office (HO) to take the lead on interaction with the EC.

On behalf of the Directing Committee  
Yours sincerely,

A handwritten signature in dark ink, consisting of several stylized, overlapping strokes. The signature is positioned centrally below the text 'Yours sincerely,'.

Vice Admiral Alexandros MARATOS  
President

Annex: Draft MoU



**MEMORANDUM OF UNDERSTANDING  
BETWEEN  
THE INTERNATIONAL HYDROGRAPHIC ORGANIZATION (IHO)  
AND  
THE EUROPEAN UNION COMMISSION (EC)**

### **1. Parties**

This document constitutes an agreement between the International Hydrographic Organization (IHO) and the European Commission (EC) in the field of maritime affairs.

### **2. Background**

The IHO and EC, being aware of the growing need for close and more efficient co-operation in the activities of common interest to support both organizations, Member States and their maritime policies, agree on the following framework of co-operation.

IHO is an intergovernmental organization of a consultative and technical nature comprising 80 Member States, out of which 19 are members of the European Union (EU) (February 2008) represented by their respective national hydrographic authorities (usually the Hydrographic Offices (HOs)). The 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 the safety of navigation and the protection of the marine environment. In its endeavour, the IHO has established Regional Hydrographic Commissions covering the world to provide focus on regional issues as well as Committees and Working Groups to deal with particular technical, financial and administrative issues.

Following the Green Paper on *A Future Maritime Policy for the Union: a European Vision of the Oceans and Seas*, the EC has developed a proposal for an Integrated Maritime Policy for the European Union (EU), "based on the clear recognition that all matters relating to Europe's oceans and seas are interlinked, and that sea-related policies must develop in a joined-up way [if we are] to reap the desired results". Most of the action areas identified in support of this integrated maritime policy are related with the activities of IHO EU and non-EU Member States HO.

### **3. Purpose**

The purpose of this Memorandum of Understanding is to provide a framework ensuring a continuing liaison between the two organizations in the specific areas of common interest. This will be achieved by maintaining and increasing the opportunities of scientific, technical, professional and operational support, through a continuing programme of co-operation leading to a mutual sharing of knowledge and expertise to the advantage of both organizations and Member States. HOs should become key enablers in the development of EU and national maritime policies using the existing framework provided by IHO without duplication and making the best use of the most efficient resources.

### **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:



1. 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.
2. Each organization should inform the other of all Commissions, Working groups, etc. that it has established and invite representation from the other where it is agreed that it would be appropriate. The International Hydrographic Bureau (IHB) will be the focal point of contact for the implementation of this MoU. In EC, the lead role is the responsibility of the Directorate-General for Fisheries and Maritime Affairs (DG FISH), with support from the Directorate-General for Energy and Transport (DG TREN), Environment (ENV) and Research (RTD).
3. Each organization should inform the other of its programme of work, proposed seminars, workshops, call for tenders, etc. to enable joint participation should it be of mutual benefit and inform its members of these events as appropriate.
4. Each organization should invite a representative from the other organization to attend respective Congresses/Conferences and offer complimentary registration.

## **5. Areas of interest**

It is agreed that both organizations should focus on the following areas of common interest among others: exchange of best practices, surveillance activities, maritime spatial planning, integrated coastal zone management, marine observation and data networks, marine research, and co-operation with third countries. Any specific action plan which may be decided to support these areas, will be arranged between the relevant subordinate bodies (e.g. EMSA and Regional Electronic Chart Centres) under specific conditions.

## **6. Financial Commitment**

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

## **7. Legal Status**

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

This Memorandum of Understanding is valid until IHO or EU 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 agreement of both organizations.

Date: ..... 2008

On behalf of IHO

On behalf of EC

Vice-Admiral Alexandros Maratos  
President IHB

Mr. John Richardson  
Head of the EC Maritime Policy  
Task Force