



THIS CIRCULAR LETTER REQUIRES YOU TO VOTE

IHB File N° S1/1811

CIRCULAR LETTER 43/2008
29 April 2008

FUTURE OF THE INTERNATIONAL HYDROGRAPHIC REVIEW

Dear Hydrographer,

1 The International Hydrographic Review (IHR) was first published in 1921 and since then has been published regularly with two or three issues per year. In September 2000 the IHR, which had until then been compiled and published internally by the International Hydrographic Bureau (IHB), was transferred to GITC to be published under a contractual arrangement. The purpose of this was to improve the scope and quality of the IHR, to widen the circulation and to reduce costs. Under the current contract with GITC the IHO pays an annual contribution to GITC of 11.000 euros for the production of two editions of the IHR and a distribution of up to 350 copies to IHO Member States and other readers identified by the IHB.

2 GITC has now been taken over by the publishing company Reed Business Geo. Shortly after the takeover Reed Business Geo reached the conclusion that continued publication of IHR was not economically sustainable with the level of existing subscriptions (no more than 600 copies, including 350 copies distributed directly to IHO Member States according to the agreement).

3 Efforts were made to improve the level of subscription through a Reader Survey in the form of a questionnaire which was sent to all recipients of the IHR in early 2007. The questionnaire sought information aimed at developing a strategy that would improve the situation. The questionnaire was also circulated to Member States via CL 59/2007. Despite this effort the response rate was discouraging, with only 21 replies out of 600 being received. The result was that it was impossible to draw any conclusions from the survey.

4 In further meetings between the publisher and the Directing Committee it is clear that the IHO contribution of 11.000 euros per year is not enough to sustain publication in its current form - nearly 20.000 euros would be required to ensure any sort of viability and, even then, this would be for an internet-based publication only.

5 In October 2007 the Directing Committee was informed by Reed Business Geo that they were no longer prepared to bear the financial losses associated with the existing arrangements and that they did not wish to renew their four-yearly contract in 2008. Accordingly, the issue published in late July or early August 2008 will be the last produced under the contract.

6 Reed Business Geo informed the Directing Committee that it would nevertheless explore other options to enable publication to continue. This resulted in a request passed to *Elsevier Science* to look into possibilities of publishing the IHR. In March 2008 the response from *Elsevier* was both disappointing and short: "financial benefits are too marginal and the

readership is too small, there's no fit with other publications within Elsevier Science and the wish to continue publishing a hard copy version on the side of the IHB doesn't fit in to the strategy of the scientific publisher".

7 The Directing Committee has therefore concluded that there are no realistic possibilities for the IHO to continue the publication of IHR in its traditional form without a significant increase in costs and expenditure. The contract with Reed Business Geo ends on 01 August 2008 and a decision is therefore required on the way forward.

8 The Directing Committee has considered several options:

- .1 continue publishing IHR in paper form as it is now, with peer-reviewed papers, through a new, considerably more expensive contract with Reed Business Geo or another publisher;
- .2 publish a web-based edition with peer-reviewed articles, in association with the Reed publication "*Hydro International*", through a new and more expensive contract with Reed Business Geo, with perhaps a printed annual compendium of articles;
- .3 publish a web-based edition with peer-reviewed papers, on the IHO web site using IHB resources and a "part time" paid editor;
- .4 publish IHR papers on the IHO web site but with no editing or peer review;
- .5 cease publication of IHR in any form.

9 The Directing Committee feels that, given its history, every effort should be made to continue the publication of IHR in some form. However, it is also very aware of the very limited readership. Equally importantly, the current editor of IHR reports an alarming drop in submissions generally, but particularly from HO's. In the last 3 years, of 36 articles and 21 notes, only 8 of each have come from HOs. This means that, in effect, the principal readership is not actually contributing to the content of the publication. Unless this situation is likely to change, it must influence the long-term future of IHR.

10 Given the circumstances, it is the opinion of the Directing Committee that publication of the IHR can only continue in a much simplified way; (see option 4). Under this arrangement:

- The IHR would be a digital collection of relevant technical articles (as it is today), the content of which shall correspond to the compilation of the original texts provided by the authors. There will be no peer-review and no editorial intervention.
- Texts would be published as they arrive, in a designated *International Hydrographic Review* section on the IHO web site. This will keep the name of IHR alive. This can be done within the existing resources of the IHB.
- At the end of the year the IHB would compile a printed compendium of all the papers published throughout the year. The printing would be done under contract using the funds currently allocated to the GITC/Reed Business Geo contract (11.000 Euros, annually). The printed edition would be distributed to Member States and other relevant institutions. (Around 350 copies, same as distribution for current IHR)
- The Directing Committee would consider further whether advertising in the printed edition is feasible to subsidise the printed annual version of the IHR and thereby sustain its quality.

The Directing Committee requests Member States' opinion on the future of IHR and its method of publication. In particular,

- should IHR continue to be published?
- If yes, do you support the publication of IHR on the IHO web site as a collection of un-reviewed, un-edited papers; supported by an annual printed compendium edition?
- Do you have any other comments or suggestions on the future of IHR?

11 Responses are requested to reach the IHB **no later than 30 June 2008**, using the attached form.

On behalf of the Directing Committee
Yours sincerely,

A handwritten signature in blue ink, consisting of a large, stylized 'H' with a loop at the top and a long, sweeping tail that curves back up to cross the stem of the 'H'.

Captain Hugo Gorziglia
IHB Director

Annex: Voting form

VOTING FORM

*(to be returned to the IHB by 30 June 2008
E-mail: info@ihb.mc - Fax: +377 93 10 81 40)*

Member State:

FUTURE OF THE INTERNATIONAL HYDROGRAPHIC REVIEW

Should IHR continue to be published?

YES

NO

If yes, do you support the publication of IHR on the IHO web site as a collection of un-reviewed, un-edited papers; supported by an annual printed compendium edition?

YES

NO

Do you have any other comments or suggestions on the future of IHR?

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Name/Signature:

Date: