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**CIRCULAR LETTER 82/2012
22 August 2012**

**REPORT ON THE SECOND SESSION OF THE UN COMMITTEE OF EXPERTS
ON GLOBAL GEOSPATIAL INFORMATION MANAGEMENT**

References: A. CL66/2011 dated 3 November - IHO Participation in the UN Committee of Experts on Global Geospatial Information Management
B. XVIIIth IHC Decision 17 (PRO 6) - Global status of hydrographic surveying

Dear Hydrographer,

1. The UN Committee of Experts on Global Geospatial Information Management (UN-GGIM) held its second session at UN Headquarters in New York between 13 and 15 August. Over 50 UN Member States were represented, together with representatives from 10 international organizations, including the IHO. Director Ward represented the IHO as an Observer at the session.

2. As reported in Reference A, the aim of the UN-GGIM is to advance international cooperation in geospatial information management and to help make accurate and authoritative geospatial information readily available, particularly in support of advancing sustainable development. The UN-GGIM reports to the UN Assembly via the UN Economic and Social Council (ECOSOC). ECOSOC has set a five-year work programme for UN-GGIM and requires the Committee to report to ECOSOC in 2016.

3. The work of UN-GGIM is based on a list of key issues. These are:

- Developing a national, regional and global strategic framework for geospatial information
- Establishing institutional arrangements, legal and common frameworks
- Building capability and capacity, especially in developing countries
- Assuring the quality of geospatial information
- Promoting data sharing, accessibility and dissemination
- Embracing trends in Information Technology
- Promoting geospatial advocacy and awareness
- Partnering with civil society and the private sector

4. The 2nd session of UN-GGIM (GGIM-2) considered various reports under the following themes:

- Future trends
- Outcome of the recent UN Conference on Sustainable Development (Rio+20)
- An overarching Statement of Ethics for geospatial information management
- Development of a UN-sponsored knowledge base for geospatial information management
- The status of mapping in the world
- The need for a global geodetic reference system
- Development of a global map for sustainable development

5. In response to the report on the status of mapping in the world, the IHO representative informed the Committee of the status of global charting and surveying as discussed at the XVIIIth IHC in April (Reference B) and the Resolution that was adopted by Member States. The status of global charting and surveying appeared to be unknown by almost all the delegates and observers at GGIM-2. As a result, the GGIM has invited the IHO, through the IHB, to provide information that can be incorporated into the continuing work on the GGIM report on the status of mapping in the world. This is an important development for the IHO, since it provides a new opportunity to inform senior representatives of UN Member States of the current global situation regarding hydrography. It also emphasizes the importance of continuing to improve the information and the use of IHO publication C-55 - *Status of Hydrographic Surveying and Nautical Charting Worldwide*.

6. Following a discussion on international standards, the ISO, IHO, and the Open Geospatial Consortium (OGC) were invited to develop proposals on issues related to standard setting in the international community for consideration by the next session of GGIM. This is another important development for the IHO because it will highlight the role that the IHO is playing in global geospatial standards setting, and in particular its recent work on establishing the S-100 standard.

7. The work of the UN-GGIM is becoming increasingly relevant to the IHO. There is now an acknowledgement of hydrography and the maritime domain in its work. This, in turn, provides an opportunity to bring the work of the IHO Member States' Hydrographic Services to the attention of the top levels of the UN system. There is also active discussion taking place at UN-GGIM on the development of spatial data infrastructures around the world. Here there is an opportunity for the IHO MSDI Working Group to monitor world developments in SDI and to promote the role that Hydrographic Offices can play in the provision of fundamental data and information covering the maritime domain.

8. Member States are encouraged to keep their respective delegations at GGIM informed and to provide support as appropriate.

9. The third session of the GGIM will take place from 24 to 26 July 2013 in Cambridge, UK. A UN high-level forum on geospatial information management will also be held in Doha, Qatar from 4 to 6 February 2013. Information on UN-GGIM and the high level forum in Doha is available at: <http://ggim.un.org/default.html>.

On behalf of the Directing Committee
Yours sincerely,

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to read 'Robert Ward', with a stylized flourish at the end.

Robert WARD
Director