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Report on Open ECDIS Forum (OEF) Activities

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1. Background

The Open ECDIS Forum (OEF) was established in 1997 to facilitate the international development and implementation of ECDIS. The objectives of the OEF are to:

- encourage and support the development of ECDIS and its extensions
- provide lines of communication between IMO/IHO/IEC standards users and developers
- promote the S-57 data model in the marine environment, and monitor its use
- examine new development proposals, and advise on their validity
- promote world-wide ENC production

Specific OEF activities include:

- a. establish discussion forums on issues related to ECDIS
- b. review and register "user-defined" S-57 objects
- c. register private producer agency codes
- d. distribute ECDIS-related freeware/shareware software and S-57 datasets
- e. organize workshops on ECDIS-related matters
- f. provide a link with the IHO website, and to other organizations involved in ECDIS

2. Year in Review

Now in its fourth year of operation, the OEF is experiencing growing support by industry and HO members. While the number of active discussion forums remains stable, the level of activity has become more pronounced. It is obvious that for many participants, e-mail discussions are being widely used as means to exchange ideas, as well as to prepare for meetings. On the administrative side, a number of new ENC manufacturers have received their producing agency codes from, and new object classes and attributes compatible with S-57 have been registered.

Some events of the last twelve months that warrant specific mention:

- a. The OEF server that hosts the OEF website and the e-mail forums is now maintained at the University of New Hampshire (USA) under the supervision of Dr. Lee Alexander. A new server was installed and the website was handed over in August by SevenCs. The funding for this transition was kindly provided by the IHB in early 2001. The design and overall operation of the website has not changed. However, some future enhancements are planned.
- b. The OEF Board Of Patrons is back to six members. Capt. Henrik Solmer of A. P. Moller resigned due to changes in the organisation of his company. The OEF is again looking for a person willing to serve who represents the point-of-view of the shipping industry. Gert Büttgenbach continues to chair the Board Of Patrons Forum that supervises all OEF activities.
- c. The UKHO contacted the OEF to investigate whether the Additional Military Layer (AML) extensions to S-57 could be registered with the OEF. On behalf of the OEF, SevenCs looked into the details, and suggested minor changes to avoid overlapping with existing attribute codes. The UKHO is currently considering these ramifications.
- d. The Colours & Symbols Maintenance Working Group (C&SMWG) used the OEF quite successfully in preparing for their most recent meeting. C&SMWG members expressed interest in using the OEF even more intensively for future activities.

3. Looking Ahead

The OEF is evolving from being primarily a discussion and information site, to a means for consensus building and facilitation a range of topics related to ECDIS development and implementation. Further enhancements to the OEF should include more powerful search functions to browse discussion archives, and topics of broader scope/content to attract new talents to the field. All of this depends on the continued operation and maintenance of the web site. In the near future, organizations and companies interested in ensuring the continued operation of the OEF will be asked to provide a modest level of support to OEF.

For further information, please go to the OEF website: www.openecdis.org