

THIRD MEETING OF THE IHO REGIONAL COORDINATION COMMITTEE
IHO-IRCC
Niteroi, Brazil (26-27 May 2011)

Report of the First Meeting of the Arctic Regional Hydrographic Commission (ARHC)
4-6 October 2010
Ottawa, Canada

Background on the Formation of the ARHC

In June 2009 at the International Hydrographic Conference in Monaco, Canada, Denmark, Norway, Russian Federation and United States met for informal discussions to determine the level of interest in forming a Regional Hydrographic Commission for the Arctic Ocean region. General interest was expressed at the scientific/hydrographic level by all five Member States. Canada was asked to draft an initial set of Statutes which would be used by each Hydrographic Office to engage appropriate levels of government.

In February 2010 the same five Arctic Ocean coastal states met at the International Association of Marine Aids to Navigation and Lighthouse Authorities (IALA) offices to evaluate and discuss the future marking of Arctic Polar routes. Each of the five Hydrographic Offices participated in this meeting and discussed progress on the draft Statutes of the Arctic Regional Hydrographic Commission. A face to face meeting in the Fall, 2010 was proposed and Canada offered to host this meeting.

Inaugural meeting of the ARHC

The meeting was held in Ottawa, October 4-6, 2010. The five Member States attended: Canada, Denmark, Norway, Russian Federation, and the United States. Canada (Dr. Savi Narayanan) chaired the meeting. Denmark (Mr. Svend Eskildsen) served as Vice-Chair. Vice Admiral Alexandros Maratos represented the International Hydrographic Bureau (IHB).

Statutes of the ARHC

The Statutes of the ARHC were approved at this meeting. After a formal signing ceremony the Statutes were presented to the President of the IHB for retention in the repository of the International Hydrographic Organization.

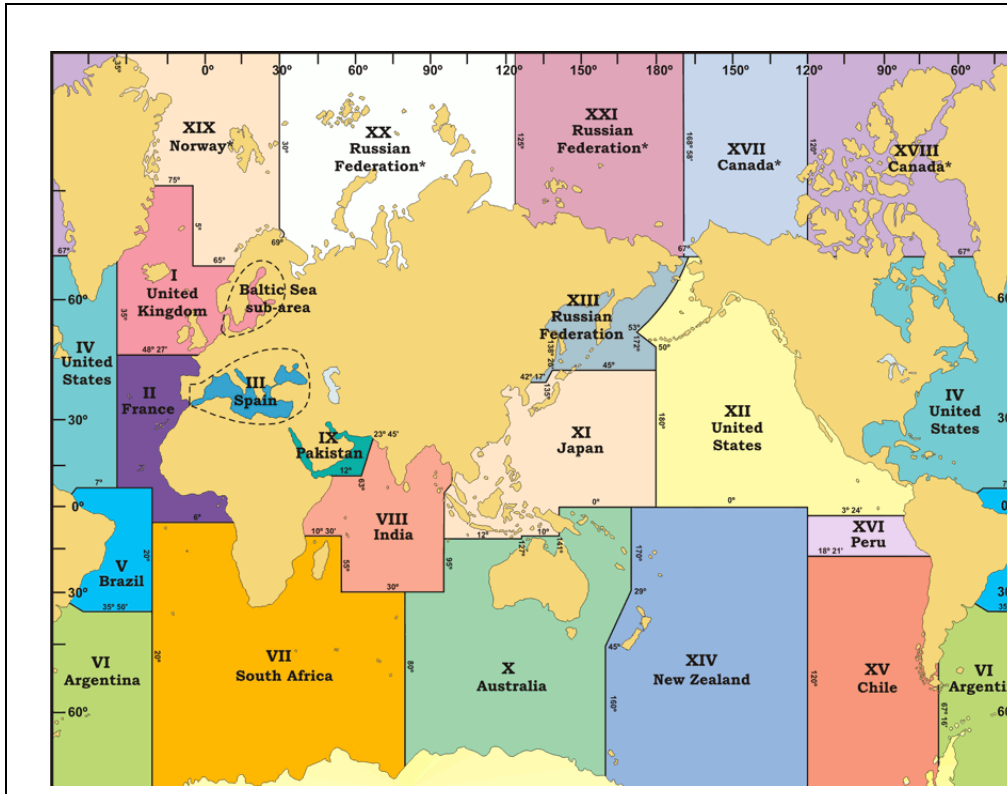
ARHC Statement

The ARHC approved an “Arctic Regional Hydrographic Statement” that outlines the goals of the Commission. The Statement is attached as Appendix A.

ARHC Area of Coverage

It is proposed that the limits of Arctic NAVAREAs XVII to XXI serve as the area of coverage of the ARHC. The final decision will be made at the next ARHC meeting, following consultations with the United States-Canada Hydrographic Commission, Nordic Hydrographic Commission, and the North Sea Hydrographic Commission.

World-wide Navigational Warning Service



Working Groups

The following Working Groups were formed:

1) Strategic Planning Working Group (Chair: Norway)

This working Group will discuss and decide the immediate strategic directions for the Commission including assessment of charts and nautical publications (coverage, harmonization, etc.), INTernational Charts and Electronic Navigational Chart scheming requirements, key groups for engagement on Arctic issues and other matters pertaining to multi-lateral or bilateral collaboration in hydrographic activities.

2) Operations and Technologies Working Group (Chair: United States)

Subject matters for this working group will include lessons learned, training and best practices in Arctic operational hydrography.

3) Working Group to develop the Mariners Routeing Guide for the Arctic (Chair: Denmark)

This Working Group will provide recommendations on the development of a routeing guide to include information on reporting systems, ice conditions, maritime assistance services, special regulations, coverage of paper charts and ENCs, as well as water levels and land rise.

ARHC Meetings

Meetings will be held annually. To promote communication and collaboration with other international organizations, it is proposed that IALA and the International Maritime Organization be invited to the second meeting of the ARHC, to be held in Copenhagen, September 27-29, 2011. The meeting will be chaired by Canada; the vice-chair will be Denmark.

Status of Actions from IRCC02

IRCC02/01: Adopt objectives to accelerate the process of ratification of the Protocol of Amendments to the IHO Convention.

ARHC Response: Four out of five Members of the ARHC have signed the Protocol of Amendments.

IRCC02/02: Encourage the approval of pending applications for the IHO membership

ARHC Response: This is a matter that will be discussed at the second meeting of the ARHC

IRCC02/05: Report to IRCC3 on

- a. the methodology used for assessing and displaying survey status*
- b. b. implementation of the guidance for the preparation and maintenance of INT schemes*
- c. c. experience in dealing with marine disasters in relation with IHO guidelines*
- d. strategies to involve non-IHO MSs in RHCs activities*

ARHC Response: ARHC Response: The first meeting of the ARHC established a Strategic Planning Working Group and it is this group that will provide guidance on all the matters in this action item. The SPWG is now in its early formative stages.

IRCC02/06: Nominate a representative to the IHR Editorial Board

ARHC Response: This would be an item of discussion for the second meeting of the ARHC

Statement of the Arctic Regional Hydrographic Commission

On October 6, 2010, the five Arctic Coastal States; Canada, Denmark, Norway, the Russian Federation and the United States, under the leadership of Canada established the Arctic Regional Hydrographic Commission (ARHC).

The establishment of the ARHC is a historic event. Since the establishment of the International Hydrographic Organization in 1921, fifteen Regional Hydrographic Commissions have been established worldwide. The Arctic Ocean remained without such a Commission until today.

The Arctic is undergoing extraordinary transformations facilitating increased natural resource development and marine traffic at a time when little reliable navigational and environmental data exists. At present, less than 10% of Arctic waters are charted to modern standards. To meet current and emerging challenges, the Arctic Coastal States represented by their Hydrographic Offices, have recognized the need for enhanced collaboration and coordination of their Arctic activities and established the ARHC.

By exchanging knowledge and information and by providing quality assured data, the Members of the ARHC aim to facilitate an environmentally responsible exploration of Arctic waters. The ARHC will thereby contribute in the development of the maritime infrastructure required for safe navigation and protection of the marine environment in the Arctic.

The ARHC is committed to enhancing cooperation with other intergovernmental organizations and the international hydrographic and maritime transportation community with a perspective towards advancing the much needed Arctic maritime infrastructure.