

Vice Admiral Alexandros MARATOS  
Chair of the Working Group on the Revision of S-23 (Limits of Oceans and Seas)  
President  
International Hydrographic Bureau  
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Reference: S-23 WG Letter No.6 06/2011 dated December 23rd, 2011

Dear Vice Admiral Alexandros Maratos,

First of all, I would like to express on behalf of the GOJ, our sincere appreciation for your work to prepare the conclusion for the S-23 WG. In this relation, the GOJ would like to register the following **five comments** for the Chair Group to consider while drafting the "Report to Member States."

**(1) The description of the sea area of "Japan Sea" as "the sea area between the Korean Peninsula and the Japanese Archipelago" should be modified to "the sea area bordered by Russia, Japan and the Korean Peninsula" for accuracy and technicality sake.**

The GOJ proposes that, for accuracy sake, the WG should modify the way it has been referring to the current impasse caused by the ROK's objection since 1997 to the IHO's use of the name Sea of Japan. The name Japan Sea, as a matter of fact, designates a vast international sea in the North West Pacific area, the longest coast line of which belonging to Russia. In short, "Japan Sea", *extends far beyond* "the sea area between the Korean Peninsula and the Japanese Archipelago." A more accurate, albeit simple enough way for the WG and the IHO to refer to this sea area would be "the sea area bordered by Russia, Japan, and the Korean Peninsula."

(note) The WG is reminded that, "the sea area between the Korean Peninsula and the Japanese Archipelago" *is not either* what the Korean term Tong-Hae, which can be literally translated as "the sea on the east-side", necessarily means. As a matter of fact, the ROK Government's official nautical map (also known as 102A), including its recent version published in 1993 (attachment A), uses the Korean name "Tong-hae" for

the immediate coastal area east to the Korean peninsula, as the term literally means, while the map uses the term Japan Sea, alongside its Korean translation "Ilbon Hae," for the sea area bordered by Russia, Japan, and the Korean Peninsula.

**(2) The WG should not base its conclusion on this issue solely on the Chair's assessment of GOJ's and ROK's response, which risks misleading the IHC into believing that this naming issue is a long standing bilateral history-related issue between Japan and the ROK, as claimed by the ROK, despite the opposition by the GOJ.**

As the GOJ has been continuously pointing out, this naming issue is not a long standing bilateral issue related to history between Japan and the ROK. This issue is *not* either about a choice between a Japanese name and a Korean name. Indeed, the current Japanese term *"Nihon-kai" for the sea area in question, is a translation of a pre-existing international name "Japan Sea"* and not the other way round. *What the ROK is claiming is to replace this international name*, which precedes the debut of Japan in international affairs in late 19<sup>th</sup> century, with a local Korean name, "Tong-hae," which came to be translated later as "East Sea" in some documents (*not* including those documents including the 1993 ROK official nautical map 102 A, as mentioned above).

(note) The WG is reminded that the Korean Government's Report (National Geographical Information Agency) dated November 20<sup>th</sup> 2007 (Attachment B) also explicitly recognizes that the name "Japan Sea" became in wider international use rapidly from 1830 onward, when Japan was totally secluded from the rest of the world, in line with the GOJ's survey of about 5000 old maps from Europe and the U.S.A. The WG is also reminded that the ROK has not expressed any objection to the IHO's use of the name "Japan Sea" for as long as 4 decades since it joined the organization in 1957, and using the name "Japan Sea" in its official nautical maps as recently as in 1993 (Attachment B), which indicates that this naming "issue" did not exist for the ROK until very recently.

**(3) The WG should propose to the IHC a solution based on technical considerations with a view to achieving the IHO's mission to "bring about the greatest possible uniformity in**

**nautical charts and documents”, as stated in its founding convention.**

Rather than letting this issue being politicized by treating it as a matter for diplomatic and political negotiation between the GOJ and the ROK in the conclusion, *the WG should inform the IHC of those elements and facts to be considered in order to make a technical decision on the issue of the revision of the S-23*, which is a technical document intended for nautical experts’ use.

These elements for consideration should include the mission of the IHO as mentioned in the Convention “bring about the greatest possible uniformity in nautical charts and documents”, as well as those IHO’s technical resolutions emphasizing the centrality of standardization of names for the pursuit of this mission. The IHC should also be reminded that explicit support for the ROK’s demand to print the name “East Sea” is almost non-existent among WG members, while many members have expressed their respective support for either the continuation of the use of the name Japan Sea, or the Chair’s proposal (“Way Forward”). The WG may also want to inform the IHC that the IHO’s hitherto approach to frame this issue a bilateral issue between Japan and the ROK has failed for years to bring about any breakthrough. The Chair should also inform the members of those relevant facts as mentioned in the sections (1) and (2) above.

#### **(4) Lack of consensus/unanimity support for a new name should result in the continued use of the existing name**

The GOJ is also of the view that there is *no reason for the WG to treat the claim by the ROK to rename “Japan Sea” differently from the claim by China to rename the “Beibu Gulf” the existing “Gulf of Tonkin”*. The lack of unanimity as a result of the persistence of the ROK’s position to print a locally used name “East Sea” in the S-23 should just result in the continued use of the existing name “Japan Sea” in the S-23, just as the Chair suggests that the lack of consensus regarding the above mentioned Chinese claim signifies that the IHO should retain the existing name “Gulf of Tonkin” in the S-23. Such a simple approach is appropriate and natural considering the non-political and technical nature of the S-23.

**(5) The GOJ objects to any portrayal by the WG of its position as lacking flexibility**

The GOJ would also object to any suggestion in the WG conclusion that the GOJ's position represents in any way a "lack of flexibility", while *it has just been emphasizing the need for the IHO to base its decision on objective facts*, including those documented in the ROK governments' publications, as well as the *necessity for the IHO to protect its integrity and credibility as a body for technical and expert international cooperation*, the mission of which being to bring about the greatest possible uniformity in nautical charts and documents.

Lastly but not least, I would like to reiterate the GOJ's intention to spare no effort in cooperating with the Chair Group and other WG members in the preparation of the IHC.

Yours Sincerely,

Hideo Nishida  
Japan Representative to the S-23 WG

Cc: Ing. en chef Michel Huet, Secretary of S-23 WG