

7th Meeting of the Inter-Regional Coordination Committee Mexico City, Mexico, 1-3 June 2015

The seventh meeting of the Inter-Regional Coordination Committee (IRCC7) took place in Mexico City, Mexico, from 1 to 3 June, hosted by the Mexican *Secretaría de Marina* in the premises of the *Centro de Estudios Superiores Navales*. The meeting was attended by the Chairs, or their representatives, of the 15 Regional Hydrographic Commissions (RHCs) and the IRCC subordinate bodies, three observing organizations and 29 observers. A total of 55 participants from 23 countries were present. The IHB was represented by President Robert Ward, who also attended as Chair of the IHO Hydrographic Commission on Antarctica, Director Mustafa Iptes (Secretary) and Assistant Director Alberto Costa Neves. The meeting was chaired by Rear Admiral Tom Karsten (UK) on 1 and 2 June, and by Dr Parry S.L. Oei (Singapore), the Vice Chair of the IRCC, on 3 June at the absence of the Chair.

The IRCC reviewed the reports and activities of the RHCs and its subordinate bodies, considered the outcomes of the 5th Extraordinary International Hydrographic Conference (EIHC-5), acknowledged the accomplishments and challenges of the Capacity Building programme and IBSC activities, examined the developments on Crowd-Sourced Bathymetry and maximizing the use of Hydrographic Data and considered the Worldwide ENC Database (WEND) related issues.

As directed by EIHC-5, the IRCC established a Crowd-Sourced Bathymetry Working Group (CSBWG) and approved its proposed Terms of Reference (ToR). The Committee also appointed the Director of the IHO Data Centre for Digital Bathymetry (DCDB), Ms Lisa Taylor (USA), as the first Chair of the CSBWG.

The Committee considered a revision of its ToR and Rules of Procedure (RoP) to include the Chairs of the Maritime Spatial Data Infrastructure Working Group (MSDIWG) and the newly established CSBWG as members of the Committee. The revised ToR and RoP will now be submitted to Member States for approval.

The Committee examined the management and monitoring of INT chart production and agreed on an experimental procedure for monitoring and validating new INT Chart production. This procedure will be coordinated and implemented by Regional INT Chart Coordinators or INT Chart Coordination Working Groups (ICCWGs) and will run for two years before further evaluation.

The Committee decided to add the topic of satellite-derived bathymetry as a standing agenda item at all future IRCC meetings. The Committee also took note of the IHO GIS and INTtoGIS Projects reported by the IHB and how they should have a beneficial impact on RHCs and the Member States' activities.

The IRCC acknowledged the accomplishments and challenges, including the resource limitations of the IHO secretariat, to support the administration of the Capacity Building programme and IBSC activities. The Committee approved the CB work programme, the IBSC work plan and the new IHO Publication S-5B - *Standards of Competence for Hydrographic Surveyors*. The Committee also endorsed the proposal of the World-Wide Navigational Warning Service Sub-Committee (WWNWS-SC) to submit proposed revised texts related to Maritime Safety Information documents directly to the International Maritime Organization through the IHB in the future.

Taking into account Decision 12 of EIHC-5 concerning the long term consequences of not achieving full implementation of the WEND Principles, the IRCC reviewed the WEND Principles and the Guidelines for its implementation, ENC Coverage including gaps and overlaps, information overlay issues and proposals arising from the WEND Working Group report. The Committee agreed that no further action should be taken for the moment on amending the WEND Principles and Guidelines and approved the WENDWG Work Programme for 2015-2016.

The Committee considered papers on data gathering, the management and maximizing the use of hydrographic data, and guidance on access to bathymetric data collected for commercial or scientific purposes. As a result, the IRCC agreed on the need to update IHO publication C-16 - *National Hydrographic Regulations* and also decided that an appropriate supplement or additional chapter, as appropriate, on maximizing access to bathymetric data collected for commercial or scientific purposes was required in IHO Publication C-17 - *Spatial Data Infrastructures: "The Marine Dimension" - Guidance for Hydrographic Offices*.

The IRCC acknowledged an IHB paper on “Considerations on the development of the General Bathymetric Chart of the Oceans (GEBCO)” and tasked the GEBCO Guiding Committee (GGC) to take the recommendations included in the paper into consideration in implementing the GEBCO work plan and to report progress on those recommendations to the next meeting of the IRCC. The Committee also took note of an IHB paper regarding concerns over the governance and administration of the GEBCO Project.

It was announced prior to the meeting that the current Chair would step-down shortly after the meeting as a consequence of his retirement from UK service. The current Vice-Chair would then assume the position of Chair, leaving a vacant position of Vice Chair to be filled. The Committee therefore elected Rear Admiral Gerd Glang, the National Hydrographer of the USA, as the next Vice Chair to succeed Dr Oei when he takes over the Chair.

The next meeting of the IRCC will be held in Abu Dhabi (UAE) from 29 to 31 May 2016. The full report of the meeting of IRCC7 will be published on the IHO website.