

13th Conference of the Eastern Atlantic Hydrographic Commission Casablanca, Morocco, 16-18 September 2014

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The 13th Conference of the Eastern Atlantic Hydrographic Commission (EAtHC) was hosted from 16 to 18 September 2014, at the Royal Naval Academy in Casablanca, Morocco, by the Department of Surveying, Oceanography and Charting of the Royal Navy of Morocco. The Conference was chaired by Bruno Frachon, Director General of SHOM (France), and attended by 45 delegates. Five IHO Member States of the Region (out of six), five Associate Member States (out of nine) and three Observer States (out of eleven) were represented. The Intergovernmental Oceanographic Commission (IOC), the IHO-IOC GEBCO Project, the International Association of Marine Aids to Navigation and Lighthouse Authorities (IALA), the Maritime Organization of West and Central Africa (MOWCA), three partners from industry, two Regional ENC Coordinating Centres (RENC) and the Directors of the Regional Maritime Universities of Abidjan (Côte d'Ivoire) et Accra (Ghana) were represented also as observers. Director Gilles Bessero and Assistant Director Yves Guillam represented the IHB.



The delegation of the Republic of the Congo was represented by M. Martin Coussoud-Mavoungou, Minister of the Merchant Navy, who confirmed the active participation of Congo as associate member of the Commission and reported on the on-going preparation of the application of Congo to IHO membership.

The Chair reported on EAtHC achievements since the previous Conference in 2012 through a remarkable report which put the regional issues in the perspective of the role and responsibilities of Regional Hydrographic Commissions in furthering the objectives of the IHO.

Director Bessero provided a briefing on current IHO corporate, technical and cooperation issues and an overview of the preparation of the 5th Extraordinary International Hydrographic Conference. He provided also a brief on the Audit Scheme of the International Maritime Organization (IMO) and the implications of the transition from a voluntary to a mandatory scheme in relation to the status of hydrographic services in coastal States.

All the coastal States represented reported on their activities, progress, achievements and difficulties. A few coastal States expressed concerns about the delays between the completion of surveys covering important maritime traffic areas and the publication of new editions of the relevant nautical charts. Others indicated that, in the absence of a national hydrographic authority and appropriate hydrographic expertise, they were not always in a position to co-ordinate surveys in their waters and ensure that hydrographic data is made available to the relevant primary charting authorities.

The status and implementation of the regional INT and ENC charting schemes were reviewed by the regional coordinator.

Following presentations by the Chair on the outcomes of the IRCC-6 meeting and by the IOC representative on the North East Atlantic Tsunami Warning System, it was decided to consider the organization of a future stakeholder workshop on the risks of maritime disasters in the region to highlight the importance of hydrography and identify the shortfalls. Following the sub-regional Seminar hosted by MOWCA in November 2013 in Pointe-Noire, Congo, the Commission welcomed

the reinforcement of the co-operation between the IHO and MOWCA through a formal agreement, the draft of which will be circulated first to the EAtHC Members and Associate Members and then submitted to the IHB Directing Committee for seeking the subsequent approval of IHO Member States.



Capacity Building (CB) issues were given particular attention and the implementation of a design study for a sub-regional CB project included in the IHO CB Work Programme and led by the CB regional co-ordinator was reviewed. Discussions benefited significantly from the inputs of the MOWCA delegation which included the Directors of the two Regional Maritime Academies based in Côte d'Ivoire and Ghana. Training issues in the region will be addressed through the CB design study.

Noting the positive outcomes of the IMO-IHO-IALA Seminars conducted in Mauritania (Nouakchott, Sept. 2013) and in Ghana (Accra, April 2014), the representative of IALA confirmed IALA's support in joint capacity building initiatives with IHO and MOWCA in the African sub-region (technical visits, seminars, training, etc.).

The outstanding hospitality and facilities kindly offered by the Royal Navy of Morocco, including a very efficient simultaneous translation in the two official languages of the IHO, greatly facilitated lively and constructive exchanges.

In accordance with the Statutes of the Commission, Morocco took over the chairmanship at the end of the Conference. The next Conference will take place in Cadiz, Spain, in 2016. The exact date will be proposed by the end of 2014.