

14th Conference of the Eastern Atlantic Hydrographic Commission Cádiz, Spain, 18-20 October

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The 14th Conference of the Eastern Atlantic Hydrographic Commission (EAthC-14) was held from 18 to 20 October 2016, in San Fernando, Cádiz, Spain and hosted by the Hydrographic Office of Spain (Instituto Hidrográfico de la Marina - IHM). Due to the non-availability of the Director of the Department of Surveying, Oceanography and Charting of the Royal Navy of Morocco (DHOC), the Conference was chaired by Commander Hassan Ouahid, Head of the Hydrographic Section of DHOC. Simultaneous translation from French to English and vice versa was provided.

The Conference was attended by 28 delegates. Five IHO Member States of the Region (out of six), three Associate Member States (out of nine) and two Observer States (out of eleven) were represented. Representatives from the IHO-IOC GEBCO Project, from the UNESCO IOC Intergovernmental Coordination Group for the Tsunami Early Warning and Mitigation System in the North-Eastern Atlantic, the Mediterranean and connected seas (ICG/NEAMTWS), the International Association of Marine Aids to Navigation and Lighthouse Authorities (IALA), two expert contributors from industry (Kongsberg Maritime, Teledyne-Caris), two Regional ENC Coordinating Centres (IC-ENC, PRIMAR) participated as observers. Director Gilles Bessero and Assistant Director Yves Guillam represented the IHO Secretariat.



Participants of EAtHC-14, Cádiz, Spain

The Conference was opened by Rear Admiral Ricardo Hernandez Lopez, Chief of Staff to the Admiral of the Spanish Fleet and by Captain Juan Antonio Aguilar Cavanillas, Director of the IHM.

The Chair reported on EAtHC achievements since the previous Conference in 2014 through a comprehensive report highlighting the main events and topics of interest to Regional Hydrographic Commissions in general and to the EAtHC in particular.

Director Bessero provided a briefing on current IHO corporate, technical and cooperation issues. He offered an overview of the preparation of the 1st Session of the IHO Assembly and highlighted the practical consequences for the IHO Member States of the ratification on 8 August 2016 of the Protocol of Amendments to the IHO Convention. As a consequence, the process for the selection of the EAtHC Member State that will occupy the seat on the IHO Council allocated to the Commission was adopted. In response to the IHO Secretariat report on the activities and current issues addressed by the Hydrographic Services and Standards Committee (HSSC), the Hydrographer of Spain confirmed his intention to continue contributing, on a case-by-case basis, to the translation of IHO technical standards into Spanish.

The Chair reported on the goals and calendar of the Mandatory Audit Scheme of the International Maritime Organization (IMO) in relation to the status of hydrographic services in coastal States. UK informed the Conference that it had provided some assistance to a coastal State in relation to responding to the preparatory questionnaires and offered to assist other coastal States on request. However, no feedback from the coastal States that had been audited prior to EAtHC-14 was provided and no request for assistance for the preparation of the forthcoming audits was submitted during the Conference. Due to the unplanned absence of the representative of the Maritime Organisation for West and Central Africa (MOWCA), it was not possible to consider how the Memorandum of Understanding on cooperation between the IHO and MOWCA that had been signed in July would affect the activities of the Commission and the relations with MOWCA's specialized organs.

All the coastal States participating in the Conference reported on their activities, progress and difficulties. Most of the Western Africa coastal States continue to express concerns about lack of expertise and training opportunities, despite several training sessions sponsored by the IHO in accordance with the recommendations of the IHO Western Africa Action Team in the 2000's. The Conference took note that very few initiatives aimed at setting up national hydrographic committees or national hydrographic services, or joining the IHO were reported by those States. Clearly, there is a need to re-consider the relationship between those coastal States and the EAtHC and the IHO. This is hopefully what could be achieved through the "HydroMAOC" project led by France (as regional Capacity Building Coordinator). The objectives of the project are to define, conduct and implement a consistent set of actions to develop hydrography in Western and Central Africa. France delivered the report of the definition study supporting this project addressing education, equipment, and empowerment issues as well as associated funding strategies.

The status and implementation of the regional INT and ENC charting schemes were reviewed by the regional coordinator for INT Region G (France). The coordinator reminded the participants of the new regime decided by the Inter-Regional Coordination Committee (IRCC) for the monitoring and the management of INT charts, as well as of the operational use of INTtoGIS services for the maintenance of the INT charts catalogue database (S-11 Part B). All participants were invited to take advantage of the methodologies available for conducting risk-assessment studies as far as the ENC coverage is concerned, not only in relation to international shipping in the approaches of the main harbours, but also in support of the cruise industry, submarine cable, and oil and gas industry activities.

Ingénieur général Bruno Frachon, national Hydrographer of France, reported on the participation of Director Gilles Bessero and himself at the African Union Extraordinary Summit on Maritime Security and Safety and Development in Africa, held in Lomé (Togo) from 13 to 15 October (see separate bulletin report).



Spain succeeds Morocco as Chair of the EAHC

In accordance with the Statutes of the Commission, Spain took over the chair at the end of the Conference. The next Conference is expected to take place in Nigeria in 2018. The venue and exact dates are expected to be decided by the end of November 2016.