



Date, 22 December 2016

Reference:

Assembly Circular Letter no. 10, 02 September 2016 – *Proposal for consideration by the 1th session of the IHO council*

To: Mr. Robert Ward, Secretary-General IHO

Subject: **Comments on PRO3 - Revision of the Resolution on Response to Disasters**

The Netherlands, also in the capacity as outgoing Chair of the MACHC, thanks Japan for its proposed revisions to the IHO Resolution 1/2005 on Response to Disasters.

The Netherlands note that the Resolution has been amended on several occasions and has become increasingly prescriptive by placing obligations and directions on the IHO Secretariat, the Chairs of RHC's and on HO's, for instance with contingency/action plans which suggest executive responsibilities. Moreover, the described responsibilities of coastal states, RHC's and the IHO secretariat seem overlapping.

The RHC's as the MACHC, have been established in line with the (overarching) IHO resolution 2/1997 on the establishment of RHC's. The MACHC is advisory, scientific and technological in character with aims to promote hydrographic surveying, marine cartography and nautical information. In that sense it has no executive remit. The Chair of a RHC as the MACHC is not envisioned to have a standing 'Command and Control Capability' for disaster response.

IHO resolutions 1/2005 and 2/1997 are therefore not fully aligned. In a revision of IHO resolution 1/2005 this needs to be taken into account. Depending upon the circumstances of the disaster, the regions involved, and the resources of individual HO's and Chairs, many of the directives in IHO resolution 1/2005 cannot be achieved because of lack of resources, difficulties in communication, political or diplomatic protocols.

A mayor lesson identified during the passage of Hurricane Matthew last October, is that the ambition level of what can be expected of a RHC should be realistic. The role of the Chair of the MACHC was essentially restricted to that of a broker of hydrographic demand (from the affected countries) and supply (by countries offering assets). For immediate disaster response this focused on supporting other relief activities as an enabler. During the subsequent recovery phase the main focus was updating charts and hydrographic information.

Another important lesson identified is the need for functioning channels. Effective hydrographic support predicated on diplomatic clearance to actually deploy the offered hydrographic assets in theatre. It was the responsibility of affected states to institute procedures to progress 'hydrographic' requests timely through their Nations Diplomatic channels. The Chair of the MACHC had no means to absorb these national responsibilities. The IHO resolution on Disaster Response should therefore also be outward looking and be placed in the proper diplomatic context.

Based on this very recent experience in relation to natural disasters in the MACHC region, and as supported by the 17th MACHC meeting in Belém (14-17 December 2016), the Netherlands take the view that the Resolution does not continue to be overly prescriptive or place obligations upon the Chairs of all RHC's or the IHO Secretariat, or HO's, that they cannot fulfil for various reasons. Also, the Resolution needs to take into account other (overarching) resolutions and existing standing procedures to avoid friction and/or duplication.

The Netherlands therefore suggests that it would be appropriate to task the IRCC to take note of the input provided by Japan and this letter, and to seek the further opinion of the Chairs of the RHC's and the IHO Secretariat, with a view to completely redrafting the Resolution 1/2005 instead of continuing the current incremental approach. This work should assess the original needs and aims of the guidance with a view to creating a generic set of guidelines and best practices for consideration by RHC's when faced with a disaster in their region.

Yours sincerely,



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