

**2nd ROPME SEA AREA HYDROGRAPHIC COMMISSION (RSAHC)
Tehran, Islamic Republic of Iran, 2-3 May 2006**

IHB Report

The IHB follows very closely the development of the diverse activities undertaken by the Regional Hydrographic Commissions, and it considers them as a real partner in the execution of the agreements adopted by the Organization at the International Hydrographic Conferences as well as through the correspondence exchanged between Conferences.

It is the role of the International Hydrographic Bureau to facilitate the association of the hydro/cartographic efforts developed by the National Hydrographic Services aiming safety of life at sea, safety to navigation and protection of the marine environment, as well as contributing to the development of other productive activities of direct impact to the economy of maritime countries.

So far the RSAHC has had just one meeting that took place in October 2000. Despite the interest to have the second meeting in conjunction with the EIHC this could not be arranged. Nevertheless an informal meeting of Members of the RSAHC present at the 3rd EIHC on Wednesday 13 April 2005 took place. In the occasion I explained that there were several important issues, which needed to be addressed for regional consideration. I recall that I briefed participants on the progress of IHO Publication S-55 and the Capacity Building Committee / Fund, stressing the urgent need for RSAHC input to these two matters. The contribution of those that attended this gathering and the concrete message from ROPME as regard to their capability and willingness to support and facilitate the work of the RSAHC was deeply appreciated.

Since then, and certainly since the first RSAHC Meeting the IHO has continued developing its agreed work program with the support of its RHCs and technical subsidiary bodies. In this report I will make a brief reference to general aspects of direct relation to this region, and afterwards I will provide some details of the IHO Work Program development.

General aspects.

Each Regional Hydrographic Commission faces different realities, either from the point of view of their particular geography or their capacities – due to diverse factors - to offer hydro-cartographic services and safety to the local, regional and international mariner. The existence of a RHC is justified as a tool to combine the efforts for the identification of common problems and to search for solutions that are acceptable, advisable and viable both, from an economic and technological point of view. The Organization as a whole is therefore favoured due to the exchange of experiences obtained under each RHC, experiences that the IHB collects and shares among all existing RHCs.

The fulfilment of the objectives of the OHI is highly favoured if RHCs are active, and that to happen, requires that member countries not only express their willingness and desire to participate, but to be actively involved. 9 States exist in the region of influence of the RSAHC, all of them members of the International Maritime Organization (IMO); 8 are members of the Intergovernmental Oceanographic Commission (IOC); 5 are members of the International Association of Aids to Navigation and Lighthouses Authorities (IALA) and 6 are members of the IHO. The applications of Qatar and Saudi Arabia have been favourably voted by MSs since 1993 and 2005 respectively, and the IHO is awaiting the deposit of their instruments of accession. As it can be appreciated, the picture as regard to membership is quiet good.

Nevertheless the problem is that out of the 6 IHO Member States, only 1 participates permanently in one of the IHO Working Groups and another States does it from time to time. It is to say that we think that this is not a good sign and steps should be adopted to improve the participation in the IHO businesses. Not to do it, is to resign voluntarily to the cooperative and collaborative work the IHO offers, that certainly contributes to the national interests of each one of the maritime countries in this region.

IHO Work Program.

Next I will try to provide in a summarized form, information on the accomplishment of the IHO Program of Work, with special emphasis on matters relevant to this RHC, proposing certain initiatives, when found it necessary:

Program 1

Cooperation between States Member and with International Organizations

- **RHCs**

In general, RHCs have been very active in the past three years. Some of the RHCs have changed their Statutes to update and modernize the content and also to consider establishing a more frequent calendar of meetings. Considering the important subjects that should be discussed and the role RHCs are expected to play in the functioning of the Organization, several have established that meetings should be held each year.

As regard to the RSAHC, the IHB has made all possible efforts to facilitate the Second Meeting of the RSAHC, and we are proud that finally this is coming to be a reality, as soon we will be meeting in Tehran, thanks to the kind invitation of the Islamic Republic of Iran and the support of ROPME.

The informal meeting I referred to before, generated a positive animosity towards the objectives all RHCs have in mind. Hydrographic Offices are today being exposed to many challenges, including sometimes difficult problems, the solution of which could be better found working in a cooperative and collaborative environment.

Members of RSAHC might decide to examine the present Statutes and agree on some changes to make it in line with present IHO practice.

- **IMO**

The IHB has been present for all sessions of the Assembly, Maritime Safety Committee (MSC), the Safety of Navigation sub-Committee (NAV) and the sub-Committee on Radio Communications and Search & Rescue (COMSAR).

SOLAS issue, especially new Regulation 9 of chapter V, which refers to Hydrographic Services, has motivated an active and fruitful relationship between IHO and IMO to the effects of promoting joint initiatives that tend to facilitate the fulfilment of this Regulation by Contracting Governments. It is considered of value that at a national level, maritime and hydrographic authorities seek to work together this challenging matter.

The offer of hydrographic services stopped from being a voluntary activity, to constitute an obligation for the Governments Part of SOLAS. It is for that reason that the IMO has considered and endorsed IHO recommendations. The last example is IMO MSC Circular 1179 (2005).

The IMO Maritime Safety Committee through this Circular refers to deficiencies in hydrographic surveying and nautical charting worldwide and their impact on safety of navigation and protection of the marine environment.

The covering text of the Circular indicates:

1 The Maritime Safety Committee, at its eightieth session (11 to 20 May 2005), in response to a proposal from the International Hydrographic Organization (IHO) for the issuance of an MSC circular, approved the note set out in the annex. The note indicates deficiencies world-wide in the provision of hydrographic services in accordance with SOLAS regulation V/9.

2 Member Governments, Parties to SOLAS' 74 as amended, are reminded of their obligations under the Provisions of regulation V/9 and are urged to take actions to remedy the situation.

3 Member Governments are invited to bring the attached annex to the attention of their national authorities responsible for Hydrography, Nautical Cartography and Safety of Navigation, as well as of other appropriate parties.

On this aspect, the IHB is ready to collaborate with all national or regional initiative that might help in achieving the objective of this IMO resolution.

One particular subject that deserves attention is the submission to IMO NAV51 of a follow-up report on the status of hydrography and nautical cartography in remote areas (June 2005), that resulted in a draft Assembly Resolution on guidelines on voyage planning for passenger ships in remote areas (to be considered at MSC 81 in May 2006 for endorsement and forwarding to Assembly 23 in 2007).

- **IOC**

As you might be aware two projects exist as regard to Ocean mapping. One is the joint IHO/IOC project known as GEBCO and other is constituted by regional bathymetric projects known as IBC projects, mainly forming part of IOC structure.

The IHB has been working jointly with the IOC Secretariat in order to find the necessary mechanisms to liase these efforts and to optimise the ocean mapping global program. At the present time a proposal for a new organizational structure for the Ocean Mapping is with IHO and IOC MS, and the IHB has been seeking the views of the GEBCO Guiding Committee in this regard.

One of the practical aspects to consider, is that the meetings of the Regional Hydrographic Commissions could be held in conjunction with the meetings of the regional projects, or at least that a strong link should exist between them, in order to optimise the use of resources, to really avoid duplication and to make the best and wider possible use of the available bathymetric data, for regional benefit.

Another important field in which we are working very close is in a project know as “Building Coastal Resilience to Ocean-based Extreme Events through Improved Coastal Mapping Capacity in the Indian Ocean” (COAST-MAP-IO), where IHB is providing expert advise in hydrography and guidance for capacity building.

As we know, several of our Member States were affected by the 26 December 2004 earthquake and resulting tsunami. The IHO convened a special meeting of interested and affected Member States at the conclusion of the 3rd EIHC (April 2005) to understand better how the IHO should respond and what procedures should be put in place to effectively respond to future similar disasters. CL 89/2005 provided the outcome of this meeting and subsequent discussions via correspondence. Member States and Chairmen of Regional Hydrographic Commissions were committed to assess, collate and report information of importance to the IHB so that pertinent international organizations or other Member States may take appropriate actions.

- **United Nations**

The IHO has been represented in UNICPOLOS and at the United Nations Assembly where it has an observer status. In both tribunes matters related to the ocean and the law of the sea have been treated and the results of the deliberations have been reflected in different Resolution.

Through Resolution 58/240 (2003) the Assembly recognized that hydrographic surveys and nautical charts are vital for the security to navigation and life at sea, for the protection of the marine environment, the economy of shipping and sustainable fishing, maritime delimitations and other related maritime activities. The Resolution makes special mention to the work of the OHI and its RHCs.

In 2004 and through Resolution 59/24, the General Assembly, recognized that hydrographic surveys and nautical charting are critical to the safety of navigation and life at sea, environmental protection, including vulnerable marine ecosystems and the economics of the global shipping industry, and recognizing in this regard that the move towards electronic charting not only provides significantly increased benefits

for safe navigation and management of ship movement, but also provides data and information that can be used for sustainable fisheries activities and other sectoral uses of the marine environment, the delimitation of maritime boundaries and environmental protection.

Moreover, the Resolution invites the International Hydrographic Organization and the International Maritime Organization to continue their coordinated efforts, to jointly adopt measures with a view to encouraging greater international cooperation and coordination for the transition to electronic nautical charts and to increase the coverage of hydrographic information on a global basis, especially in the areas of international navigation and ports and where there are vulnerable or protected marine areas;

Recently, the 2005 UN General Assembly adopted Resolution 60/30, through which insisted in the importance of Capacity Building by encouraging intensified efforts to build capacity for developing countries, in particular for the least developed countries and small islands developing States, as well as coastal African States, to improve hydrographic services and the production of nautical charts, including electronic charts, as well as the mobilization of resources and building capacity with the support from international financial institutions and the donor community.

In this opportunity the General Assembly also welcomed the adoption by the International Hydrographic Organization of the “World Hydrography Day”, to be celebrated annually on 21 June, with the aim of giving suitable publicity to its work at all levels and of increasing the coverage of hydrographic information on a global basis, and urges all States to work with that organization to promote safe navigation, especially in areas of international navigation, ports and where are vulnerable or protected marine areas.

It has to be recalled that in order to contribute enhancing the importance of Hydrography worldwide, the IHO has established the “World Hydrography Day”.

As it should be understood, we have in these UN resolutions powerful tools to help raising priority to hydro-cartographic activities. On one side Governments cannot ignore the importance UN assigns to hydrography in the development of projects of socio-economic impact and on the other hand, financing agencies could begin to consider carefully and with priority the hydrographic projects submitted for their consideration, given the multiplying impact they have.

The conditions are given to benefit from this resolution. The opportunity exists, but coordination and hard work are needed. Nothing will happen if a passive attitude is adopted. The IHB can help to put the Commission’s initiatives in motion, but necessarily the success will depend on the assigned national priority and commitment of each participant.

Program 2

Capacity Building

The IHO Capacity Building Committee was created on 10 April 2003 with the following tasks:

- Continuously assess the status of hydrographic surveying, nautical charting and nautical information, developing IHO publication S-55.

- To cooperate with the IHB in the establishment and maintenance of close relationships with agencies and organizations which may provide financial support.
- To cooperate with the Hydrographic Regional Commissions in the creation of a Groups of Experts to carry out assessment studies.
- To support the IHB in monitoring the assessment carried out and the identification of potential projects.
- To cooperate with the IHB in the provision of advice to countries needing to implement SOLAS V, Rule 9.
- To support the IHB in the preparation and keeping update of the Capacity Building Work Programme.

The progress made since its establishment includes among others, the following achievements:

- Updating of Publication M-2 “Maritime National Policies and the Hydrographic Services”.
- Agreed on an IHO definition for “Capacity Building”.
- Develop of an IHO Capacity Building Strategy.
- Establishment of a management Plan integrating all requirements, projects and initiatives organized by the RHCs.
- Approval of the IHO CB Work Program (2005, 2006 and 2007)
- Establishment of the IHO Capacity Building Fund.

More details are being provided in the Document RSAHC-11 “IHO CBC Report”.

From the RSAHC no one country participates in the mentioned Committee and this situation should be examined as it would be recommended that the region’s needs be reported by a MS representative of the region. .

Program 3

Support of Techniques and Standards

- **CHRIS**

CHRIS has continued the maintenance of existing standards while developing future standards predominately for the use of hydrographic data in broad array of uses beyond safety of navigation. Two significant decisions of the last meeting (Rostock 5-9 September 2005) included:

- Change 3.1.1 to S-57 to accommodate a very few objects mandated by IMO that cannot otherwise be depicted on ENC's.
- Renaming the work item on S-57 edition 4 to S-100 to avoid confusion. Work on S-100 is expected to be completed by late 2007 while an ENC Product Specification based on S-100 (denoted as 5-101) is not expected before 2012.

- **WEND**

The focus of WEND has undergone a fundamental shift. For the last ten years WEND has concentrated on developing high-level principles regarding the construction of ENC. In the last two years WEND has taken a broader perspective of

what is necessary to make ECDIS work. This perspective adopted by the WEND Task Group has resulted in an emphasis on:

- Achieving global coverage of ENC
- Prioritising ENC development with respect to shipping routes and ports
- Improving consistency amongst ENC of neighbouring hydrographic offices
- Providing user-friendly, integrated, service-oriented distribution of ENC.

Of particular note are the changes that strongly encourage Member States to complete appropriate ENC in support of IMO carriage requirements either through in-house capabilities or with outside assistance.

- **MoHWG**

The IHB announced the edition of the Manual on Hydrography. This publication has been posted in the IHO website and can be down loaded free of charge. The Manual is being translated into Spanish and studies are being held to see if also can be translated into French. The IHO is willing to make this publication as wide as possible and any initiative in this regard is welcomed.

- **S-55**

In the corresponding agenda item of this meeting Captain Barritt (UK) who has been the Project Leader in the preparation of a new version of Publication S-55 will brief us in detail about it and therefore it does not make sense to provide details at this stage.

- **FIG/IHO/ICA International Advisory Board. Courses and M-8.**

The Board registers 39 recognized courses in hydrography and 3 in nautical cartography. Out of these courses, learned institutions belonging to countries members of this commission deliver no one.

- **Projects GEBCO/IBC**

I have mentioned earlier the intention to optimize the ocean mapping programme. In this line, and thanks to a special contribution of the Nippon Foundation, since 2004, 7 students a year are being trained in bathymetry and related disciplines at the University of New Hampshire. 2005/2006 course considered one student from the region, Mr BASHIR, Muhammad from the Hydrographic Department of the Pakistan Navy. The third and last course will start in October 2006.

Program 4

Public Relations and Information Management

- **IHO Web site**

The IHB has dedicated great time to improve the structure and content of the IHO web site, and by all means tries to maintain it as updated as possible, task impossible to fulfil unless contributions are received from MSs.

The IHB considers that the Web site is an excellent communication tool for both, MSs and IHO Working Groups of the Organization.

We have also taken note on the efficient and effective improvement made in the access to Circular Letters and most of the IHO Publications, as well as the access to the work and progress made by different working groups of the Organization. The IHB encourages MSs to make full use of this powerful tool.

In this same line, it is urged that MSs that do not have implemented its institutional web pages, to do so, in order to facilitate the coordination and consultations processes between hydrographic services and with the IHB.

- **Annual Report**

The format of the IHO Annual Report obeys to the Work Program corresponding to the year is being reported. Its printed version has a limited distribution in order not to incur in excessive expenses, but such publication is available free of charge at the IHO web site.

The IHB will appreciate any improvement that RSAHC could identify to improve these two services, the web site and the Annual Report.

Program 5 General Development of the Organization

- **WP AND BUDGET**

The IHB has been trying to tie the IHO Work Programme with the Annual Budget, and certain information has been so far provided to MSs. In effect, and as regard to 2005 and 2006 proposals, a complete explanation of both documents has been incorporated in the documentation submitted for comments to the Members of the Finance Committee and later for approval of MSs.

Unfortunately the IHB practically does not receive comments or suggestions from MSs, when these have been asked for. In effect, in average the IHB receives replies/comments from no more than 40% of the total MSs.

At the IHB we have confirmed that Hydrographic Offices that have assigned a person as a permanent nexus with the IHB, that is to say, somebody with the mission to be aware of the incoming and out going documentation related to IHB, are permanently up to date on the events and indeed, in a position to contribute timely and effectively with the organization.

- **SPWG**

The report of SPWG and the resulting proposals to amend the Convention of the IHO were presented to the 3rd EIHC on 11-14 April 2005 and subsequently approved by the Conference. Monaco Government has sent the amendments to the Convention via diplomatic channels to the Governments of the Member States for their ratification of approval, as appropriate. The amendments to the Convention cannot take affect until ratified by two-thirds of the Member States' Governments. So far, 5 countries have ratified the amendments. (27th March 2006).

Meantime the SPWG has been progressing in the development of an implementation plan to be ready when ever the approval is reached. The Chairmen of CHRIS and CBC have been tasked to conduct an analysis pertaining to some bodies that would constitute the two main committees that have been considered in the new structure. All details can be found in the IHO web site. Nevertheless it has been requested to have SPWG developments as a standing Agenda item in order that Members of the Commissions are kept informed on the progress of various issues pertaining to its work.

One of the key issues is that RHCs should develop their own procedures for the selection of their Members to the Council. New Article 16 of the General Regulations and Appendix VIII (Council Membership) contained in the document "A Study Into the Organization Structure and Procedures of the IHO", as approved by the Extraordinary Conference, are the reference material that contain the details regarding membership to the Council.

The term 'Hydrographic Interests' still remains undefined. The SPWG sees this as a challenge and will strive to come up with a definition for the term that all MS will accept by 2007.

- **International Hydrographic Conference**

As you should be aware, the XVII IHC will take place in Monaco, 07 - 11 May, 2007. The process has already started and until today (27MAR06) two Conference Circular Letters have been issued. A special section has been organized at the IHO web site, in order to have a direct access to all the documentation and information the IHB will be issuing. MSs are invited to keep an eye on the web site to be permanently informed on the development of this event.

Well, I think I have finalized this very brief and partial count on what has been done at the IHB in the last period.

Please do not hesitate to ask for any information before or during the Meeting.

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IHB Director