

**SPECIAL MEETING OF THE MESO-AMERICAN AND CARIBBEAN
HYDROGRAPHIC COMMISSION**

Cartagena de Indias, Colombia, June 01, 2005

SPECIAL REPORT

On occasion of the Technical Workshop for the Central American and Caribbean countries, held in Cartagena on 30 May 2005, a special meeting of the Hydrographic Commission of the region (MACHC) was organized and convened by the Chairman of MACHC. All the MACHC members, associated members and observers that had attended the Workshop were present, besides some members of the CBC.

The MACHC Chairman gave a presentation about the work carried out by the Commission in the inter-sessional period and the targets achieved. He emphasized especially the need to complete the signature of the Statutes and ask the representatives from Members and associated members to take care of this item.

The Commission reviewed the List of pending actions and the Chairman confirmed that the next ordinary meeting of the Commission will be held in Veracruz (Mexico) from 7 to 11 November 2005. He encouraged the countries present to attend this meeting.

Capt. Gorziglia, IHB Director stressed the following items:

1. The signature of the Statutes, that is not a bureaucratic point, but a commitment and therefore addressing the participation of member countries.
2. The need to establish a Work Programme for the Commission, as well as for the rest of the IHO Regional Hydrographic Commissions.
3. The improvement of communications in the region.

The representative from Australia informed about the establishment of a VRENC in his region and the difficulties to have a feed back from the countries of the area. The delegate from Norway stressed that VRENCs ensure the consistency of ENC's and that consistency is a very important point. He offered the experience of PRIMAR to build up a regional RENC.

UK stated that the adoption of a systematic approach of communications and using S-55 were satisfactory, but that the needs of the regional countries in capacity building should be stressed.

US informed that under the umbrella of the Electronic Chart Working Group, two Sub-groups had been formed:

- 1) The Meso American Capacity Building Pilot Project and
- 2) The ENC Production and distribution

Gulf of Honduras Project

The US delegation explained how this Project was submitted to GEF and the Inter American Bank of Development and finally approved in March 2005. COCATRAM has been appointed executive agency of the project and it was expected that the project would be operational by the end of the year.

It was considered that the hydrographic development of the project should be carefully followed up by the IHO which could provide advice about the following topics:

1. Training
2. Hydrographic professional staff to assess surveys
3. Continuous advice for project implementation
4. High level visits to the countries involved
5. Other partnership
6. Definition of the hydrographic surveys priority.
7. Identification of the charting needs of the zone

The Commission decided that the Chairman would write a letter to the Secretary of COCATRAM to offer the IHO's and specifically of the MACHC's support to develop the hydrographic component of the project.

The Chairman also stated that he would give support to the project before the national authorities of the Commission, but previous organization of the three countries involved was necessary.

Caribbean Team project

Capt. Barritt, UK representative gave a comprehensive presentation of the visit carried out in 1998 by a Study Team to the Caribbean countries that was headed by him. He explained that the visit had been planned by the then Caribbean Hydrographic Commission with the aim at raising profile of Hydrography I governmental authorities, with specific focus on GMDSS.

The visit had a limited follow-up and no specific action had drawn from the consideration of the report submitted by the Caribbean Study Team. Capt Barritt reminded the main recommendations made in the report:

- Formation of a National Hydrographic Committee
- Focus on Phase 1 of Hydrographic Capacity
- Training in the region
- RHC advice on national survey plans and bids for capacity building assistance
- RHC liaison with ACS and CARICOM

Among the follow up that the present special meeting could consider, the following points were proposed:

- Focus on 1998 targets to achieve Phase 1 Capacity. Establishment of NHCs
- Bids to CBC (e.g. programme of further visits at Ministerial level.
- Ensure contacts with NAVAREA coordinators and charting Hydrographic Offices.

Ingénieur Général Le Gouic in his turn commented the work carried out by the West African Action Team, which has resulted in a complete project name "CHARMER". The first part of this project involves the beneficiary countries themselves, from which the nomination of an official representative has been requested. This will be followed by a Seminar, grouping all these representatives, who will be the future Heads of the National Hydrographic Committees, or similar bodies, and is scheduled to be held in IMA (Trieste), in October 2005. The Seminar will involve, besides IHO, IMO and other international organizations and it is expected that the project will be refined and completed by 2007.

Lt. Torres, on behalf of Colombian H.O. gave a presentation showing the methodology followed by his office to fill up the S-55 Questionnaire. This presentation interested all the participants and the Colombian H.O. was requested to send a paper on the subject to be published by International Hydrographic Review.

During the second part of the meeting, the delegates made presentations on their principal problems and needs. For most of the countries present, the need for training was one of the principal requests.

Honduras and Guatemala stated that the visit carried out by IHB representatives to their countries in March 2005 were very positive and had developed the interest from the authorities responsible for safety in navigation. The Mexican delegate informed that, following the recognition of the Courses in Hydrography by the Ministry of Education, scholarships would be soon available for civilians.

The delegate of IOC informed that this organization has a Capacity Building sector that can provide funds for training in some fields, such as coastal bathymetry. Applications can be made to IOC for these purposes.

It was also recognized that the project "Gulf of Honduras" can provide fundamental support to the countries involved and that the development of the hydrographic component of the project needs assessment from the IHO. The Commission decide to request to the CBC to fund the expenditures of an expert who will carry out a series of technical visits to the countries of the "Gulf of Honduras" to provide assessment on specific hydrographic matters arising from the project.

Conclusions

The Commission agree on the following conclusions:

1. All participants agree to raise the subject of the importance of Hydrography with their national authorities by means of a report addressing the subject discussed at the meeting;
2. Participant countries should start considering to draft a project of development of Hydrography, including needs for equipment, infrastructure etc.
3. Participants should send a report on their concrete needs to the MACHC Chairman.
4. Confirmation of national contact points should be made as soon as possible.
5. A proposal will be sent to the CBC for action concerning:
 - a. Support for a Technical Advisor to visit the three countries involved in the Gulf of Honduras Project and help them in the definition of pilot phase survey of the project.
 - b. Support to have Chairman of MACHC briefing CARICOM meeting of Transport Ministers.
 - c. Endorsement of the projected Seminar for Chairmen of NHCs in 2006.
 - d. Support to MACHC to conduct a Technical Visit to the Caribbean Countries visited in 1998 and other islands states.
6. Countries that have not yet signed the Commission statutes should do that as soon as possible.

7. Endorsement of the continuation of high level visits to the remaining countries of Central America (IHO Work Programme)



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