

## **IHO Input to Part 2 of the Report of the UN Secretary General on Oceans and Law of the Sea**

This contribution is provided in response to letter *LOS/SGR/2015* dated 25 May 2015 as the input from the International Hydrographic Organization to Part 2 of the Report of the UN Secretary General on Oceans and Law of the Sea. It addresses developments and issues relating to ocean affairs and the law of the sea, including the implementation of the resolution.

### **Executive Summary**

The International Hydrographic Organization (IHO) is the inter-governmental organization whose by bringing together the national hydrographic agencies responsible for the conduct of hydrographic surveys, the production of nautical charts and the distribution of Maritime Safety Information (MSI) in accordance with the requirement set out in the International Convention for the Safety of Life at Sea (SOLAS). The current membership of the IHO stands at 85 Member States with 7 other States in the process of joining the Organization.

Although safety of navigation remains a major driver for the IHO, hydrographic products and services are meant to support all activities associated with the seas and oceans. As every human activity conducted in, on or under the sea depends on knowing the depth and the nature of the seafloor and an understanding of the tides and the currents, hydrography is an essential foundation to the development of the Blue Economy. Yet, mankind has higher resolution maps of the Moon and Mars than for most of the seas and oceans. This has a big impact on what mankind can do at sea today in a safe, and economical and sustainable way. It is impeding progress and economic development in many, if not most, States and has a major impact on the effective management, sustainable exploitation, and well-informed policing of the seas and oceans. This situation results notably from the fact that only about half of the States Parties to the SOLAS Convention have arrangements in place to provide adequate hydrographic surveying and nautical chart services. In this context, it is important to continue to call upon States that have not yet done so to consider actively becoming members of the IHO, and urge all States to work with the IHO to increase the coverage of hydrographic information on a global basis.

All coastal States should be encouraged to ensure that their seas and coastal areas are properly surveyed and charted. This will directly support safety of navigation and protection of the marine environment. There are currently 162 States Party to SOLAS 1974, 167 States Party to the UN Convention on the Law of the Sea and more than 180 States that have a recognisable coastline. Perversely, there are only 85 Member States that are Members of the IHO, with a further seven States in various stages of joining the Organization.

Through its active technical and capacity building programmes conducted in close liaison with other international organizations, notably the International Maritime Organization and the Intergovernmental Oceanographic Commission, the IHO supports the development and improvement of hydrographic and nautical charting standards, products and services, especially in digital formats. These capabilities contribute directly to safe navigation, informed marine spatial planning and coastal management and the prevention of natural disasters. They provide also a technical basis for the implementation of the UN Convention on the Law of the Sea.

### ***General***

1. The International Hydrographic Organization (IHO) is the inter-governmental organization whose oceans and navigable waters are surveyed and charted, through the coordinated endeavours of national Hydrographic Offices as well as the distribution of Maritime Safety Information (MSI). The requirement to provide these services is set out in Regulation 9 of Chapter V of the International Convention for the Safety of Life at Sea (SOLAS) and is therefore an obligation placed on all contracting governments. Regulation 9 requires, among other things, that States:



introduced at the 25<sup>th</sup> meeting of States Parties to the Convention on the Law of the Sea (UN-SPLOS25 in June 2015. The Manual can be downloaded free from the IHO website<sup>1</sup>.

9. IHO standards and guidelines intended to assist coastal States meet their obligations and requirements fall under three main themes:

- nautical charts, issued on paper or in digital format (Electronic Navigational Charts), which are produced by national Hydrographic Offices to support safe navigation in accordance with the requirements of SOLAS;
- the maritime component of spatial data infrastructures being developed at the national and regional levels, which includes in particular high resolution bathymetry (depth data) compiled by national Hydrographic Offices;
- the global reference bathymetric data sets developed and made available through the GEBCO project (General Bathymetric Chart of the Oceans) operated jointly by the IHO and the Intergovernmental Oceanographic Commission (IOC).

10. The IHO continues to encourage and support its Member States to achieve an adequate global coverage of nautical charts and to contribute to the development of maritime spatial data infrastructures. To assist in prioritizing charting improvements and resource allocation, the IHO is promoting the use of risk assessment methodology.

11. The current worldwide coverage of Electronic Navigational Charts is approaching the corresponding paper chart coverage. Further progress is hindered by the lack of reliable survey data and the allocation of appropriate resources and priority by the governments of many coastal States. While most of the

use by many ships over many years, the advent of larger vessels and the need for vessels to travel to new destinations, in particular with regard to the expansion of the cruise industry, are not being supported by adequate surveys and charts. In that respect, the polar regions are a major area of concern. The IHO ensured that the relevant risks and precautionary measures have been reflected in the International Code for Ships Operating in Polar Waters (Polar Code) which was adopted in 2014 by the IMO. The IHO also prompted the 37<sup>th</sup> Antarctic Treaty Consultative Meeting to adopt a Resolution on Strengthening Cooperation in Hydrographic Surveying and Charting of Antarctic Waters.

12. The IHO has prepared a new edition of publication S-66 *Facts about Electronic Charts and Carriage Requirements* the preparation of which was undertaken by a focused project team. This new edition reflects the changes that have occurred since the first edition was published in January 2010.

### ***Building capacities***

13. Capacity building continues to be an important component of the IHO Work Programme. The IHO defines capacity building as the process by which the O

(about 400, ) continues to grow year on year. Active coordination with other agencies involved in capacity building, ensures that the priorities and joint policies that can reinforce each capacity building programme are assessed and progressed. The 8<sup>th</sup> annual Joint IHO/IMO/WMO/IOC/IALA/IAEA/FIG Capacity Building Coordination Meeting was held in November 2014, at the FIG Headquarters in Copenhagen (Denmark). Participants from the IHO, IMO, WMO, IOC, IALA and FIG committed to offer mutual assistance in obtaining high level contacts in countries where the member organizations need to improve awareness and to work as much as possible under the United Nations theme of "Deliver as one". The meeting agreed that information should be shared on the establishment of regional training hubs and advances in distance/e-learning; furthermore, the meeting saw benefits in further information exchange between member organizations.

***Raising awareness on the role of hydrography***

16. The theme of the World Hydrography Day (WHD) for - much more than

place in, on or under the sea. A number of WHD events were held by Member States of the IHO including in Bangladesh, Brazil, Chile, Japan, Mauritius, Monaco, Nigeria, Poland, Spain, United Kingdom and USA.

17. The theme for the celebration of World Hydrography Day 2015 (WHD-2015) - ur seas and waterways - aims to raise awareness and attract support for improving the currently unsatisfactory situation regarding the lack of hydrographic data in many parts of the world, including coastal waters as well as in the deep ocean. The IHO estimates that more than 50% , while the depth has only been measured directly in less than 10% of the deeper ocean areas. The 2015 theme offers the opportunity to highlight both the missed

build a Global Earth Observation System of Systems (GEOSS) in order to exploit the growing potential of Earth observations to support decision making in an increasingly complex and environmentally stressed world. At the plenary sessions of GEO in January and November 2014, the IHO supported the objective of improving global coverage and availability of earth observation data, products and services as a foundation for sustainable growth and expressed its concerns related to the inadequate status of

The IHO highlighted the need for coordinating and bridging the various programmes and initiatives dealing with the observation of the Earth at the national, regional and international levels, in order to make better use of existing arrangements, avoid duplication, address gaps and improve overall efficiency. The IHO statement also noted that its capacity building programme contributes to the strengthening of the engagement of GEO with developing countries.

### ***Ocean bathymetry***

22. The General Bathymetric Chart of the Ocean (GEBCO) project is a joint programme that is executed under the governance of the IHO and the Intergovernmental Oceanographic Commission (IOC) of UNESCO. GEBCO is directed by a Guiding Committee made up of representatives from both IHO and IOC and is supported by a Technical Sub-Committee on Ocean Mapping (TSCOM), a Sub-Committee on Undersea Feature Names (SCUFN), a Sub-Committee on Regional Undersea Mapping (SCRUM), and a Nippon Foundation/GEBCO Training Project Management Committee.

23. Through the work of its organs, GEBCO produces and makes available a range of bathymetric data sets and products, including gridded bathymetric data sets, the GEBCO Digital Atlas, the GEBCO world map and the GEBCO Gazetteer of Undersea Feature Names. The lead GEBCO bathymetric product is a global seabed model at 30 arc second grid interval. A new version of the GEBCO Grid, GEBCO\_2014, was released in December 2014. It is a significant update to the previous GEBCO\_08 released in January 2009. The grid is presently available in netCDF form with additional formats to be made available; it is also available as a web map service<sup>2</sup>. A significant source of data for this product is the IHO Data Centre for Digital Bathymetry (DCDB).

24. One of the primary objectives of the IHO DCDB is to provide an authoritative source of bathymetry for ocean mapping requirements. In order to achieve this, GEBCO proactively collects, stores

participation in regional mapping activities and has appointed representatives to participate in selected meetings of Regional Hydrographic Commissions that operate under the umbrella of the IHO. Traditionally GEBCO has focused on waters deeper than about 200m; however, it is now actively collecting data in shallow water areas to support activities such as coastal zone management and development, and the mitigation of marine disasters such as storm and tsunami inundation.

### ***Awareness of hydrography and the future***

25. Increased IHO involvement in international initiatives, such as the Group on Earth Observation (GEO) and the United Nations initiative on Global Geospatial Information Management (UN-GGIM) means that there is a