



International Federation of Surveyors
Fédération Internationale des Géomètres
Internationale Vereinigung der Vermessungsingenieure

FIG COMMISSION 4

Hydrography

Report on the IHC XVIIIth meeting, Monaco, 22-27th April 2012

By

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The 80+ Member States of IHO met to discuss and agree key issues of Hydrography and to elect three directors of the Bureau (IHB)..

The five day conference allowed its Member States to raise important technical items and to agree the 2013-2017 work plan.

General

The work of IHO is coordinated through its central Bureau the IHB, based in Monaco. Activities relating to Hydrography are concentrated upon safe navigation and the improvement of the coverage of surveys for nautical charting and ENC's (electronic navigation charts). Various work groups and committees oversee much of the work and regional Hydrographic Commissions (RHCs) perform the local and regional assessment of priorities and effort.

The two following committees represent the main effort and focus of the work of the IHO.

HSSC – Hydrographic Services and Standards Committee

The main technical effort of IHO has been undertaken by the HSSC group. Much of the work has involved considerable input and technical support from commercial and external groups (often FIG members) to the IHO. This point was stressed several times as the various work groups reported their work, output and future challenges.

It was agreed that the work of HSSC should continue. In association with this it was proposed that the IHB should increase its technical resources.

IRCC – Inter-regional Coordination Committee

IRCC reported on its work that encompasses Capacity Building and the cohesion of the Regional Hydrographic Commissions. Each Hydrographic Commission submitted its work report as well as the joint FIG/IHO/ICA Board under the Capacity Building section..

Arctic Region: Very sparse bathymetric data available in a sensitive area that is seeing due to global change an increase in maritime traffic looking for new routes.

Future work relates to expanding bathymetric data coverage, to assess new technologies for data collection

Baltic Sea: Have developed a web portal to aid in the management and preservation of the Baltic environment. A Baltic regional harmonised bathymetric database is developed with funding from Sweden under a survey plan called Helcom. The aim is to deliver a web based bathymetry model. Next meeting is in Finland Spet'12.

Eastern Atlantic Hydro Commission

A number of maritime states are not members and with IMO the plan is to visit re capacity building, identifying national focal points and to develop local training and hydrographic service capability (France for Morocco)

Mediterranean and Black Sea Hydro Commission. Regional cooperation for tsunami warning through the provision of sea level data.

MACHC: has instigated interest in the region regarding Marine Economic Infrastructure Programmes.

Nordic HC: Is not a very contentious region but continues its collaboration regarding chart coverage and consistency..

North Indian Ocean: Industry and stakeholder days are held that prove very popular. A Capacity Building coordinator is now in place and an MSDI event took place this March '12.

North Sea HC: Has remained active over the last 5 years. Working to develop a common vertical reference for the N Sea and on re-survey joint plans for certain areas.

ROPME: Several meetings and workshops held in the region to maintain its basis but no major changes or developments.

SE Pacific HC: Regular meetings and technical meetings held with assistance from the IHB.

SA & I HC: Some training opportunities exist to promote the issues of Hydro and CBC is active with technical visits.

SWAtHC: CBC efforts include river surveying, ENC, multibeam etc.

SW Pacific HC: great efforts have enabled PNG to develop their own hydro capability and technical visits and training courses are taking place in the region. Australia has played a very strong role in mentoring and developing the SIDS in the SWP region.

Since 11th mtg in Feb'12 Cook Islands became a Member State and the area continues to be active in Capacity Building with various work shops and initiatives to further the awareness and capability of the SW Pacific Region.

USA & Canada: 35th meeting this year. Recently several overlapping area of ENCs have required to be resolved. This involved boundary, language, IP and data accuracy.

HCA: Comprises 23 Member States.

The Antarctic is a very sensitive region but dialogue appears to be increasing with relevant stakeholders such as environmental groups, cruise companies and marine safety and transport groups.

Capacity Building Committee:

A brief overview was presented with the main debate surrounding the possible reduction in the funding from the IHB to the Capacity Building programme.

Interestingly the debate was more about the guarantee of the monies, as those from S Korea and Japan could be withdrawn, but any committed from IHB fund would be held. I believe the political issue below is related to the security of the funding.

The IRCC report included the International Board for the Standards of Competence (IBSC) (the author is a member) and the main activities developed including:

Reduction from 10 to 6 years for the period of any Course recognition

The inclusion of fee for any submissions of courses

The Standards now also include the possibility of Professional Competency Schemes.

The next meeting of IBSC is May 2012 in Buenos Aires. Where 12 courses are to be reviewed and an overhaul of the Standards completed.

Member State Proposals

Various proposals had been submitted and were duly debated, commented and approved or withdrawn. These were almost all related to the mechanics of the IHO and IHB. One of these was to introduce into the candidature for Directors a requirement for each to make a short presentation to the conference.

Work Plan: This session was scheduled to last a whole morning but in the end was constrained to a shorter session. Essentially it covers the work of the IHB including developing a GIS web facility. Also the IHO through the IHB shall maintain strong links with other organisations (IMO, FIG, ICA, IALA etc). The technical efforts are to continue and the IRCC work is to continue. Also capacity Building is to be supported and the IBSC to develop its new Standards.

General

A serious political topic has developed with the publication of the Sea Names and Areas (S-23). It has been under revision for over 35 years but due to a sensitive area no possible completion has been possible. As a political issue the conference decided to attempt to use proposals but on voting in this respect insufficient support was gained. The consideration of S-23 continues but it is essentially a political issue now and not technical.

At the end of the conference the election took place for the new IH Board directors.

Nine candidates stood although one withdrew before the commencement of the event.

The 3 directors elected are:

Rob Ward (Aus) President

Mustafa Iptes (Tur)
Gilles Bessaro (Fr)

Exhibition

The 30 or so stands we spread around the reception, mezzanine floor and the entrance to the auditorium. The exhibitors ranged from equipment manufacturers of MBES, INS, GPS systems through survey and processing services to GIS and data processing software vendors.

Comment: The MOU that FIG has with IHO simply confirms the desire to work and collaborate and for IHO this is listed as participation of a Director in a meeting every two years. This seems rather too vague and the author suggests that at least **an annual FIG-IHO meeting** is agreed plus the commitment of **FIG to attend Regional Hydrographic Commission meetings** around the globe wherever possible. These RHC events to be attended by local or regional FIG Commission 4 delegates. However this is a level of commitment that although FIG should be able to achieve it is a reality that much of this will require volunteer individuals, groups and of course funds.

A further aspect would be to host a **joint workshop** perhaps once every two years where topical papers and presentations can be delivered. Such a joint meeting could for example be associated with one of the main commercial events such as Oceanology, InterGeo, Hydo etc to ensure as wide an audience as possible.

The author recommends that FIG pursue these initiatives to aid the liaison of the two organisations, raise the FIG profile and influence world wide hydrography.

G Johnston
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