

Notes

XVIth International Hydrographic Conference

Rear Admiral Giuseppe Angrisano, President of the International Hydrographic Bureau,
Monaco

The XVI International Hydrographic Conference will be held at Monaco from 14-19 April 2002. Ordinary I.H. Conferences are held every five years and previously have lasted for approximately two weeks. This conference will extend over a much shorter period and consequently has much pressed into it. Included on the agenda are proposals for shortening the period between conferences. The Convention allows for Extraordinary Conferences to be held on a specific subject between the regular conferences and the second such conference was held in March 2000 to discuss and agree on a Strategic Plan.

Matters associated with the strategic planning process and arising from it will occupy much of the agenda of the XVI Conference. Changes to the Convention and the General Regulations have long been a difficulty for the Member States, the former requiring ratification by Governments, always a slow and difficult process. Important organs of the IHO are the Regional Commissions and a proposal will be put forward to clarify their formation and work. Proposals are being put forward concerning other committee structures, including their executives and roles. In particular, some clarification of the role of the legal committee will be sought.

As already noted, there is a proposal that the time between conferences, in their ordinary session, to be halved to two and a half years. This is not without difficulty as it will require change to the Convention. A change to the eligibility criteria for Directors is the subject of a proposal. This matter has been addressed at previous conferences, so far without success. It is based on the argument that the stringent requirements for previous practical sea going experience may no longer be relevant for all members of the Directing Committee.

Several proposals are related to the running of the Conferences to improve the administrative procedures. These will require changes to the Rules of Procedure and possibly the General Regulations. Unlike earlier conferences, where much of the agenda was spent on technical issues, this conference will include very few technical subjects. Those that are included discuss such matters as ellipsoidal height determination, support for electronic chart databases, index charts and agreement on the use of small-scale data. With an increasing number of specialised committees and working groups, such matters can usually be better discussed by these bodies and ratification from Member States sought by Circular Letter.

So much for the administrative and technical parts of the Conference, by far the most stimulating and interesting part will be the election of the new Directing

Committee. At the time of going to press ten candidates have been nominated from the following Member States: Algeria, Australia, Canada, Chile, France, Greece, India, Nigeria, the Netherlands and the United States of America. As there will be no Directors carrying over from the present Committee there will be three places to fill, one of whom will be elected as President. The election will be held on 19 April. The procedure is to elect the three members of the Committee, one after the other and then to hold a further election of the President from the three members. In the past Ordinary Conferences the candidates had the chance to chair a technical committee and this was carried out during the two week conference but the shorter conference this year does not allow such activity. Nevertheless most of the candidates are very well known in the hydrographic environment and in addition various receptions are held which will allow candidates to get known to the Member States' representatives.

Important to the commercial companies will be the exhibition which is run in parallel with the general meetings. There will also be an exhibition of Member States charts, both paper and electronic with a prize to be awarded the best exhibitor.

This year the Conference will be held in the magnificent new Grimaldi Forum that was inaugurated in July 2000. H.S.H. Rainier III, Prince of Monaco and the Hereditary Prince Albert have been invited to open the Conference. At the Opening those Member States that have joined the Organisation since the Second Extraordinary Conference in 2000 will be invited to present their flags for hoisting above the IH Bureau on their national days. It is hoped that Mexico, an important seagoing nation, which has recently reached the requisite number of approvals from the Member States, can deposit its instrument of adhesion in time to join these States.

Commander Frode Klepsvik, the Hydrographer of Norway, has already been elected as the President of the Conference by the IHO Member States with the procedure of Circular Letter and will formally take over from the President of the IHB Directing Committee at the very beginning of the Conference. After that formality the Conference will elect the Vice President and the Chairman and Members of the Eligibility Committee.

Work of the IHO

The Second Extraordinary IH Conference by establishing a Strategic Plan set in motion numerous activities of the Organisation that form the basis for the present Conference. Efforts were concentrated on the implementation and refinement of the Work Programme. In parallel, the fourteen Regional Commissions that now cover practically the entire world, have started to tailor their own periodical conferences and associated activities along the lines of the Work Programme. The most recently formed of these Regional Commissions was one for the North Indian Ocean, which, based on the initiative of the Chief Hydrographer of India, had its first successful conference in Dera Dun (India) at the end of January 2002.

Co-operation with related international organisations has been intensified and liaison improved. In particular, note is made of co-operation with the United Nations Division of Ocean Affairs and Law of the Sea (DOALOS); the International Maritime Organisation (IMO); the International Association of Aids to Navigation and Lighthouse Authorities (IALA); the International Standards Organisation (ISO); the International Cartographic Association (ICA); and the Intergovernmental Oceanographic Commission (IOC) of UNESCO.

Another activity has been to secure improved relations with Industry through a better understanding of the roles that private industry and government should play. This activity has particularly focussed on the manufacture of ECDIS and the provision of Electronic Navigational Charts.

The development of standards is an important activity of the IHO and the Bureau in concert with the

Member States continues to be active in the refinement of standards, particularly those concerning the electronic chart, namely the S 57 exchange standard. Another important standard has been S 44 Standards for Hydrographic Surveys. Considerable reference is made to this both within government and by private industry. The input of the IHO to the IMO in the amendment of Safety of Life at Sea (SOLAS) Convention, Chapter V has led to the inclusion of specific hydrographic requirements for the signatories to that convention.

Standards for the training and education of hydrographers also continue to be of great importance and the Organisation is now turning its attention to standards for the training of nautical cartographers in co-operation with the International Cartographic Association.

Yet another area of work has been in technical co-operation and development of expertise in developing countries. Attention has been particularly given to areas where so far hydrography has been neglected. This includes the southern Mediterranean countries and in fact most of the African continent excepting South Africa. Central America is another area that has had attention. Assistance has also been given, often in conjunction with IMO and IALA to surveys and charts required for crucial passages, such as the Malacca Straits, southern Red Sea and the Gulf of Suez. The objective in most of these cases has not been to directly fund the work but to bring attention to the need and to provide some co-ordination to the effort needed to *improve the situation leading to enhanced safety of navigators.*

The International Hydrographic Organisation owes great gratitude to the Government of Monaco which among other things provides the Bureau with premises in Monaco. The attention and co-operation of the Monegasque Government with the IHO is constant. In particular, in 2001, Monaco's Mission to the United Nations, led by H.S.H. Prince Albert, caused the I.H.O. the status of Permanent Observer at the United Nations Assembly, with effect from 13 December 2001.