Briefing Notes for World Hydrography Day - 2017

Mapping our seas, oceans and waterways - more important than ever

Purpose of World Hydrography Day

In 2005, the General Assembly of the United Nations (UN) adopted Resolution A/60/30 on oceans and law of the sea, which in particular welcomed the adoption by the IHO of the World Hydrography Day, 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. The Resolution urged all States to work with the IHO to promote safe navigation, especially in the areas of international navigation, ports and where there are vulnerable or protected marine areas. As a result, on the 21st of June each year the IHO celebrates World Hydrography Day.

World Hydrography Day is an opportunity to increase public awareness of the vital role that hydrography plays in everyone's lives.

Theme for 2017

The IHO has chosen as its theme for World Hydrography Day 2017:

"Mapping our seas, oceans and waterways - more important than ever".

Topics for WHD 2017

As in previous years, the World Hydrography Day theme for 2017 is intended to provide a broad range of opportunities to publicise the hydrographic work and services provided by national hydrographic offices, industry stakeholders and expert contributors, and the scientific community. The relevant topics include, but are not limited to:

Our Limited Knowledge of the Seas, Oceans and Waterways

It remains a fact that the depth of barely 10% of the world's oceans and about 50% of the world's coastal waters has been measured directly. The depth of the remainder is either estimated from such things as satellite-based gravity measurements or no depth is available at all. The result is that there are higher resolution maps of the Moon, Mars and Venus than for most of the world's maritime areas. Survey coverage is particularly poor in the Caribbean, Indian and Pacific Oceans and the Polar regions, but all areas of the world are affected to some extent, including the waters of many developed coastal States.

The Impact of Poorly Surveyed Seas, Oceans and Waterways

In addition to the obvious economic, social and environmental impact of ships encountering uncharted hazards, the lack of knowledge of the depth and nature of the seafloor impacts on many other areas – mostly with significant economic and environmental impacts. The revelation that the search area for the missing Malaysian aircraft MH370 was 1,500m deeper than shown previously on oceanic maps and contained numerous seamounts and submarine canyons, is one example of how little is known about the ocean floor. Such a lack of detail impacts on the study of ocean water movement as well as the optimal routing of submarine cables and pipelines as well as many other aspects of the ocean environment. Very often, the closer inshore one is, the more critical the situation becomes. This is often due to the survey techniques involved and their costs. In these inshore areas, the lack of hydrographic data compromises such things as the ability to define maritime boundaries, develop and manage coastal infrastructures and installations and to predict the effects of natural phenomena such as tsunami waves, storm surges, currents and climate variability.

UN Priority on Good Management of Seas and Waterways

In September 2015, the UN General Assembly adopted its *2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development.* The Agenda specifically targets the sustainability of the oceans under its Sustainable Development Goal 14 - *Conserve and sustainably use the oceans, seas and marine resources for sustainable development*.

Sustainable Development Goal 11, which addresses the resilience of cities and human settlements, refers to the implementation of the Sendai Framework for Disaster Risk Reduction 2015-2030. This framework, initiated at the request of the UN General Assembly, considers the impact of severe weather events and of natural phenomena such as tsunami.

Concern over sustainably managing the oceans and their resources, assessing and controlling the impact of marine disasters and ensuring the integrity of the oceans is gaining priority on the world's political agenda. There is a growing realisation that almost all activities and phenomena in, on or under the sea are influenced in some way or other by the depth and the shape of the seafloor.

Hydrographic Knowledge in Support of the UN 2030 Sustainable Development Agenda

Hydrography and the detailed knowledge of the shape and depth of the seafloor underpin the proper, safe, sustainable and cost effective use of the world's seas, oceans and waterways.

Target 14.a of Sustainable Development Goal (SDG) 14 - *Use of the Oceans* includes the need to: *Increase scientific knowledge, develop research capacity and transfer marine*

technology, … In this context, the ongoing work of the IHO and its stakeholders in considering how to use satellite derived and crowd-sourced bathymetry, providing access to relevant data through maritime spatial data infrastructures, and providing more capacity building are all relevant mechanisms that will help ensure SDG 14 is achieved.

The UN Ocean Conference to be held in New York from 5 to 9 June 2017, coinciding with World Oceans Day, and preceding World Hydrography Day by only two weeks, is expected to include references to hydrography and the need to obtain more data. The ongoing work of the IHO-IOC GEBCO Project and new initiatives will also be highlighted.

The Best Use of Limited Hydrographic Data

While there are significant gaps in our hydrographic knowledge of the seas and oceans, most hydrographic offices manage, or have access to the most comprehensive hydrographic data that exists for each country. They are increasingly making this data available for the widest possible use as part of developing national spatial data infrastructures, in addition to publishing charts for safety of navigation. This, together with the IHO-IOC GEBCO Project, and the IHO Data Centre for Digital Bathymetry (DCDB) represents the most comprehensive, publically available, authoritative hydrographic data set covering the world.

The Work and Contribution of Hydrographers

Stakeholders involved in hydrography may wish to highlight the significance and importance of their activities. This could include, but is not limited to, the support of safety of navigation, the protection of the marine environment, coastal zone management, marine spatial data infrastructures, defence and security, resource exploration, and all other components of the blue economy. The work of all the world's hydrographers - whether from the public or the private sector - should be highlighted to increase public and political awareness of the importance of the seas and waterways to everyone's lives. Key figures on the benefits gained from accurate and updated hydrographic data should be provided in relation, for example, to competitive and sustainable shipping or efficient marine spatial planning and associated decision-making processes.

96th Anniversary of the IHO

World Hydrography Day 2017 marks the 96th anniversary of the establishment of the organization known today as the IHO. On this occasion, the IHO and its nearly 90 Member States will reaffirm their commitment to raising awareness of the importance of hydrography; and continue to coordinate their activities, in particular through maintaining and publishing relevant international standards, providing capacity building and assistance to those countries

where hydrographic services require improvement, and by encouraging the collection and discovery of new hydrographic data through programmes such as crowdsourcing and satellite derived bathymetry and by ensuring the widest possible availability of this data through the development of national and regional marine spatial data infrastructures.

More Information

For more information about the IHO, visit the IHO website at:

www.iho.int or email *info@iho.int*

IHO Member States

The following countries are Members States of the IHO:

Algeria	Iceland	Qatar
Argentina	India	Republic of Korea
Australia	Indonesia	Romania
Bahrain	Iran (Islamic Republic of)	Russian Federation
Bangladesh	Ireland	Saudi Arabia
Belgium	Italy	Serbia
Brazil	Jamaica	Sierra Leone
Brunei Darussalam	Japan	Singapore
Cameroon	Kuwait	Slovenia
Canada	Latvia	South Africa
Chile	Malaysia	Spain
China	Malta	Sri Lanka
Colombia	Mauritius	Suriname
Croatia	Mexico	Sweden
Cuba	Monaco	Syrian Arab Republic
Cyprus	Montenegro	Thailand
Democratic People's Republic of Korea	Morocco	Tonga
Democratic Republic of the Congo	Mozambique	Trinidad and Tobago
Denmark	Myanmar	Tunisia
Dominican Republic	Netherlands	Turkey
Ecuador	New Zealand	Ukraine
Egypt	Nigeria	United Arab Emirates

Estonia	Norway	United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland
Fiji	Oman	United States of America
Finland	Pakistan	Uruguay
France	Papua New Guinea	Vanuatu
Georgia	Peru	Venezuela (Bolivarian Republic of)
Germany	Philippines	Viet Nam
Greece	Poland	
Guatemala	Portugal	