

BENEFITS OF BEING A MEMBER STATE OF THE IHO

Introduction

Any maritime State that is a member of the United Nations can become a Member State of the IHO by acceding to the Convention on the IHO.

The IHO's General and Finance Regulations, as amended, establish that Member States pay an annual contribution, the amount of which is based on the tonnage of the countries' merchant marine and partially, on the tonnage of the naval fleet. The annual contribution is significantly less than other comparable intergovernmental organizations, ranging from 8 000€ for States with a registered tonnage of less than 100 000 to a maximum of 108 000€ for States with a registered tonnage in excess of 29 000 000. However, some maritime countries' authorities erroneously feel that the cost of the annual contribution is too high and its payment is not justified, not being aware of the real value and the benefits of being an IHO Member State.

Aim

The aim of this short paper is to provide information that explains why non-IHO member countries should consider joining the IHO.

Background

The IHO is an intergovernmental, international and technical organization established in 1921, the mission of which is:

“to facilitate the provision of adequate and timely hydrographic information for world-wide marine navigation and other purposes, through the coordination of the endeavours of national hydrographic offices”

More precisely, the IHO's objectives are:

- *to promote the use of hydrography for the safety of navigation and all other marine purposes and to raise global awareness of the importance of hydrography;*
- *to improve global coverage, availability and quality of hydrographic data, information, products and services and to facilitate access to such data, information, products and services;*
- *to improve global hydrographic capability, capacity, training, science and techniques;*
- *to establish and enhance the development of international standards for hydrographic data, information, products, services and techniques and to achieve the greatest possible uniformity in the use of these standards;*
- *to give authoritative and timely guidance on all hydrographic matters to States and international organizations;*
- *to facilitate coordination of hydrographic activities among the Member States; and*
- *to enhance cooperation on hydrographic activities among States on a regional basis.*

All IHO Member States take part in the decision making processes of the organization, that is to say, they define the IHO Work Program and the allocation of resources to implement the agreed activities in the program, based on the above-mentioned objectives. Every IHO Member State not only has the right to make its voice heard when discussing and approving the organization's work program, but can benefit from the activities agreed and most importantly, can take advantage of its results.

Before going further, it is important to consider the IHO's definition of Hydrography:

“Hydrography is the branch of applied sciences which deals with the measurement and description of the physical features of oceans, seas, coastal areas, lakes and rivers, as well as with the prediction of their change over time, for the primary purpose of safety of navigation and in support of all other marine activities, including economic development, security and defence, scientific research, and environmental protection”.

This definition emphasizes that the IHO strongly associates hydrography with the safety of navigation and is therefore a particular priority.

Nevertheless, the IHO also recognizes that hydrography plays a vital role in all other marine activities and therefore encourages hydrographic offices to raise awareness of the importance of hydrography at the national level. A maritime State without a minimum basic hydrographic capability is not in a favourable position to take advantage of its maritime assets and resources. Maritime development, including hydrographic capability ought to be seen as a strategic national objective, and the resources employed as an investment, not as expenditure. Financial studies have shown that the cost:benefit ratio for investment in national hydrographic programmes can be better than 1:10 for maritime nations. The IHO is committed to assisting States that are willing to enhance their hydrographic capabilities or to establish such capability where it does not exist. While the aim of the IHO is to advise and support the development of hydrographic capabilities worldwide, priority is given to IHO Member States.

The IHO works very closely with other international organizations such as the International Maritime Organization (IMO); the World Meteorological Organization (WMO); the Intergovernmental Oceanographic Commission (IOC); the International Association of Marine Aids to Navigation and Lighthouses Authority (IALA), to mention a few. In light of the Convention on the Safety of Life at Sea (SOLAS), the IHO has a particularly strong association with the IMO and is recognized as the competent organization to establish standards and guidelines related the hydrographic obligations that SOLAS has placed on coastal States.

National Obligations under SOLAS

SOLAS Chapter V Regulation 9 refers to “Hydrographic Services” and provides details on what the services are that the signatory countries of SOLAS should provide. Contracting Governments are obliged to *undertake to arrange for the collection and compilation of hydrographic data and the publication, dissemination and keeping up to date all nautical information necessary for safe navigation.*

This can only be achieved by:

- *ensuring that hydrographic surveying is carried out, as far as possible, adequate to the requirements of safe navigation;*
- *preparing and issuing nautical charts, sailing directions, lists of lights, tide tables and other nautical publications, where applicable, satisfying the needs of safe navigation;*
- *promulgating notices to mariners in order that nautical charts and publications are kept, as far as possible, up to date; and*
- *providing data management arrangements to support these services.*

Contracting Governments to SOLAS are also required to ensure *...the greatest possible uniformity in charts and nautical publications and to co-ordinate their activities to the greatest possible degree in order to ensure that hydrographic and nautical information is made available on a world-wide scale as timely, reliably, and unambiguously as possible.*

SOLAS defines *Nautical chart or nautical publication* as *... a special-purpose map or book, or a specially compiled database from which such a map or book is derived, that is issued officially by or on the authority of a Government, authorized Hydrographic Office or other relevant government institution and is designed to meet the requirements of marine navigation.* This definition refers specifically to the

resolutions and recommendations of the IHO concerning the authority and responsibilities of coastal States in the provision of charting in accordance with SOLAS Chapter V Regulation 9.

That is to say, the charting and the provision of associated hydrographic services for a coastal State must conform to the IHO's resolutions, specifications and recommendations. How can a State ensure that such nautical charts and publications exist if it does not have a suitable infrastructure in place?

At a minimum, every coastal State must establish a working relationship with a recognised national charting authority and be prepared to continuously supply relevant and up to date hydrographic information.

Benefits for IHO Member States

States belonging to the IHO are in a much better position to comply with the requirements of SOLAS V, Regulation 9. The IHO, the IHO Secretariat, the Regional Hydrographic Commissions (RHC) and all other bodies of the IHO provide a valuable source of advice and experience for the development of strategies and technical and administrative policies aimed at improving hydrographic capacity and capability and supporting national maritime objectives.

For a maritime State it is vital to ensure that the services indicated in SOLAS V Regulation 9 are in place. For this to happen requires trained human resources; access to modern technology; well set-up infrastructure including legal regulations, and an appropriate budget. The opportunity to benefit from the experience of other IHO Member States in defining the size of a national hydrographic agency, the regulations and procedures that should govern it, constitute an invaluable resource that is very difficult to evaluate in monetary terms.

An IHO Member State can seek technical support, advice or assistance from other IHO members, particularly from those belonging to the same region. A problem can first be considered on a bilateral or multilateral basis for which the 15 Regional Hydrographic Commissions (RHCs) play an important role. If still not resolved at this level, then collectively the problem can be considered by the whole IHO through its specialized technical bodies.

In order to obtain the greatest possible uniformity in nautical charts and publications, the IHO sets standards and IHO Member States play an active and important role in defining these standards. The benefit of being on the development side of standards rather than being exclusively on the implementation side hardly needs explanation. Member States have the right to join any Working Group established to develop standards.

Many IHO Member States are at the front line of hydrographic developments and can therefore profit from the collective advance of the technology. Developing countries in particular can benefit from being IHO Members due to the fact that in isolation, the chances are usually very low that they will have access to the key information that is available through the IHO's collective and inclusive approach.

The contribution hydrography makes to improving safety of navigation and the safety of life at sea may be self-evident, but the other benefits of hydrographic data, information and products in support of the development of activities of national social and economic importance, such as coastal zone management, exploration and exploitation of living and non-living resources, defence, flood mitigation, and others, are much less appreciated.

Practical Information

Here are some practical examples of the immediate financial benefits of IHO membership.

Training IHO membership gives access to free training opportunities; fee-paying training opportunities and several other alternatives in between. Normally, IHO Members benefit from the best conditions. Considering that a six-day multi-beam echo sounder course fee is about 4 000€; a basic six-month hydrographic surveying course costs about 30 000€ and a five-week nautical cartographic course costs around 10 000€, then an annual contribution to the IHO of 8 000€ per year (for countries with tonnage lower than 100 000 tonnes), is not expensive.

Equipment When considering the purchase of hydrographic technology, such as buying a Differential Global Positioning System (DGPS) position fixing system, the cost could be around 30 000€. Making

the correct choice of equipment is important. IHO Members have the opportunity to request advice from other IHO Member States, thereby ensuring a good and long lasting investment. Again, the annual contribution for an IHO Member with a tonnage lower than 100 000 tonnes (8 000€) is not expensive compared to the potential benefits.

Technical/Advisory Visits Developing IHO Member States can request a team of experts in a particular discipline to pay an in-country visit. Such a technical/advisory visit would include the cost of travel and allowances for two people, on average such a visit could be 10 000€, paid for by the IHO. Again, an annual Member State contribution of 8 000€ (as previously indicated), represents good value for the visit recipient.

Information The IHO liaises with several other international organizations - governmental and non-governmental, as well as the private sector and academia. It is therefore well informed on developments in hydrography, nautical cartography and other disciplines. Such information is made easily and freely available to all IHO Member States. Non-IHO Member States have to invest significant resources to obtain the same valuable knowledge for their decision making. The network of experts that comprise the IHO community represents a huge capital value which is difficult to quantify.

Application Procedure

The Monaco government acts as the depository nation for the Convention on the IHO. A formal application to become a Member State must be submitted via diplomatic channel to the Government of the Principality of Monaco. The IHO Secretariat is always available to assist and advise prospective Member States on the joining procedures (see the IHO Publication M-2 *The Need for National Hydrographic Services* at www.iho.int/downloads).

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