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GREATER USE OF THE INTERNET AND OEF FOR CHRIS WG's

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Introduction

1. The IHO is finding that the pace of change is ever increasing. The various IHO Committees and Working Groups (WG's) must respond both quicker and more effectively to changing circumstances and developments. It is important to involve all the parties who may be affected by IHO decisions. This is increasingly difficult to achieve using the traditional IHO working methods of mail correspondence and formal meetings. There is a requirement for on-going discussions with a wide range of interested parties if issues are to be thoroughly aired and sensible and safe solutions developed.

2. There has been an acknowledgement that those affected by IHO decisions, policies and standards need to be more actively engaged in the process. Although a series of "Industry"¹ Workshops have been held, their effectiveness has been limited because of the need to correspond in a formal manner and to actually attend the meetings. A more accessible means of attracting and engaging the relevant parties is required.

Discussion

3. The internet is playing an ever-increasing role in communications between Member States. This is particularly true at the level of IHO Working Groups (WG's). In recent times a number of CHRIS WG's have used the internet successfully to progress their work. Examples are:

- SNPWG - revision of TR's
- TAWG - formulation of reports on data protection
- formulation of reports on emerging technology
- TSMAD - revision of "Use of the Object Catalogue"
- development of the List of Recommended Tests for ENC validation
- C&SMWG - preparation for 12th meeting in Monaco

4. The Open Ecdis Forum (OEF) continues to be used as the internet platform of choice by these WG's. This is because of its flexibility and the fact that the OEF can be used to reach a much wider audience than through formal meetings and correspondence. This can only benefit the development

¹ Industry means all those who may be affected by IHO decisions – such as equipment manufacturers, mariners, software authors, regulatory bodies, other agencies, etc.

of relevant and acceptable solutions to problems. The OEF offers the ability both for open server list based discussion groups and for closed discussion, as appropriate to the subject and the participants.

5. The use of the OEF enables both M/S and the other relevant parties (so-called *expert contributors*) to take part in the work through frank and efficient exchanges of views. This is inherently efficient. All who wish to participate can express a considered view. This is often impossible in a formal meeting because of time constraints and the fact that a number of the participants are unable or unwilling to attend meetings. It is noteworthy that at both the 2nd and 3rd Industry Workshops, there was significant support from “industry” to make more use of mechanisms such as OEF discussion groups to obtain wide ranging and relevant input.

6. It is obvious that not all discussion is suited to the internet. However, it is an ideal medium to conduct preliminary discussion of topics and to seek the widest range of views prior to reaching a formal IHO position. For technical WG’s it should be possible to refine and even resolve many issues before a meeting; leaving formal meetings merely to endorse the consensus position. This could be particularly relevant for TSMAD and C&SMWG, whose meetings and deferred items lists are becoming increasingly long. Also, work on extending S-57 to include a matrix data model will include digital bathymetry, and will require input from the surveying community and equipment manufacturers if we are to identify the correct solution. What better way to encourage participation than via an OEF discussion group?

7. The OEF already operates with a number of established procedural “rules” that guide the conduct of activities. Further rules or guidelines are not required.

8. An important role when using the OEF to discuss matters is that of the discussion leader. The discussion leader is generally the person who nominates a particular topic for discussion. That person then has a responsibility to coordinate and effectively chair the discussion as it progresses and is expected to summarise and forward the outcomes of discussion to the relevant IHO forum. A crucial task of a discussion group leader is to identify likely contributors to the discussion group.

Summary

9. Specialist discussion groups are being established on the OEF as a means of obtaining a wider perspective to the work of CHRIS WG’s. In addition, the establishment of specialist OEF discussion groups has the potential to progress much of WG work programs traditionally conducted during formal meetings.

Action Required by CHRIS

10. The Committee should:

- a. **Support** the increasing use of discussion groups on the OEF to progress CHRIS WG activities;
- b. **Encourage** the chairs of WG’s to establish relevant discussion groups to progress work in hand, particularly in advance of or as a replacement for, work otherwise conducted in formal meetings;
- c. **Stress** the role of discussion group leaders to identify likely contributors, coordinate and chair discussion as they progress and to summarise and forward the outcomes of discussions to the relevant IHO forum; and
- d. **Ensure** that this development is reflected in the CHRIS Report to the XVIth IH Conference.