

**WG ON THE REVISION OF IHO PUBLICATION S-23  
“LIMITS OF OCEANS AND SEAS” (S-23 WG)  
Second Meeting, Singapore, 5-7 July 2010**

**DRAFT MINUTES**

**11.4 Gulf / Sea of Oman**

Docs: S-23WG2-11B *Gulf / Sea of Oman – Correspondence with Oman Embassy in France*

The Chair explained that the IHB had received a letter from the Oman Embassy in Paris, France, reporting on the Government of Oman's decision to change to *Sea of Oman* the name of the maritime area currently known as *Gulf of Oman*, further asking the IHO to reflect this change in its official publications. He noted that the 1953 3<sup>rd</sup> edition of S-23 includes *Gulf of Oman* for this area and *Arabian Sea* for the adjacent sea area south-eastwards.

Oman mentioned that Gulf of Oman was changed to Sea of Oman because in the past it used to be known as Sea of Oman, some neighboring states still call it Sea of Oman and not the Gulf of Oman. The geographical dimensions of the Sea of Oman are comparable to other seas in terms of size and openings.

Oman provided the definition of a Gulf as, 'a part of the SEA extending into the LAND, usually larger than a BAY'. 'a BAY is a well-marked indentation which contains land locked waters'. Oman added from these definitions it is understood that the sea of Oman is a Sea more than a Gulf because the southern limits face open sea which is Arabian Sea and the northern limits face the Strait of Hormuz.

Oman expressed that changing 'GULF' to 'SEA' does not imply any legal, political, economic or even geographical significance.

France gave a presentation showing that the area in question has always been depicted on charts as *Gulf of Oman* since 1865 at least. However, the existing *Arabian Sea* appeared as *Sea of Oman* on some old charts and even sometimes as *Arabian Sea (Sea of Oman)*. Noting the definitions provided in the IHO Hydrographic Dictionary (S-32) for *Gulf*, i.e. "a part of the sea extending into the land, usually larger than a bay" and for *Sea*, i.e. "One of the smaller divisions of the oceans", France suggested that *Gulf* is a more appropriate generic term than *Sea* for this maritime area. Further, changing from *Gulf of Oman* to *Sea of Oman* could lead to confusion regarding the geographical extension of this maritime area, considering the historical names which may still be in use for the *Arabian Sea*, e.g. *Sea of Oman* or *Sea of Oman* as a variant of *Arabian Sea*. As a result, France recommended keeping the name *Gulf of Oman* and using *Sea of Oman* as a possible variant for *Arabian Sea*.

Oman clarified that their initiative only relates to the maritime area which is shown in S-23 as *Gulf of Oman*, which they think is a *Sea*, and they were not asking to add *Sea of Oman* as a variant of *Arabian Sea*. Oman also asked how the limits of Strait of Hormuz were introduced.

USA concurred with France that this maritime area does not qualify as a *Sea* and that the name *Gulf of Oman* should be retained.

Oman contradicted the opinions of France and USA, regarding this maritime area. It stressed that this maritime area is a 'SEA' and not a "GULF" referring to the definitions provided by the IHO Hydrographic Dictionary (S32) and the United Nations Conventions of the Law of the Sea 1982. This maritime area faces Strait of Hormuz in the north and faces Arabian Sea in the South.

The Chair summarized that, although Oman can use any name for national use, there was no support for the change from *Gulf of Oman* to *Sea of Oman*.

Outcome:

- The WG examined the letter received at the IHB from the Sultanate of Oman. The proposal of changing from *Gulf of Oman* to *Sea of Oman* did not have enough support during this meeting and did not support the proposed change from *Gulf of Oman* to *Sea of Oman*. IHB to provide Oman with historical information on the limits of the Strait of HQormuz.

2<sup>nd</sup> Meeting of the S-23 WG, Singapore, 5-7 July 2010

Outcomes / Conclusions

**1. Proposals by India**

- a. To move the Malacca Strait from Chapter 6 (South China Sea and Eastern Archipelagic Seas) to Chapter 5 (Indian Ocean).

*Due to their significance for international navigation, the WG agreed that the Malacca and Singapore Straits be considered an independent area forming a separate administrative division in S-23.*

- b. To change the western limit of the Malacca Strait from T. Jamboaye – Lem Phra Chao to Pedropunt - Lem Phra Chao.

*Amendment of the western limit of the Malacca Strait, as proposed by India, was agreed by the WG.*

**2. Proposals by China**

- a. To consider the South China Sea an independent area forming a separate administrative division in S-23.

*The WG position was to defer consideration of China's proposal to make the South China Sea an independent area within S-23. (Meeting participants to provide comments on this issue till the end of August 2010 in order to determine the way forward.)*

- b. To subsume Natuna Sea into South China Sea, so that the southern limit of South China Sea would be the same as in the 1953 3<sup>rd</sup> edition of S-23.

*The WG position was not to include Natuna Sea in South China Sea, as proposed by China. China to re-consider their position and/or provide additional information to the Chair for circulation to meeting participants.*

- c. To rename Beibu Gulf the existing Gulf of Tonkin, based on a 2005 agreement with Vietnam. China to provide the Chair with the official agreement with Vietnam and information on actual technical usage, for circulation to meeting participants. Based on the responses received, the Chair will propose a way forward.

- d. To consider Beibu Gulf (Gulf of Tonkin) a sub-body of the South China Sea.

*The WG agreed that Gulf of Tonkin / Beibu Gulf be considered a sub-body of the South China Sea, as proposed by China.*

- e. To slightly amend the northern limit of South China Sea.

*Alteration of the South China Sea's northern limit, as proposed by China, was agreed by the WG.*

- f. To consider Taiwan Strait a sub-body of East China Sea.

*The WG concluded that the Taiwan Strait should remain a separate body.*

- g. To amend to Taiwan Dao the name of this island.

*Meeting participants to provide to the Chair their views on China's proposal to name the island "Taiwan Dao" instead of "TAIWAN", by end of July 2010. Based on the responses received, the Chair will propose a way forward.*

- h. To change East China Sea' southern limit, from Hateruma Shima – Fu-kuei Chao to Hateruma Shima – Amlanan – E'luan Bi, so as to include a portion of the existing Philippine Sea in the East China Sea.

*The WG concluded that the existing limit should be retained.*

- i. To remove Liadong Wan as a sub-body of Bo Hai.  
*China's proposal to remove Liaodong Wan as a sub-body of Bo Hai was agreed by the WG.*
- j. To consider Bo Hai a separate body from the Yellow Sea.  
*Separation of Bo Hai from the Yellow Sea, as proposed by China, was agreed in principle by the WG. China to provide written technical justification to the Chair who will circulate it to the meeting participants for final approval.*
- k. To amend the line of demarcation between Bo Hai and the Yellow Sea.  
*The new line of demarcation between Bo Hai and the Yellow Sea, as proposed by China, was agreed in principle. China and USA to provide the Chair with written technical justification for their respective proposals. These, together with IHB findings on the justification for the existing line dating back to 1986, will be circulated to meeting participants for final approval.*
- l. To amend the eastern limit of the Yellow Sea.  
*Bilateral discussions to take place between China and Rep of Korea regarding the changes proposed by China on the eastern limit of the Yellow Sea. Outcome of these discussions to be sent to the Chair by end of July 2010 for circulation to the meeting participants.*
- m. To correct the spelling of several geographical names, and add some new names, relating to South China Sea and East China Sea (re: section 9 of China's paper in S-23WG2-11A, Part 10).  
*The spelling corrections for various geographical names and the addition of new names in the South China Sea and East China Sea, as proposed by China, were agreed by the WG, noting that the issues of Beibu Gulf / Gulf of Tonkin and "TAIWAN" / "Taiwan Dao" have been addressed in § 2.c and 2.g, respectively.*

**3. Sea area between the Korean peninsula and the Japanese archipelago.**

*Australia, France, Japan and Republic of Korea to provide the Chair with their proposals for circulation to the members of the WG. Meeting participants and WG members not attending the meeting to provide the Chair, by the end of August 2010, with their views on these proposals. Based on the responses received, Chair will propose a way forward.*

**4. Gulf / Sea of Oman.**

*The WG examined the letter received at the IHB from the Sultanate of Oman. The proposal of changing from Gulf of Oman to Sea of Oman did not have enough support during this meeting and did not support the proposed change from Gulf of Oman to Sea of Oman. IHB to provide Oman with historical information on the limits of the Strait of Hoormuz.*

**5. Morocco's requests.**

*Change from Ras Espartel to Ras Spartel, as proposed by Morocco, was agreed by the WG. The WG position was not to change from Punta Almina to Ras Almina, as proposed by Morocco.*

2<sup>nd</sup> Meeting of the S-23 WG, Singapore, 5-7 July 2010Actions arising from the Meeting

Agenda Item	Action No.	Details
11.2.a	1	(Meeting participants to provide comments on China's proposal to make the <i>South China Sea</i> an independent area within S-23 till the end of August 2010 in order to determine the way forward.)
11.2.b	2	<b>China</b> to re-consider its position on <i>Natuna Sea</i> and/or provide additional information to the <b>Chair</b> for circulation to meeting participants.
11.2.c	3	<b>China</b> to provide the Chair with the official agreement with Vietnam about <i>Beibu Gulf</i> and information on actual technical usage of this name, for circulation to meeting participants. Based on the responses received, the <b>Chair</b> to propose a way forward.
11.2.g	4	<b>Meeting participants</b> to provide the Chair with their views on China's proposal to name the island "Taiwan Dao" instead of "TAIWAN", by end of July 2010. Based on the responses received, the <b>Chair</b> to propose a way forward.
11.2.j	5	<b>China</b> to provide the Chair with written technical justification for separation of <i>Bo Hai</i> from the <i>Yellow Sea</i> . The <b>Chair</b> to circulate it to the meeting participants for final approval.
11.2.k	6	<b>China</b> and <b>USA</b> to provide the Chair with written technical justification for their respective proposals regarding the line of demarcation between <i>Bo Hai</i> and the <i>Yellow Sea</i> . These, together with <b>IHB</b> findings on the justification for the existing line dating back to 1986, to be circulated to meeting participants by the <b>Chair</b> for final approval.
11.2.l	7	Bilateral discussions to take place between <b>China</b> and <b>Rep of Korea</b> regarding the changes proposed by China on the eastern limit of the <i>Yellow Sea</i> . Outcome of these discussions to be sent to the <b>Chair</b> by end of July 2010 for circulation to the meeting participants.
11.3	8	In connection with naming the sea area between the Korean peninsula and the Japanese archipelago, <b>Australia, France, Japan</b> and <b>Republic of Korea</b> to provide the Chair with their proposals for circulation to the members of the WG. Meeting participants and <b>WG members</b> not attending the meeting to provide the Chair, by the end of August 2010, with their views on these proposals. Based on the responses received, the <b>Chair</b> to propose a way forward.
11.4	9	<b>IHB</b> to provide Oman with historical information on the limits of the <i>Strait of Hormuz</i> .