

Japanese Comment in response to the ROK letter Nov 25th 2011
(received 2 December 2011 by the S-23 WG Secretary)

Reference Paper

Japanese comments regarding the letter dated November 25 2011 from Mr. Moon Bo Shim addressed to Vice Adm. Alexandros Maratos.

1 Concurrent use of names

- As stated in previous Japanese reference papers, it would be totally inappropriate to interpret that the IHO TR A4.2.6 and UNCSGN Res. III/20 entitle newly claimed geographical names to be printed “concurrently” in such authoritative maps as the S-23, alongside internationally established names, however groundless these new claims can be. Such an open-ended interpretation of the resolutions could potentially bring about an endless proliferation of “concurrent use of names”.

- These resolutions should be interpreted in the context of the pursuit of respective missions by the IHO and the UNCSGN. The UNCSGN’s mission is obviously the standardization of geographical names. The IHO’s Convention clearly states that its mission includes the pursuit of greatest possible unification of nautical charts, while its technical resolutions, including TR A4.2.3. and TR A4.2.5, stipulate that the IHO cooperate with the UNCSGN for the purpose of standardization of geographical names. Needless to say, both the IHO TR A4.2.6 and the UNCSGN Res. III/20 were brought to existence to serve both bodies in the pursuit of their respective missions. That is, these resolutions provide a guidance in case the unification of two equally established international names is difficult. These resolutions, therefore, cannot possibly be interpreted as entitling groundless and sudden new claims to be dignified in the form of “concurrent use” in the S-23. The fact that the TR A4.2.6. mentions only “a bay, strait, channel or archipelago”, conspicuously omitting such major marine geographical features as “an ocean” and “a sea”, clearly indicates that the resolution is meant to only apply to limited and exceptional cases.

- The 2002 version of the draft 4th edition of S-23, mentioned in the ROK letter, does not contain any concurrent use of two different English names any more. In fact, the number of cases in the same draft where names are used concurrently is only three, and all of them are cases of different names in the English version and in the French one: “the English Channel” and “La Manche”, “The Bay of Biscay” and “The Golfe of Gascogne”, and, “Dover Strait” and “Pas de Calais”. These English and French names have all been recognized internationally for centuries.

- It should be noted that the ROK, a full-fledged IHO member state since 1957, which claims to have “steadfastly exerted its vigorous effort to regain the legitimacy of the name “East Sea”” after the end of the Korean War, did not for once referred to the IHO TR A4.2.6 at the time and after it was adopted in 1977.

2 “Way Forward”

- The ROK’s claim in its letter that the “Way Forward” proposed by the Chair is not a “feasible option,” does not reflect the attitudes of WG members on this issue. To our knowledge, there are only two countries in the S-23 WG that support the “concurrent use” of the name Sea of Japan and “East Sea”, i.e., the ROK and the DPRK. In contrast, numerous countries expressed their support for the Chair’s proposal or, simply, for the use of the name Sea of Japan as in previous editions of S-23. It is true that many countries hope that Japan and the ROK resolve the differences bilaterally, but those countries include a number of countries favoring the Chair’s proposal. The “Way Forward” is therefore totally “feasible,” provided that the ROK can act reasonably and responsibly.

- The difficulty here is that the ROK maintains its claims, while being all aware that these claims clearly contradict the reality, as well as their own documents and surveys. This means that this “naming” issue cannot, and should not be handled bilaterally. This is a matter for all IHO members, who have to decide what the best way is for the IHO’s pursuit of its mission. Japan firmly believes that IHO

members should turn down and put an end to the ROK's claim of the name "East Sea". The Korean claim paralyzed the IHO, by stalling the work for the revision of the S-23, as well as by potentially turning the international organization into a highly politicized forum where member states express nationalistic emotions. Thus the Japanese government fears that the integrity and credibility of the IHO could be extensively damaged.

(Note) The 1993 ROK's nautical chart 102A, using the name Sea of Japan, shows that there was no real objection to the use of the name within the ROK government at that time. The 2007 Report by the ROK's National Geographic Institute explicitly states that the name Sea of Japan became widely in use rapidly from 1830 onward, and not after the 20th century as the ROK still insists.

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