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**RECOGNITION OF IHO AS AN OBSERVER ORGANISATION  
TO THE ARCTIC COUNCIL**

IHO Reference: S1/5027/B

**Chairman, Arctic Commission**

Secretariat of the Arctic Council

Fram Centre

N-9296 Tromsø

Norway

by email

**For Information:**

Chairman

Arctic Regional Hydrographic Commission

by email

Reference: A. email from Secretariat of the Arctic Council to IHO Secretariat dated  
5 December 2012

1 January 2013

Dear Sir,

Thank you for your email of 5 December in which you invite the IHO to submit a memorandum that describes the IHO position in relation to the seven criteria for observer status to the Arctic Council, as adopted in Nuuk on 12 May 2011. We understand that this will lead to consideration at the next Ministerial Meeting that is expected to take place on 15 May 2013.

Please find a short statement at Annex A.

On behalf of the Directing Committee

Yours sincerely,



Robert WARD  
President

Annex A: Recognition of IHO as an Observer organization to the Arctic Council

## **RECOGNITION OF IHO AS AN OBSERVER ORGANISATION TO THE ARCTIC COUNCIL**

### **General Introduction**

The International Hydrographic Organisation (IHO), established in 1921, is an inter-governmental technical consultative organisation currently comprising 81 Member States. Its principal roles are the global coordination and improvement of hydrographic and navigational charting services and the maintenance of relevant international standards and guidelines to support those services. Coastal States are obliged to provide these services under the terms of the UN Convention on the Safety of Life at Sea (SOLAS). Most Member States of the IHO are represented by the Head of the national hydrographic service or its equivalent. The headquarters and secretariat of the IHO is based in Monaco.

### **UN Observer Status**

The IHO enjoys observer status in the United Nations and is particularly active in a number of its subordinate organisations, most notably the International Maritime Organization (IMO) and the Intergovernmental Oceanographic Commission (IOC), under UNESCO. The IHO is recognised as the competent authority in respect of hydrography and nautical charting. As a consequence, all relevant UN instruments dealing with hydrography and nautical charting refer to the relevant standards and guidelines set by the IHO.

### **Regional hydrographic coordination, including in polar regions**

The IHO has encouraged the establishment of Regional Hydrographic Commissions (RHCs) to assist in the coordination of hydrography and nautical charting. Of particular relevance to the Arctic Council is the fact that of the 15 RHCs, there are two RHCs that encompass the polar regions.

The Arctic Regional Hydrographic Commission (ARHC) comprises the five littoral States of the Arctic (Canada, Denmark, Norway, Russian Federation, USA), and is currently chaired by Norway. The ARHC exists to coordinate hydrographic surveying and nautical charting not only in support of safer navigation, but also in support of the much wider application of hydrographic information for other purposes such as protection of the marine environment, scientific research and sustainable economic development.

### **Notes in support of Arctic Council suitability criteria**

The IHO recognises that in the determination by the Arctic Council of the general suitability of an applicant organisation for observer status the Council will, inter alia, take into account the extent to which observers fulfil a number of criteria that were adopted by the Council in Nuuk on 12 May 2011. The following paragraphs provide brief notes against each of those established criteria.

#### **- Accept and support the objectives of the Arctic Council defined in the Ottawa declaration.**

The IHO supports directly and primarily the Protection of the Marine Environment objective and to a secondary degree the Sustainable Development objective of the Arctic Council. The objectives of the IHO contribute to the Arctic marine transportation infrastructure that underpins protection of the marine environment and socioeconomic

development through safe navigation for Arctic community re-supply and responsible resource development.

- Recognize Arctic States' sovereignty, sovereign rights and jurisdiction in the Arctic.

The ARHC, operating under the auspices of the IHO comprises the littoral Arctic Ocean States that, recognizing their sovereign role in the provision of hydrographic services and nautical charting for safety of Arctic navigation, protection of the Arctic marine environment and overall improved scientific understanding of the Arctic marine environment. Article 5 of the ARHC Statutes states as follows:

*'All activities, including exchange of information, technical cooperation, statements made or positions taken in the course of the works of the Commission are without prejudice to the respective national legal positions or sovereign rights of each member and shall not be construed as any statement, position or admission whatsoever in relation to any claim regarding the Arctic Ocean Region.'*

- Recognize that an extensive legal framework applies to the Arctic Ocean including, notably, the Law of the Sea, and that this framework provides a solid foundation for responsible management of this ocean.

Hydrographic objectives and cooperation between the Arctic Ocean Coastal States are guided by several internationally recognized instruments and agreements including the United Nations Law of the Sea (maritime boundaries, extended jurisdiction on the continental shelf, etc.), the UN Convention on the Safety Of Life At Sea (SOLAS), numerous IHO standards, guidelines and specifications, and various legislative guidelines for the prevention of marine pollution and ship operations in Polar waters. Responsible management of ocean and navigational areas is an overarching goal of the IHO and consequently the ARHC focus is supporting this management in the Arctic Ocean region.

- Respect the values, interests, culture and traditions of Arctic indigenous peoples and other Arctic inhabitants.

The IHO is an inter-governmental technical consultative organisation established under the Convention on the IHO for the purpose of promoting safe navigation, protection of the marine ecosystem and support of responsible economic development. The IHO approved definition of 'hydrography' encapsulates these broad objectives and is as follows:

*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.*

In extension of this definition for hydrography, a goal of the ARHC is to support and respect the needs of Arctic indigenous peoples and other Arctic inhabitants.

- Have demonstrated a political willingness as well as financial ability to contribute to the work of the Permanent Participants and other Arctic indigenous peoples.

As stated in the Convention on the IHO, the Member States of the IHO are resolved to meet the objectives of the Organization. In financial and cost-benefit terms the goals of the IHO are to provide a safer navigational environment that will provide efficient marine transportation, sustainable and effective use of the natural resources of the area and at the

same time minimising marine incidents and the inevitable financial consequences of such things as oil spills, pollution, degradation of the environment, loss of life and property.

As an intergovernmental organisation, the IHO is funded by annual subscriptions from its 81 Member States. This is based on the registered tonnage of the fleet of each State. Among its activities, the IHO operates a capacity building programme that provides targeted training and technical assistance aimed at improving nautical charting and the delivery of maritime safety information in regions, such as the Arctic.

- Have demonstrated their Arctic interests and expertise relevant to the work of the Arctic Council.

In specific relation to the Arctic, the five Arctic Ocean Coastal States (that are also full Member states of the IHO) that form the ARHC agreed via their signed Statutes and the following statement that was released upon the formation of the Commission in 2010:

*'To meet current and emerging challenges, the Arctic Coastal States represented by their Hydrographic Offices, have recognized the need for enhanced collaboration and coordination of their Arctic activities and established the ARHC.*

*By exchanging knowledge and information and by providing quality assured data, the Members of the ARHC aim to facilitate an environmentally responsible exploration of Arctic waters. The ARHC will thereby contribute in the development of the maritime infrastructure required for safe navigation and protection of the marine environment in the Arctic.*

*The ARHC is committed to enhancing cooperation with other intergovernmental organizations and the international hydrographic and maritime transportation community with a perspective towards advancing the much needed Arctic maritime infrastructure.'*

- Have demonstrated a concrete interest and ability to support the work of the Arctic Council, including through partnerships with member states and Permanent Participants bringing Arctic concerns to global decision making bodies.

The Arctic Regional Hydrographic Commission (ARHC) was established in 2010. Its purpose is to coordinate hydrographic and nautical charting services on a regional basis. The five Member States (Canada, Denmark, Norway, Russian Federation, USA) are represented by their National Hydrographer, who is responsible for the provision of hydrography and nautical charting services under the terms of Regulation 9 of Chapter V of the UN Convention on the Safety of Life at Sea (SOLAS V/9) and other UN instruments. The establishment of the ARHC in 2010 completes the IHO's regional coverage of technical hydrographic coordination for the world.

The IHO Member States cooperate at the regional (through RHCs) and global (through IHO) levels to coordinate hydrographic surveying and nautical charting not only to support safer navigation, but also to support the much wider application of hydrographic information for other purposes such as protection of the marine environment, scientific research and sustainable economic development.

The IHO has a number of Memoranda of Understanding and similar arrangements in place that recognizes other international and regional organisations, all of which have interests in ensuring safe and sustainable activities in the polar regions.. These organisations include:

- Comité International Radio Maritime (CIRM)
- Cruise Lines International Association (CLIA)
- Baltic and International Maritime Council (BIMCO)
- Intergovernmental Oceanographic Commission (of UNESCO) (IOC)

International Association of Institutes of Navigation (IAIN)  
International Association of Marine Aids to Navigation and Lighthouse Authorities (IALA)  
International Association of Geodesy (IAG)  
International Cartographic Association (ICA)  
International Chamber of Shipping (ICS)  
International Electrotechnical Commission (IEC)  
International Federation of Hydrographic Societies (IFHS)  
International Federation of Surveyors (FIG)  
International Geographical Union (IGU)  
International Maritime Organization (IMO)  
International Maritime Pilots' Association (IMPA)  
International Organization of Standards (ISO)  
International Association of Antarctic Tour Operators (IAATO)  
International Society for Photogrammetry and Remote Sensing (ISPRS)  
Scientific Committee on Antarctic Research (SCAR)  
United Nations Organisation (including DOALOS, GGIM)

### **More Information**

More information about the IHO is available at: *www.iho.int* and from the secretariat of the IHO: *info@iho.int*