

**10th EAtHC-CHAto MEETING
LOMÉ, TOGO 3, 4 & 5 December 2008**

CHAIRMAN'S REPORT

Dear colleagues, after having agreed on the meeting Agenda, allow me to summarize the most important events occurred during the last two years directly related to the Eastern Atlantic Hydrographic Commission since its 9th Meeting, held in Dakar, Senegal in December 2006, that will be discussed in detail during the meeting.

1. RESULTS OF THE SEVENTEENTH INTERNATIONAL HYDROGRAPHIC CONFERENCE

The amendments to the International Hydrographic Organization Convention were approved during the Third Extraordinary International Hydrographic Conference in May 2005, and the Seventeenth International Hydrographic Conference held in May 2007 approved the basic documents of the IHO covering the new organization structure and procedures for the Organization.

According to the decisions approved during the last Conference, starting on January the 1st, 2009, the new Organizational Structure of the International Hydrographic Organization will be implemented, as it is shown in the Circular Letter 94. The International Hydrographic Conference and the International Hydrographic Bureau will continue working until the ratification of the new Convention but below these two bodies the whole new Structure basically composed by the Interregional Coordination Committee and the Hydrographic Services and Standards Committee will start working.

After more than three and a half years since the approval of the amendments at the 3rd EIHC, the number of Member State Governments who have approved them remains very low. This may have a negative effect on the efforts to put in place as soon as possible the new structure of the Organization, therefore, following the directions given to the Regional Chairmen by Circular Letter 1, 2008, we will check on the status of the Convention ratification in each Member State of this Regional Commission.

Also, I would like us to establish the selection procedures for our representatives to the future Council, where 20 members will be selected as representatives of the Regional Commissions.

The Seventeenth International Conference also considered the future of Strategic Planning Working Group, as it is accepted that it has fulfilled the task assigned

to it. However, the Conference considered that there remains a need for a Group to revise the Organization Strategic Plan, and somehow to monitor the changes in the Organization during the next few years; consequently, it was agreed to establish the IHO Strategic Planning Working Group to fulfil these tasks and report to the next Extraordinary Conference in 2009. We are honoured to have General Bessero with us, Director of SHOM and Chairman of this Working Group.

Portugal, who was the representative of this Regional Commission to the old Planning Working Group, volunteered to be also our representative to the new working group. Therefore they have the task of circulating the documents that are under discussion in this working Group, consolidating our comments and acting as our liaison with the ISPWG Secretariat. I would like to thank very much Portugal for the excellent work they are doing in this field. In their role of representative to this Working Group they will deal with all these items under Agenda item 10.

2. NEW MEMBERS, BILATERAL ARRANGEMENTS

Last year, on November the 9th 2007, during the technical visit accomplished by SHOM to Benin and Togo, this last country signed the Statutes of this Regional Commission and became an Associate Member with the possibility to host the Commission Plenary Sessions. Thanks to this initiative we are able to be here today holding this meeting in Lomé. I would like to send my congratulations to the Togolese Delegation and my appreciation to France for their excellent collaboration in this field.

Also it is important to note that France and Morocco signed on January the 21st, 2008 a bilateral arrangement of cooperation on hydrography and nautical cartography in which it is specified the role of France in a provisional period while preparing Morocco to organize a fully self-dependant hydrographic service.

Today was also signed a bilateral agreement between France and Togo and a new one between France and Cameroon is almost ready. Congratulations once more to France and Togo for this agreement and again we all appreciate very much France efforts trying to help with the development of national hydrographic services in this region.

3. CAPACITY BUILDING COMMITTEE (CBC)

We must admit that the last two years have not been too successful with regards to activities aimed to evaluate and improve capacities either for cartographic production or the dissemination of maritime safety information (MSI) among the States in our Regional Commission.

As a result of the Sixth Meeting of the CBC held in Monaco in May 2008, pending budget items have been revised and new items have been approved. Regarding our Commission, two items scheduled for 2008 are still pending

(“Portugal and Guinea-Bissau collaboration” and the “Basic Practical Hydrographic Training Course”). A new item was approved for next year, the “MSI Technical Training Course”. The planning of these bids will be discussed in this meeting, under Agenda item 8.

4. INTERNATIONAL CHART CATALOGUE

France, as coordinator nation of the International Chart Catalogue of our Regional Commission will deal with all the issues regarding this topic under Agenda item 8, trying to update this Catalogue taking into account all the new charts or modifications to the existing ones occurred since February 2007, date of the last update of the CHATINTCHART Catalogue.

There is an important issue that France has pointed out in their National Report and that I would also like to mention in this report regarding the availability of new hydrographic data. All countries in the region should be aware that they must access the data covering their national waters obtained whether from foreign countries by means of bilateral agreements, from private companies accomplishing local works, etc. That is the only way that afterwards that information may be shown in the corresponding nautical charts produced by those countries with cartographic responsibility of that area.

Another issue is the role of the coordinator for ENC small and medium scale ENC Schemes in Regional Hydrographic Commissions which has not been officially established yet but that France has taken for a long time now the responsibility for this subject. We appreciate very much the work done by France during these years.

There has been a paper submitted by France to WEND-11 (Document WEND11-07C Titled “*Guidelines for the preparation and maintenance of small/medium scale ENC schemes*”). We will have time to discuss about this subject when dealing with Agenda item 9.c. which will clarify in the future who should be in charge of the coordination of the ENC schemes for small and medium scales.

5. EXTENSION OF THE CONTINENTAL PLATFORM

Suggested by several countries in our Commission headed by Togo, we received a proposal in order to include the subject “Extension of the Continental Platform” in the Agenda for this meeting.

I consider it a very interesting subject in accordance with the new definition of Hydrography suggested by ISPWG, as we will be informed during this meeting. Hydrography should not only be used for cartographic production but also for other purposes as the exploitation of natural resources in the area, environmental protection and so on. Therefore, we will discuss on this subject when dealing with item 9 in the Agenda.

6. OUTCOMES FROM IHO AND IMO WORKING GROUPS

We will also deal with the results, decisions, recommendations that have been achieved during the great number of meeting held during these two years and more specifically along 2008. Some of them have been already mentioned above in this report but we will also discuss on other outcomes related to our Regional Commission coming form Working Groups such as NAV-54, CHRIS-20, CPRNW-10 or the creation of the new International Maritime Academy for Navigation Safety and Environmental Protection in Genoa, Italy.

Now, following the order established in the Agenda, we will deal with the designation the Vice Chairman for the meeting.

Thank you.