

**EASTERN ATLANTIC HYDROGRAPHIC COMMISSION (EAtHC)
8th Meeting, Brest, France, 28-29 October 2004**

REPORT BY THE CHAIRMAN

Following the 7th Eastern Atlantic Hydrographic Commission (7th EAtHC), in Lisbon, 15-17 October 2002, two main issues were engaged; first, the activities of the Strategic Planning Working Group (SPWG), concerning the new structure and legal documents of International Hydrographic Organization (IHO) Convention; secondly, the actions of the Western Africa Action Team (WAAT), concerning the development of hydrographic capabilities and marine safety.

1. Strategic Planning Working Group (SPWG)

Throughout the last two years, the SPWG did an important work regarding IHO structure and Convention. Meetings took place between 2002 and 2004 in Monaco, Goa, Lima, Singapore and Tokyo.

The Portuguese Hydrographic Service represented this Commission in SPWG works. France also attended all meetings; Spain and Morocco participated occasionally. All members were always informed about these works as asked to inform the Chairman concerning their main ideas for SPWG works. We were all invited to attend the Athens Seminar, about this process explanation.

During those two years, SPWG undertook this evaluation and made appropriate recommendations to the third Extraordinary Conference, from 11 to 15 April 2005, in accordance with the SPWG Terms of Reference. The SPWG was also tasked with addressing a number of proposals deferred from the Conference, which were seen as being complementary to the main review. Discussions focused subjects such as the Council representation model, financial and administrative mechanisms and basic documents

revision.

All the documents to be considered, as well as the 8 Proposals to the Conference issuing from the work of the SPWG have been dispatched to all IHO Member States by the Conference Circular Letters n.º 2 and 5.

We will have the opportunity to refer SPWG works during this Meeting, on the Chairman Report. France and Portugal will also present their own position.

2. West Africa Action Team (WAAT)

After the seventh Eastern Atlantic Hydrographic Commission conference, and during the last two years, the Western African Action Team fulfilled an extensive technical visits programme that embraced almost twenty African countries.

As background, I recall that the WAAT was set up in the Eastern Atlantic Hydrographic Commission Special Meeting, held in Lisbon, in March 2001, in which its Terms of Reference were established. France, United States, United Kingdom and Portugal joined the project, allocating national experts to the team. France assumed the coordinator role, inviting African countries from our region to receive this team and establishing a two-year schedule of visits based on the positive responses to the invitations. The WAAT fieldwork started in October 2002, right after the 7th EAHC Conference, and was concluded in May 2004. During this period, seventeen visits were done including sixteen countries:

- On the first tour, during October and November: Gabon, Nigeria, Ghana, Mauritania, Senegal, Cape Verde, Guinea and Sierra Leone;
- On the second tour, in March 2003: Benin, Republic of Congo, Equatorial Guinea, Democratic Republic of Congo and Togo;
- On the third tour, in October 2003: Senegal (second visit) and Gambia;
- On the fourth tour, between April and May 2004: Cameroon and Guinea-Bissau.

Only two countries were not object of the Action Team evaluation: Sao Tome and Principe and Liberia, as they did not answer to invitations. In addition, Ivory Coast did not present stability conditions to receive the team.

Each country and each tour were evaluated – and proposals were referred to. We will discuss it during this meeting.

I sincerely hope that this highly valuable work, which was notably accomplished by WAAT, will represent an effective and sustained improvement of the navigation safety conditions in West Africa. However, this joint effort of France, United Kingdom, Portugal, Spain and United States, done under the auspices of the IHO, will only be succeed if the West African countries also perform a hard and perseverant work, which must necessarily include an organization effort such as the creation of the National Hydrographic Services.