

GEO Ministerial Summit
13 November 2015
IHO Statement

Honourable Ministers,
GEO Co-Chairs,
Secretariat Director,
Delegates,
Ladies and Gentlemen

On behalf of the International Hydrographic Organization, I would like to thank you for this opportunity to comment on the contribution of our organization to the implementation of GEOSS.

The International Hydrographic Organization - or IHO, is the long-standing intergovernmental organization whose principal role is to ensure that the world's seas, oceans and waterways are adequately surveyed and charted. It does this through the setting of relevant international standards, the co-ordination of the endeavours of the national hydrographic offices of its 85 Member States and through capacity building.

The IHO fully supports the objectives of GEOSS as reaffirmed by the Ministerial Declaration. The underpinning role of "*comprehensive and sustained Earth observations (...) to assess, understand and predict how Earth resources are a basis for sustainable development*" is particularly relevant for the seas and oceans, which cover more than 70 % of the surface of our planet.

The theme of this year's World Hydrography Day highlighted the uncomfortable fact that much of the world's seas, oceans and waterways remain unsurveyed. We have higher resolution maps of the Moon and Mars than we do of most of the world's seas and oceans. While the importance of the ocean has been reaffirmed with the adoption by the UN Assembly of a dedicated sustainable development goal, the last decades have seen a slow and continuous decrease in the level of resources devoted to hydrographic surveying around the world.

GEOSS cannot be global and effective without encompassing the blue parts of our planet, as illustrated by on-going efforts, such as an initiative of UN-GGIM Americas, to link ocean and continental GIS. The IHO therefore urges the Member State representatives in GEO to consider the lack of knowledge concerning the ocean and in particular in their own sea areas. We urge them to put in place or to reinforce their national and regional hydrographic programmes, assisted where necessary by the IHO, in order to contribute effectively to the maritime dimension of GEOSS.

Thank you.