

STATEMENT BY THE INTERNATIONAL HYDROGRAPHIC ORGANISATION  
(IHO)

Mr President, Your Excellencies, Distinguished Delegates it is an honour for me representing the International Hydrographic Bureau to present the following statement on behalf of our Member States.

The IHO was founded in 1921 to contribute to and to promote maritime safety by assisting Member States, now numbering 80, to meet their obligations to safe navigation. This is clearly defined in the Amended Chapter V of the IMO Safety of Life at Sea Convention (SOLAS) which includes the requirements for;

- the completion of modern surveys,
- the prompt promulgation of warnings and dangers,
- the publication of official charts and other navigational documents,

all in the interest of “ Safer Ships- Cleaner Seas” and improved trade for all nations.

The UN on different occasions with Assembly Resolutions under the chapter of “Oceans and the Law of the Sea” has noted the deficiencies in some national hydrographic organisations and in safety information capabilities in many regions of the world. The consequences are shown in the number of shipwrecks in areas poorly surveyed and which have led to loss of life and property and serious damage to sensitive habitats and trade. More recently (November 1998) the UN Assembly, in its Resolution 53/32 invited States to co-operate in carrying out hydrographic surveys and in providing maritime safety information services. The IMO approved an amended Chapter V of SOLAS, which entered into force on 1 July 2002, and which contains for the first time direct references to hydrographic requirements. Regulation 9 of Chapter V introduces the obligation to the more than 140 States party to SOLAS to provide such services and is even more explicit than UN Resolution 53/32. Reference is made in SOLAS to the Resolutions and Recommendations of the International Hydrographic Organisation.

Nowadays there is a growing recognition of the value of hydrographic data in applications related to coastal management and environmental safety. These data, including accurate and up to date shoreline information, near and offshore bathymetry, and real-time tidal and current information, have the potential to significantly enhance the planning and execution of development projects, the determination of marine boundaries, the characterisation of coastal habitats, and many other critical activities in the coastal zone. The IHO and its Member States Hydrographic Offices are working in the development of the Marine/Hydrographic component in support of the national, regional and global efforts in the developments of the Geospatial Infrastructures.

It is not generally appreciated that, with few exceptions, more than 90% of a nations trade is through it's ports and if a developing State is to participate in the world markets and

progress it has to ensure that its products reach the markets safely and on time. Increased insurance costs and the inferior vessels, that are prepared to take the risks inherent in areas of poor charting, will hardly assist a State to compete on the global markets and achieve sustainable growth.

The need for hydrographic and related data is not yet widely appreciated and many coastal areas, such as in Africa, Central America, the South China Sea, the Caribbean Sea, Antarctica and other areas around the world, are not adequately covered by accurate hydrographic data. The data is vital to ensure safe navigation and for the studies needed for the protection of the environment.

In closing, Mr President, the XVIIth International Hydrographic Conference, held in May this year, has decided to establish a Working Group to prepare the Strategy of the IHO on the issue of the Geospatial Infrastructures.

Not only will the resultant data help to ensure the safe navigation of all vessels and the protection of the environment; it will contribute substantially and significantly to the sustainable development of all nations.