

Future of the World's Oceans : Investment in Our Common Future



A conference to be held in Monaco in June 2016 on the future of ocean floor mapping will examine the ever-increasing pressures on the oceans of the world – the largest living space on Earth and perhaps its most precious resource – and seek solutions on how to address present and future challenges.

'The Forum for Future Ocean Floor Mapping' will bring together senior representatives, scientists and scholars from major ocean-related and international organisations, to discuss the importance of understanding the shape of the ocean floor in order to address critical issues such as marine pollution and degradation, ocean warming, acidification and the impact of global climate change. The Forum is being held jointly by the General Bathymetric Chart of the Oceans (GEBCO), the international project with a directive to

map the floor of the global oceans, and The Nippon Foundation, a private philanthropic foundation with its headquarters in Tokyo. The Nippon Foundation is also funding the Forum.

Broad Range of Human Activity

Defining the shape of the world's ocean floor underpins a broad range of human activity associated with the oceans of the world, comments Admiral Shin Tani, Chairman of GEBCO's Guiding Committee. Bathymetry, or ocean depth information, is for him the primary instrument for a better understanding of coastal erosion, storm surges, the threat of tsunamis, and ocean currents and tidal flows worldwide. He sees it as the key for assessing the impact of sea-level rises, at the heart of safe navigation and the basis of exploration for oil, gas and mineral resources.

Prince Albert II of Monaco has been invited to open the three day Forum, which will include a keynote address by Mr Yohei Sasakawa, Chairman of The Nippon Foundation, who was awarded the 2014 International Maritime Prize by the International Maritime Organisation (IMO) for his "long-standing dedication to maritime education and training". The Forum will culminate in a roadmap that will guide and focus collective efforts on mapping the gaps in current ocean depth coverage for the next ten years and beyond.

Training

GEBCO, since 2004, has been instrumental in training a new generation of scientists and hydrographers in ocean bathymetry at the University of New Hampshire in the USA, with funds provided by The Nippon Foundation. Around 60 of these Nippon Foundation-GEBCO fellowship programme scholars, drawn from coastal states worldwide, will attend the Forum.

The scholars will take back vital information to their home countries that will increase our ability to coordinate globally the mapping of our world's oceans, according to Admiral Shin Tani, who believes that this will benefit generations to come and will be a sound investment in our common future.