

WORLD HYDROGRAPHY DAY 2016

The Key to Well-managed Seas and Waterways



On 21 June 2016, and in appropriate related events every year, the IHO will celebrate World Hydrography Day. World Hydrography Day is an opportunity to increase public awareness of the vital role that hydrography plays in everyone's life. The theme for World Hydrography Day 2016 is Hydrography – the key to well-managed seas and waterways.

This theme was chosen to highlight the

importance of hydrographic information, especially in determining the depth and shape of the seafloor, in properly managing all human activities in the seas, the oceans and navigable waterways.

The theme is especially relevant in light of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development adopted by the UN General Assembly in September 2015. The UN Agenda specifically targets the sustainability of the oceans under its Sustainable Development Goal 14 - Conserve and sustainably use the oceans, seas and marine resources for sustainable development. One target outcome of Goal 14 is to increase scientific knowledge of the oceans. UN Sustainable Development Goal 11 addresses the resilience of cities and human settlements, and refers to Disaster Risk Reduction including the impact of severe weather events and of natural phenomena such as tsunamis. Achieving both Goals 14 and 11 will rely in no small way on improving the currently unacceptable level of hydrographic knowledge about our sea areas - especially in terms of knowing more about the depth and nature of the seafloor.

Limited Knowledge

An uncomfortable fact, and one yet to be fully appreciated by both the general public or most politicians, is that we have better maps of the Moon, Mars and Venus than we do of most of our seas and oceans. We have no measured depths for more than 70% of the water area on the planet. The IHO estimates that at least 50% of the world's coastal waters remain unsurveyed. The coasts in the polar regions, the South West Pacific, West Africa and the Caribbean are barely 10% surveyed. And in those areas where surveys do exist, many are so old or of such a sparse nature that they cannot support modern requirements. This should be a major cause for concern for everyone - at a time when mankind seeks to take more and more resources and support from the sea and is only now beginning to realise how important the sea is to our survival. Not only is the sea a resource for food, medicines, transport and recreation, it is also a major influence on climate and climate change because of its moderating effect. How can mankind seriously contemplate exploiting the sea in a sustainable manner when we do not really understand its shape and the features that lie on the seafloor - all of which are at the core of hydrography? The theme for 2016 is intended to highlight this situation.

95th Anniversary of the IHO

21 June 2016 - World Hydrography Day, also marks the 95th anniversary of the establishment of the IHO.