

# OmanHydro Symposium



The OmanHydro Symposium, held for the first time at the Al Shafaq Club in Muscat from 15 to 18 March 2009, was organised by the Royal Navy of Oman, one of the first in the region to establish a national Hydrographic Office. With more than 250 delegates, varying from naval personnel to academics, and about 20 exhibitor stands, the attendance was good.

The registered delegates came from, amongst others, Oman, the Emirates States, Pakistan, the Netherlands, France, Norway, the UK and USA to hear speakers present papers on local and international maritime and regulatory issues relating to hydrography, ecological and environmental monitoring and its importance, technical aspects of surveying and data management, and disaster management and training.

The Symposium started with admiral Maratos, director of the International Hydrographic Bureau, outlining their work at the International Hydrographic Organization (IHO) and stressing the importance of hydrography and the role of the IHO in developing, supporting and lobbying for hydrography and national Hydrographic Offices, especially as there are several key regulations from the International Maritime Organization (IMO) and United Nations Convention on the Law Of the Sea (UNCLOS) to be upheld.

Continuing on the importance of hydrography and using specific local examples around the waters of Oman and the Gulf, Steve Bennett (Arabian Maritime and Navigation Aids Services, AMNAS) outlined the situation promoting closer co-operation and planning of marine activities with hydrographic input being used to avoid expensive errors and problems, and to create and maintain a safe and secure navigation service through a managed approach to marine resources. The final paper of the session by Egil Arstaad (Jeppesen) illustrated the update and development of a national Hydrographic Office in order to remain cost effective whilst meeting its regulatory, surveying and data management requirements. In the following session, environmental and ecological monitoring were described by Mr Du Vall of Lighthouse using a cabled monitoring system in the Indian Ocean and Dr Usula Witt (Aberdeen University) illustrating some of the inter-relationships of the marine environment with some very impressive examples of the richness and wonders of our seas. A session on data utilisation followed, with papers by IVS 3D, Dubai Municipality and Fugro Oceanor providing delegates with great examples of the use made of data to support decision making and planning. The use of 3D visualisation, data integration with maps and other data sets really does advance our knowledge and understanding of the fragile shallow and coastal regions.

On the third day of the Symposium more papers were presented, like on from Adem Kerr on management of data in relation to national disasters, which Oman has been exposed to with the 2004 Indian Ocean Tsunami and the 2007 Tropical Cyclone Guno. The final paper of the event was on the importance of standards and training, and brought the local and regional issues together with the regulatory requirements as examples of why training of personnel to promote awareness and understanding is vital to support a cost-effective approach to building capacity and sustaining a national Hydrographic Office.

The Oman Symposium closed with a ceremony to present the delegates and exhibitors with certificates. The generous hospitality and warmth of the people of Oman was enjoyed by all the exhibitors and delegates who appreciated a well-organised and very useful event. For anybody wishing to further their knowledge and understanding of hydrography in the region and to develop their commercial awareness, they should definitely look out for the next Oman Symposium. The event was a great success and it is a credit to the Royal Navy of Oman, the organisers and local personnel who kept the schedule and speakers on time, provided generous amounts of tea, coffee and cakes, and ensured we all visited the exhibition, cultural sites and enjoyed the social periods and evenings. I for one would not wish to miss the next OmanHydro Symposium.