

World Hydrography Day - 2012



On 21 June each year the International Hydrographic Organization celebrates World Hydrography Day. The theme for 2012 is: “International Hydrographic Co-operation – supporting safe navigation”.

The IHO’s internationally recognised standards help ensure that mariners and other users of hydrographic data can use and understand the data easily. IHO standards cover a wide range from defining the training and skill sets required by hydrographic surveyors and nautical cartographers, through the minimum standards for the collection of data and its depiction on charts, both paper and digital, to the rapid delivery of Maritime Safety Information to ships at sea via the World-Wide Navigational Warning Service. The IHO provides a Hydrographic Dictionary in three languages and a Manual of Hydrography.

Establishing the standards and getting them recognised and used requires extensive international co-operation and the involvement of many other organisations.

International co-operation lies at the heart of the IHO. The IHO maintains close relations with many international bodies – the UN General Assembly, the UN Committee on Global Geospatial Information Management (GGIM), the International Maritime Organization (IMO), the International Association of Lighthouse and Aids to Navigation Authorities (IALA), the Intergovernmental Oceanographic Commission (IOC), International Organization for Standardization (ISO), and others. It ensures that appropriate IHO representatives attend meetings and provide input and expert advice. At the same time, the IHO committees and working groups are supplemented in their own work by input from expert observers from these and other international bodies, especially those representing mariners, equipment manufacturers and surveyors. In addition, IHO working groups invite expert contributors on an individual basis to contribute to the work and provide relevant expertise.

IHO Member States are active in the 15 Regional Hydrographic Commissions (RHCs) that cover the globe. The RHCs meet at regular intervals to discuss any hydrographic and chart production problems, plan joint survey operations, and organise schemes for medium and large scale International Chart coverage in their regions. The RHCs are also central to the co-ordination of hydrographic capacity building.

The IHO has a Memoranda of Understanding in place with the Port Management Association of Western and Central Africa (PMAWCA), the Secretariat of the Pacific Community (SPC), the Pan American Institute of Geography and History (PAIGH) and The Association of Caribbean States (ACS) and has concluded a Memoranda of Understanding with the European Commission in April this year. The aim of all these agreements is to set common grounds for co-operation to develop and improve hydrographic capabilities around the world. A Memorandum of Understanding is also in place with the International Standardisation Organisation (ISO). This MoU aims at mutual development and recognition of each other’s standards.

The close co-operation of the IHO with other international organisations and maritime stakeholders is a major contributor to safety at sea as well as the protection of the marine environment. It also provides a significant contribution to the better development and management of the resources of the world’s seas and oceans.