

**Visit to General Authority for Survey and Geospatial Information (GEOSA)
Riyadh, Kingdom of Saudi Arabia – 25 November 2024**
**10th Meeting of ROPME Sea Area Hydrographic Commission (RSAHC-10)
Jeddah, Kingdom of Saudi Arabia – 26-28 November 2024**

Contribution to the IHO Work Programme 2024

Task 3.2.1.10

RSAHC - ROPME Sea Area Hydrographic Commission

High level summary

- The Visit to the President of GEOSA provided a unique opportunity to strengthen the ties between the IHO and the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia - KSA and discuss issues in the field of geospatial data management and the implementation of the S-100 Standard. GEOSA intends to cooperate with the IHO and support - through a Capacity Building plan - the transition to the S-100 and a broad sharing of geospatial data in line with the 9 pathways of the UNGGIM-IGIF. At the end of the meeting, it was decided that the IHO will propose - in collaboration with the Directorate of Hydrography of GEOSA - a draft Agreement with an attached Capacity Building plan and its budgetary quantification to the President of GEOSA for evaluation and approval in 2025.
- National reports presented by the RSAHC's Members showed internal difficulties in dealing with the S-100 implementation and the need for regular support – from 2025 onwards – in courses on S-57 to S-101 conversion and activities on the production of the other S-100 products belonging to Phase 1 / Route Monitoring. The Sultanate of Oman was nominated S-100 coordinator for the RSA region, with the task to develop the implementation S-100 roadmap for the RSAHC to meet the 2026 IMO target (S-100 ECDIS) and share the regional roadmap with WENDWG at the next WENDWG meeting in February 2025.
- Particular attention was paid to the surveys of the waters under national jurisdictions, with the aim to update the C-55 publication and accomplish under the obligations of the SOLAS convention on safety of navigation.
- The need to improve the gender balance in the IHO, in the RSA region and within the RSA regional HOs.
- The RSA members nominated the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia as MSDI Ambassador for the RSA region, recognizing the KSA leadership in geospatial data management, in the field of hydrographic marine survey to support the safety of marine navigation.
- The RSA members decided to meet intersessionally in between two face-to-face meetings scheduled every two years, to reduce the lack of communications amongst the RSA members and better prepare the transition towards the S-100 standard. The RSAHC Chair will issue a Circular Letter to receive feedback from the RSA Member States and decide on the form of the intersessional meeting (face-to-face or remote).
- The most important moments of the RSAHC10 meeting and the main achievements were the subject of a long and comprehensive report on the KSA national television network "Alekhbariyatv" (see the link:
<https://x.com/alekhbariyatv/status/1862320742953529748?s=48&t=hs-ZxvnyZ5pxCRpHO15Vdw>).

Details:

On 25th November in Riyadh, Kingdom of Saudi Arabia, following an invitation from the Director General Hydrography, Mr Saud Hamoud Al-Ruways, IHO Director Luigi Sinapi paid a visit to the President of GEOSA - Eng. Mohammed bin Yahya Al Sayel. The results of the meeting were posted on the official website of GEOSA at the following link <https://t.co/s54DiyahSV> and on social media.



IHO Director and President of GEOSA, Riyadh, Kingdom of Saudi Arabia, 25 November 2024

Discussions between the IHO Director and the President of GEOSA were focused on the following topics:

- Implementation of UNGGIM – IGIF 9 pathways
- Importance of data sharing
- Need to invest in Hydrography
- Transition from S-57 to S-100 and need to implement a plan for the transition to the new S-100 products
- Importance of strengthening the ties between IHO and Kingdom of Saudi-Arabia via the General Authority for Survey and Geospatial Information (GEOSA)
- Intention of GEOSA to contribute to raise awareness on Hydrography, support the transition to S-100 through a Capacity Building plan in favour of the International Hydrographic Community.

The 10th Meeting of ROPME Sea Area Hydrographic Commission – RSAHC10 took place at the Ritz Carlton Hotel, Jeddah, Kingdom of Saudi Arabia, from 26 to 28 November. 40 attendees from 10 IHO Member States (Iraq, IR of Iran, Oman, Pakistan, Qatar, Saudi Arabia, United Arab Emirates, France, United Kingdom and United States of America) and representatives from IALA, Seabed2030 and Industry participated in the meeting, whilst the General Manager of IC-ENC participated from remote. The IHO Secretariat was represented by Director Luigi Sinapi.

The Chair opened the RSAHC10 meeting on behalf of the President of GEOSA, commenting on the importance of the need to improve safety of navigation in the area. He also affirmed the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia's role in international and regional cooperation with relevant organisations, bodies, centres and authorities in order to make KSA waters a safe environment in accordance with the best international practices.

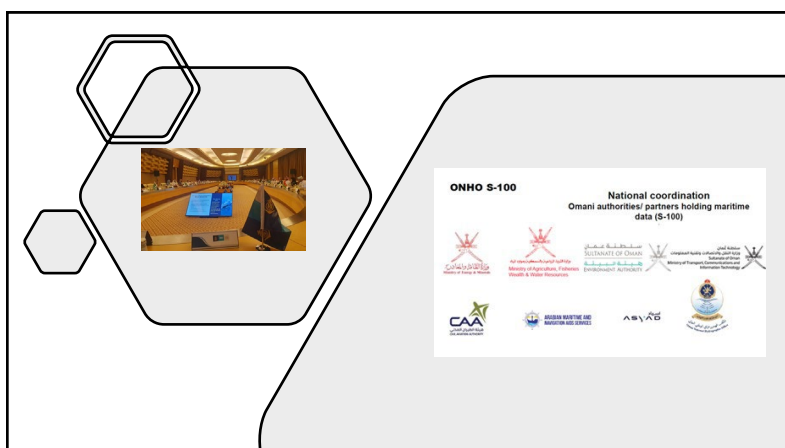
IHO Director Sinapi highlighted the approach of a new era for *e-navigation*, with the implementation of the first lot of S-100 products which will become operational in 2025 with their arrival on the market from the 1st January 2026 to be used in ECDIS-100, the need for more investment in the IHO Capacity Building Work Programme, with particular focus on the S-100 activities requested by the Regional Hydrographic Commissions. The importance of an active participation of the IHO in global initiatives in favour of the oceans, such as the UNOC which will take place in 2025 in France and Monaco, was also highlighted.

The following main topics were discussed alongside the presentation of the National reports:

- Participation in the Council from the RHCs and assignment of Council seats to the RSAHC
- Opportunity to conduct separate technical IHO and IALA visits to the I.R. of Iran
- Importance to have an MSDI Ambassador in the Region, to boost the creation of MSDIs at national and regional levels, with particular focus on S-100 and its derived products
- Need for more support and investments on Capacity Building to facilitate the transition from S-57 to S-100 and the implementation of S-100 products
- Caspian Sea: international rules and standards for safety of navigation and hydrography need to be customized to the Caspian Sea countries needs and regulations
- Iraq is facing internal challenges to sign the RSAHC Statutes to become a full member of RSAHC
- Importance of coastal areas surveys and update of IHO C-55 Publication
- Increased participation in national, regional and international fora/meetings in Hydrography
- Protection of the marine environment and sustainable development in the RSA region, such as the one described by the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia aiming for the creation of a department in charge for either Hydrography and Hydrology
- France offered to test the IntoGIS III for the RSAHC, similarly to what it is doing for other RHCs
- The United Kingdom, as Primary Charting Authority (PCA) of many RSA States, has revised its risk-based prioritisation of the PCA portfolio countries in the region
- National initiatives to reduce the impact of paper charts production on the HOs, such as the initiative of NGA to plan to cancel all traditional paper charts and their US Notice to Mariners by January 2026, and shift paper chart production to a smaller suit, created via the Certified Printed Electronic Navigational Charts (CPENC).

Pakistan, as NAVAREA IX coordinator, confirmed that in NAVAREA IX all the navigational and coastal warnings are broadcasted through INMARSAT and IRIDIUM SafetyCast systems, as Iridium SafetyCast service became SOLAS carriage compliant from 1 January 2020. Particular emphasis was given to Capacity Building and MSI courses to be conducted in the NAVAREA IX to involve also currently inactive members in the Region.

Regional CB initiatives conducted, underway and planned, were described highlighting the importance of the benefits of the inter-regional coordination, the importance of investing in S-100 implementation, MSI courses and on-line courses. The internal regional challenges were also highlighted, with the request to the RSAHC Member States to be more cooperative and participate more actively in the regional CB programme's definition. The opportunities offered by the two RENCs (1 CB activity on the S-57 to S-101 conversion funded by IC-ENC in favour of RSAHC and NIOHC, via the "Activity fund" established from a portion of national ENC revenues for other projects, including the support to the IHO CB initiatives on S-100 implementation, and the on-line courses provided by PRIMAR) and the inter-regional coordination with NIOHC for the conduct of joint CB activities were underlined. Kingdom of Saudi Arabia offered MSDI opportunities to the RSAHC members.



Oman S-100 Implementation plan

The Sultanate of Oman presented their national S-100 Implementation Plan, highlighting the implementation challenges including the lack of time, the need to support the production of both S-57 and paper charts, and the production systems, resources and capabilities. The Sultanate of Oman was nominated as S-100

Services Coordinator for the RSA region with the consensus of all the RSAHC members, closing the RSAHC9 Action 17 opened 2 years ago at RSAHC9 meeting. The new S-100 coordinator will work closely with the WENDWG in accordance with the next “*Guidelines for the Coordination and Management of the Development of S-100 Electronic Navigational Data Services (other than S-101 ENC)s*” currently under drafting by the WENDWG, and for meeting the 2026 IMO target (S-100 ECDIS).

An MSDI presentation was delivered by UKHO, with specific focus on the joint activities conducted by the MSDIWG and the UNGGIM-MGI for the implementation of the UNGGIM-IGIF 9 pathways, the recent results of the 2024 MSDIWG, the regional MSDI initiatives and the future developments related to the connection between MSDI and S-100 with specific focus on S-122 – Marine Protected Areas, the Digital Twins for Marine Spatial Data, the collaboration and engagement with stakeholders and the emerging technological trends, as well as the many similarities between MSDI and the technical committee of the IHO (HSSC). The Kingdom of Saudi Arabia was nominated MSDI Ambassador for the RSAHC, closing the RSAHC9 Action 16 opened 2 years ago at RSAHC9 meeting.

The INT Charts and ENC coverage in the RSA region were presented by the INT Chart – ENC regional coordinator (I.R. of Iran). Thanks to the RENCs assessments, the overlaps in the region were presented, highlighting that the risks for navigation are assessed low to medium. Bilateral cooperation and more communication between the ENC producers to eliminate overlaps was encouraged in accordance with the *WEND principles* and *IHO Resolution 1/2018 - Elimination of overlapping enc data in areas of demonstrable risk to the safety of navigation*.

Industry presentations on the state-of-the-art technology, geo-data and education, on Seabed2030 project and the recently issued “*Use Cases on why Mapping the Oceans is important*” from the Director of Seabed2030, UKHO on the new Admiralty Visual Ports tool, and IALA representative on the new intergovernmental status of IALA, the World-Wide Academy and the obligations related to Marine Aids to Navigation, completed the agenda of the conference.

The RSAHC Chair will send a Circular Letter requesting nominations for the regional CSB/GEBCO/Seabed2030 for the RSA Region. The I.R. of Iran was elected RSAHC Vice-Chair. In 2025 the I.R. of Iran will take over from Saudi Arabia as RSAHC Chair.

Photo



10th ROPME Sea Area Hydrographic Commission – RSAHC10 participants – Jeddah, Kingdom of Saudi Arabia

Upcoming meetings:

The opportunity of an intersessional meeting was tentatively discussed to be held in 2025 (date and venue TBD), pending on the decision of the RSA members on the most appropriate form (remote or face-to-face) in response to the Circular Letter that will be issued by the RSAHC Chair soon after the 10th meeting.