

Item 5 of the provisional agenda

Reports of the liaison officers and international organizations

Report by the International Hydrographic Organization *

United Nations Group of Experts on Geographical Names (UNGEGN)
26th Session, Vienna, Austria, 2-6 May 2011

Report by the International Hydrographic Organization

As far as geographical naming is concerned, the IHO is involved in the following two activities, for which status reports are provided:

I. Undersea Feature Naming

The IHO participates, jointly with the Intergovernmental Oceanographic Commission (of UNESCO), in the work of the Sub-Committee on Undersea Feature Names (SCUFN) of GEBCO¹. Reports of SCUFN meetings, as well as any new editions of products issued under SCUFN responsibility, are provided to UNGEGN Chairperson/Secretary on a regular basis, in accordance with SCUFN terms of reference, which include “*Maintain close liaison with the UN Group of Experts on Geographical Names, the focal point of which shall be invited to attend meetings of the Sub-Committee, and with international or national authorities concerned with the naming of undersea features*”. SCUFN-related documents are also available from the GEBCO website (www.gebco.net) and the IHO website (www.iho.int). SCUFN is currently chaired by Dr. Hans Werner SCHENKE, Alfred Wegener Institute for Polar and Marine Research (AWI), Germany, and comprises 12 members representing IHO and IOC. The Sub-Committee has its secretariat at the International Hydrographic Bureau (IHB) in Monaco. It meets once a year. Since the 25th UNGEGN session in May 2009, SCUFN held two meetings:

1. The 22nd meeting of SCUFN took place in Brest, France, on 22-25 September 2009 and was hosted by the French Navy Hydrographic and Oceanographic Office (SHOM: Service Hydrographique et Océanographique de la Marine). The meeting was chaired by Dr SCHENKE and attended by 25 participants from Brazil, China, France, Germany, India, Japan, Rep of Korea, New Zealand, Norway, Russia, USA and IHB, including nine of the 12 SCUFN members. The meeting welcomed Cdr. Ana Angelica ALBERONI (Brazil) and Dr. Vaughan STAGPOOLE (New Zealand), as new members. Ms. Lisa TAYLOR (USA) was unanimously elected Vice-Chair of SCUFN.

Following the publication in 2008 of IHO-IOC B-6: “Standardization of Undersea Feature Names” as an English / French version, the following language versions were completed and published in 2009: English / Korean, English / Japanese and English / Russian.

The meeting considered 41 name proposals from Brazil, Ecuador, Japan, Rep of Korea and Russia, and eventually accepted 30 new names for inclusion in the GEBCO Gazetteer of Undersea Feature Names, IHO-IOC publication B-8, which is maintained at the IHB.

A draft geospatially enabled database and Web-based interface for the GEBCO Gazetteer, developed at the IHO Data Centre for Digital Bathymetry (DCDB) – co-located with the US National Geophysical Data Center (NGDC) at Boulder, Colorado - in collaboration with the British Oceanographic Data Centre (BODC), was demonstrated at the meeting.

2. The 23rd meeting of SCUFN took place in Lima, Peru, on 11-14 September 2010 and was hosted by the Peruvian Navy Hydrographic Office (DHN: Dirección de Hidrografía y Navegación). The meeting was chaired by Dr SCHENKE and attended by 28 participants from Argentina, Brazil, China, Germany, India, Italy, Japan, Rep of Korea, New Zealand, Pakistan, Peru, Russia, USA and IHB, including nine of the 12 SCUFN members.

An English / Spanish version of IHO-IOC B-6 was published in 2010. The Chinese observers at the meeting offered to prepare an English/Chinese version.

¹ General Bathymetric Chart of the Oceans, a joint IHO-IOC project

The meeting considered 51 name proposals from Brazil, Germany, Japan, Rep of Korea, Peru, Russia and UK and eventually accepted 41 new names for inclusion in the IHO-IOC B-8 GEBCO Gazetteer.

Discussion was held on the appropriateness of including generic terms of genetic origin as part of the terminology section of B-6. The sub-committee eventually adopted the following two new generic terms, with their respective definitions: Mud Volcano and Rift.

A detailed review of the Gazetteer “Reserve Section”, containing all pending names, was conducted on the basis of new information received at the IHB, as SCUFN Secretariat. As a result, the sub-committee accepted the transfer of a number of those names to the official GEBCO Gazetteer and the deletion from the Reserve Section of several other names.

3. The 24th meeting of SCUFN has been planned on 12-16 September 2011 in Beijing, China, at the kind invitation of the Chinese National Marine Data & Information Service (NMDIS).

II. Limits of Oceans and Seas

The IHO has produced Publication S-23 “Limits of Oceans and Seas”, for the purpose of consistent nautical cartography and in the interest of safety of navigation at sea. The edition in force is still the 3rd edition, dated 1953, which is available from the IHO website (www.iho.int). A 4th edition of the publication has been under preparation for several years.

Noting that the update of this important publication was long overdue and that a new edition was needed as soon as possible, the IHO Member States agreed, in 2009, to set up a *Working Group on the Revision of IHO Publication S-23 “Limits of Oceans and Seas”* (S-23 WG). Since the 25th UNGEGN session in May 2009, S-23 WG held two meetings:

1. The 1st meeting of S-23 WG took place in Monaco on 1 June 2009, immediately before the 4th IHO Extraordinary International Hydrographic Conference. Vice Admiral Alexandros MARATOS, IHB President, was elected Chairperson of the WG and conducted the meeting. Rear Admiral Christian ANDREASEN (USA) was elected Vice-Chairperson and Mr. Michel HUET (IHB) was elected Secretary. On this occasion, terms of reference for the WG were agreed, as well as “Ways of Progressing the Work of the S-23 WG” which included IHB circulating to WG members a list of areas of possible concern.

From the comments received on the list above, three “areas of concern” were eventually agreed by the WG, as follows:

- a. Whether Malacca and Singapore Straits should be located in the Indian Ocean or be part of the South China Sea and Eastern Archipelagic Seas;
- b. Amendments proposed by China in South China Sea, East China Sea, Yellow Sea and Bo Hai; and
- c. Naming the sea area between the Korean Peninsula and the Japanese Archipelago.

2. The 2nd meeting of S-23 WG took place in Singapore on 5-7 July 2010 and was hosted by the Hydrographic Department of the Maritime and Port Authority (MPA) of Singapore. The meeting was chaired by VAdm MARATOS and attended by 42 participants from Australia, China, France, Indonesia, Korea (Dem. P. Rep. of), Korea (Rep of), Japan, Morocco, Nigeria, Oman, Singapore, UK and USA.

Discussions took place on the three areas of concern and agreement could be reached on the Malacca and Singapore Straits issue, as well as on a number of issues raised by China in South China Sea and East China Sea. Regarding the third area of concern, proposals were made by Australia, Japan and Rep. of Korea to progress this issue, for examination by the S-23 WG.

Comments expressed by WG members on these proposals led to the Chair Group (Chair, Vice Chair and Secretary) suggesting “a way forward” for naming the sea area between the Korean Peninsula and the Japanese Archipelago. Encouraging support for the proposed way forward has been expressed by WG members, although without consensus. The matter is still under consideration by the WG (April 2011).

It is planned that a report summarizing the activities and findings of the WG be submitted to IHO Member States around mid-2011. Depending on MS’ views, a draft new edition of S-23 could then be prepared at the IHB, for subsequent MS’ approval.

III. The IHO will continue cooperating with the UNGEGN and support actions needed that will enhance safety at sea and protection of the marine environment.