Application of UN Guidelines on Gender-inclusive Language

Proposal for Amendments to IHO Resolution 1/2020:

GENDER-INCLUSIVE LANGUAGE TO BE USED
IN IHO DOCUMENTS AND COMMUNICATIONS

Submitted by:	Secretary-General
Executive Summary:	The proposed resolution is designed to meet the intentions of the second part of Decision A2/07 to apply the UN Guidelines for Gender-inclusive Language for IHO documents. Its application is so far limited to English versions of IHO documents and communications only. A revised version (amendment) to the existing IHO Resolution 1/2020 adopted at A-2, is proposed.
Related document:	IHO Basic Documents M-1 and M-3 – potentially all other IHO documents, Committees and Working Groups TORs, and communications

References

A. IHO Publication P-6 Proceedings of the 2nd session of the IHO Assembly 16-18 November 2020

B. Update on the implementation of Decision A2/07 Gender-inclusivity Doc: C5-7.1A

C. 5th Meeting of the IHO Council IHO C-5 – *Summary Report*

D. IHO Publication M-1 Basic Documents of the International Hydrographic Organization Edition 2.1.1 - Updated October 2020

E. IHO Publication M-3 (April 2022)
    Resolutions of the International Hydrographic Organization

Annex A   Proposed Revised version (Amendments to) of IHO Resolution 1/2020: GENDER-INCLUSIVE LANGUAGE TO BE USED IN IHO DOCUMENTS AND COMMUNICATIONS

Annex B   C6_2022_7.1A_Annex_B_M-1_EN_Draft_v2.1.2 - Test English gender neutral version of IHO Publication M-1 (Draft Edition 2.1.2, 2023) Basic Documents of the International Hydrographic Organization (red line version)

Introduction/Background

1.   The 2nd Assembly tasked the Secretary-General in the second part of Decision A2/07 (Reference A refers):
   a.   to conduct a comprehensive review of the IHO Basic Documents and Resolutions, adopting the UN Guidelines on Gender-inclusive Language, and to provide draft revisions of IHO Publications M-1 and M-3 for the consideration of the Assembly at the next ordinary session (A-3), and
   b.   to monitor the IHO's progress towards the implementation of the UN Guidelines on Gender-inclusive Language to all IHO documentation and communications and report to the Assembly at the next ordinary session (A-3).

2.   Based on the Secretary-General´s report on the subject to C-5 (Reference B refers), the Council agreed that to the greatest extent possible, the updating of gender references in existing IHO documents will take place in conjunction with other edits and revisions which have been received as proposals from IHO bodies. That is, there will be no systematic updating of all IHO documents for the single purpose of addressing gender language issues.

3.   The Council also agreed that guiding principles on gender-inclusive language, once approved, will apply to all new IHO documents and communications.

Analysis/Discussion

4.   Based on this agreement reached by the C-5 the Secretary-General with assistance from Canada evaluated the UN Guidelines on gender-inclusive language for the English language - being the only available for IHO´s two working languages English and French - and cleaned those relevant to the IHO to use as guiding principles. This joint approach resulted into a proposed revised version (amendments to) of the IHO Resolution 1/2020 on gender-inclusive language adopted at A-2 (Annex A).

Conclusions

5.   In order to verify the suitability of the recommendations made by the presented revised version of the IHO Resolution and the prospective editorial work resulting from for IHO Basic Documents, the Secretariat applied the new guiding principles to the English editions of M-1 (Annex B) and M-3. The text of the IHO Convention and other historic documents included in M-1 were excluded from any modification for formal reasons. For M-3, it appears that there is only one correction to be made for IHO Resolution 2/2004. In its paragraph 2, "*he*" will be replaced by "*they*" at the first opportunity when the next update of M-3 is published (likely prior to A-3).

6.   It turned out that the application of the proposed guiding principles for the English editions on those two documents resulted in a few requirements for modifications only, does not decrease the overall readability and does not lead to possible ambiguities in terms of understanding of the content.

Recommendations

7.   As pointed out in the main body text of the proposed new resolution, the referenced UN Guidelines are currently available in English only. Relevant guidance for French being an equal working language of IHO, will be taken from the applying official UN guidelines once they become available for French language.

8.   Through this proposed amendment to the IHO Resolution 1/2020, the IHO Secretariat suggests implicitly that IHO Committees and Working Groups should update their Terms of

Reference and Rules of Procedure as appropriate, at the earliest possible opportunity but preferably, in conjunction with other content editing or revision.

Justification and Impacts

9.   The application process of the proposed revised version of the IHO Resolution 1/2020 will become part of the regular drafting and revision process of all IHO documents and communication and will apply additional workload to authors and proof readers. The translation process into French, as the other official IHO working language, will be affected as well since the text will grammatically slightly deviate from the English.

Action Required of the Council

The Council is invited to:

- **-** Take note of the proposed amendment to IHO Resolution 1/2020, the test applications to M-1 and M-3 and the additional workload in the creation process of IHO documents and communications.
- **-** **Endorse** the proposed amendment to IHO Resolution 1/2020 together with the edited versions of M-1 and M-3 and submit to A-3 these two elements for subsequent approval.

Annex A

Proposed Amendment to IHO Resolution 1/2020

TITLE	Reference	Last amendment	Reference from 1st Edition
GENDER-INCLUSIVE LANGUAGE TO BE USED IN IHO DOCUMENTS AND COMMUNICATIONS	**1/2020 as amended**	IHO A-3	IHO A-2

Current version of IHO Resolution 1/2020 in force

1   Given that language plays an important role in shaping cultural and social attitudes, it is resolved that the Secretariat and all IHO organs must ensure that the language used in IHO documents and communications issued or amended will be gender inclusive as per the UN Guidelines on Gender-inclusive Language in both official languages English and French. For the case that Spanish translations are provided by the Secretariat the above guidelines will apply too.

2   Documents produced prior to the approval of this resolution will be updated at the earliest possible opportunity and, preferably, in conjunction with other content editing or revision.

New proposed amended version of IHO Resolution 1/2020

INTRODUCTION

1. Given that language plays an important role in shaping cultural and social attitudes and IHO's clear commitment to gender equity, it is resolved that the Secretariat of the International Hydrographic Organization (IHO) and the organs of the IHO must ensure that the language used in IHO documents and communications issued or amended after the 3rd Session of the IHO Assembly will be gender inclusive as per the United Nations (UN) Guidelines on Gender-inclusive Language (https://www.un.org/en/gender-inclusive-language/).

2.   Documents produced prior to the approval of this resolution will be updated at the earliest possible opportunity and, preferably, in conjunction with other content editing or revision.

3.   The guidelines and the related resource materials (also known as the 'Toolbox') were developed to support gender equality in multilingual contexts as part of the UN System-wide Strategy on Gender Parity.

4.   It is noted on the relevant UN communication source that these guidelines may be "updated and revised to reflect feedback, suggestions and changes in the use of language". It is important for the IHO to remain aware of that these guidelines will continue to evolve.

5.   The referenced UN Guidelines are currently limited to English. Relevant guidance for French being an equal working language of IHO, will be taken from the applying official UN guidelines once they become available for French language. .

IHO IMPLEMENTATION OF THE UN GUIDELINES FOR GENDER-INCLUSIVE LANGUAGE

6.   IHO documents, Committees and Working Groups Terms of Reference and Rules of Procedures, produced prior to the approval of this resolution will be updated at the earliest possible opportunity and, preferably, in conjunction with other content editing or revision.

7.   The approval of documents amended solely to address gender language issues is delegated to the IHO Council by the IHO Assembly.

8.   Documents amended for any other reason will follow the approval process that is appropriate for that particular document.

UN GUIDELINES FOR GENDER-INCLUSIVE LANGUAGE IN ENGLISH

9.   The current UN Guidelines for gender-inclusive language in English can be found at:

[UNITED NATIONS Gender-inclusive language - Guidelines](#)

Annex A of this Resolution reproduces these Guidelines and uses annotations to highlight, clarify, or expand upon some elements of the Guidelines that may be more relevant to the IHO. Because of its specific nature for English, this Annex A will be omitted for the French and Spanish versions of this Resolution.

ADDITIONAL RESOURCES TO SUPPORT THE PRACTICAL APPLICATION OF THE GUIDELINES

The UN Guidelines for using gender-inclusive language in English are supported by training materials, activities, and resources which can be found at:

[UNITED NATIONS Gender-inclusive language -Toolbox](#)

[*End of IHO Resolution 1/2020 as amended*]

ANNEX A to the IHO Resolution 1/2020 as amended

UN GUIDELINES FOR GENDER-INCLUSIVE LANGUAGE IN ENGLISH – ANNOTATED BEST PRACTICES AND STRATEGIES FOR THE IHO

NOTES

1. The complete UN guidelines for gender-inclusive language in English can be found at:

[UNITED NATIONS Gender-inclusive language - Guidelines](#)

2. The UN Guidelines are copied below for easy reference. As previously noted, however, the original guidelines may be subject to change.

3. Some annotations to the text have been made to emphasize or contextualize certain points for the IHO. *These annotations will be in italics.*

GUIDELINES FOR GENDER-INCLUSIVE LANGUAGE IN ENGLISH.

For this Annex, 'United Nations staff' should be read as, 'the IHO', which is taken to mean the IHO Secretariat and the organs of the IHO.

These *Guidelines* include a number of strategies to help United Nations staff use gender-inclusive language. They may be applied to any type of communication, whether it is oral or written, formal or informal, or addressed to an internal or external audience.

When deciding what strategies to use, United Nations staff should:

- Take into account the type of text/oral communication, the context, the audience and the purpose of the communication;
- Ensure that the text is readable and the text/oral communication clear, fluid and concise;
- Seek to combine different strategies throughout the text/oral communication.

Gender in English

In English, there is a difference between "grammatical gender", "gender as a social construct" (which refers to the roles, behaviors, activities and attributes that a given society at a certain time considers appropriate for men or women) and "sex" as a biological characteristic of living beings.

English has very few gender markers: **the pronouns and possessives** (*he, she, her* and *his*); and **some nouns and forms of address**. Most English nouns do not have grammatical gender forms (*teacher, president*), whereas a few nouns are specifically masculine or feminine (*actor/actress, waiter/waitress*). Some nouns that once ended in *–man* now have neutral equivalents that are used to include both genders (*police officer* for *policeman/policewoman, spokesperson* for *spokesman, chair/chairperson* for *chairman*).

A challenge for gender-inclusive communication in English is the use of the masculine form by default. For example, "*Every Permanent Representative must submit **his** credentials to Protocol.*"

Best practices/strategies

A number of strategies can be applied, when speaking or writing in English, to be more gender-inclusive:

1. Use non-discriminatory language.

1.1 Forms of address

When referring to or addressing specific individuals, use forms of address and pronouns that are consistent with their gender identity.

It is important not to assume the gender of a person nor the pronoun they prefer.

For United Nations staff members, you may check the intranet or the organizational or staff directory. If the staff member appears as "Ms.", that is the form of address that should be used for her, and female pronouns are appropriate. Alternatively, and if the situation permits, you may ask the persons you are addressing or writing about what pronoun and form of address should be used for them.

In all cases, the wishes of the individual concerning their choice of title and pronouns must be respected.

Note for United Nations staff members who draft texts to be translated: If you are the author of a text that is going to be translated, and your text is referring to a specific person, please let translators know what the gender of that person is so they can use appropriate language in their translations. This is crucial for languages such as Arabic, French, Russian and Spanish.

There should also be consistency in the way women and men are referred to: if one of them is addressed by their name, last name, courtesy title, or profession, the other one should be as well.

Less inclusive:	More inclusive:
"Professor Smith (surname and title for a man) and Madeline (first name for a woman) will attend the luncheon."	"Professor Smith and Professor Jones will attend the luncheon (surname and title for both)."

Ms. or Mrs.?

Care should be taken to use the form of address preferred by each individual. However, when that preference is not known, precedence is given to Ms. over Mrs., as the former is more inclusive and can refer to any woman, regardless of marital status

1.2 Avoid gender-biased expressions or expressions that reinforce gender stereotypes

Discriminatory examples:

- "She throws/runs/fights like a girl."
- "In a manly way."
- "Oh, that's women's work."
- "Thank you to the ladies for making the room more beautiful."
- "Men just don't understand."

Less inclusive:	More inclusive:

"Guests are cordially invited to attend with their wives."	"Guests are cordially invited to attend with their partners."
"Fathers babysit their children."	"Fathers care for their children."

How do I know if I am using discriminatory language?

Reverse the gender: Would reversing the designation or the term from masculine to feminine or vice versa change the meaning or emphasis of the sentence? Would it make the sentence sound odd?

Examples:

- "Women should not seek out leadership positions."
- "Men cannot do two things at the same time."

2. Make gender visible when it is relevant for communication

In general, IHO should avoid the use of these strategies to 'make gender visible' in English as they may inadvertently exclude people who do not refer to themselves using either male or female pronouns and/or do not identify as male or female.

2.1 Using feminine and masculine pronouns

"Pairing" is the use of both feminine and masculine forms (he or she; her or his). It is a strategy that may be used when the author/speaker wants to explicitly make both women and men visible. **It is advisable not to overuse this strategy in English**, however, as it may be distracting to the reader, in particular in narrative texts. It may also create inconsistencies or render the text less accurate — for example, in legal texts.

The feminine and masculine forms can be alternated throughout the text. This strategy should be used with caution, however, in particular when its use may affect the meaning of the text, cause confusion or be distracting to the reader. It may be more appropriate to alternate masculine and feminine forms by paragraph or section, rather than by sentence or phrase.

Example: "When a staff member accepts an offer of employment, **he or she** must be able to assume that the offer is duly authorized. To qualify for payment of the mobility incentive, **she or he** must have five years' prior continuous service on a fixed-term or continuing appointment."

2.2 Using two different words

In cases in which highlighting gender would make the sentence more inclusive, two separate words can be used. This strategy should be used only when popular beliefs or preconceptions may obscure the presence or action of either gender.

Examples:

- "Boys and girls should attend the first cooking class with their parents."
- "All of the soldiers, both men and women, responded negatively to question 5 in the survey on gender inclusivity."

3. Do not make gender visible when it is not relevant for communication

3.1 Use gender-neutral words

Less inclusive:	More inclusive:
"Mankind"	"Humankind"; "humanity"; "human race"
"Plans to outsource some 19 services have not proceeded at the anticipated pace, as there are significant **manpower** shortages."	"Plans to outsource some 19 services have not proceeded at the anticipated pace, as there are significant **staffing** shortages."
"Man-made"	"Artificial"; "human-caused"

3.2 Using plural pronouns/adjectives

In informal writing, such as emails, plural pronouns may be used as a shortcut to ensure gender inclusiveness. Such strategies are not recommended in formal writing.

Example: "Before submitting your document, send it to the focal point for **their** review; **they** will return it to you with comments."

3.3 Use the pronoun one

Less inclusive:	More inclusive:
"A staff member in Antarctica earns less than **he** would in New York."	"A staff member in Antarctica earns less than **one** in New York."

3.4 Use the relative pronoun who

Less inclusive:	More inclusive:
"If a complainant is not satisfied with the board's decision, **he** can ask for a rehearing."	"A complainant **who** is not satisfied with the board's decision can ask for a rehearing."

3.5 Use a plural antecedent

When referring to generic subjects, plural antecedents may be used in order to avoid gendered pronouns.

Less inclusive:	More inclusive:
"A substitute judge must certify that **he** has familiarized **himself** with the record of the proceedings."	"Substitute judges must certify that **they** have familiarized **themselves** with the record of the proceedings."
"The External Auditor may proceed to such detailed examination and verification as he chooses of all financial records including those relating to	*"The External Auditor may proceed to such detailed examination and verification as they choose of all*

supplies and equipment". [IHO Resolution 2/2004 (2).]	*financial records including those relating to supplies and equipment".*
A Secretary-General or a Director elected at an ordinary session of the Assembly shall assume his/her duties on the following 1 September". [IHO General Regulations Art. 15.]	*A Secretary-General or a Director elected at an ordinary session of the Assembly shall assume their duties on the following 1 September".*

3.6 Omit the gendered word

Less inclusive:	More inclusive:
"Requests the Emergency Relief Coordinator to continue **his/her** efforts to strengthen the coordination of humanitarian assistance."	"Requests the Emergency Relief Coordinator to continue efforts to strengthen the coordination of humanitarian assistance."
"An external auditor shall be appointed by the Assembly; his/her term of appointment shall be for a period of three years, subject to Article 19 (b) below". [IHO Financial Regulations Art. 19(a).]	*"An external auditor shall be appointed by the Assembly; the term of appointment shall be for a period of three years, subject to Article 19 (b) below".*

3.7 Use the passive voice

The passive voice is not an appropriate option for all sentences in English, as employing the passive voice often changes the emphasis of the sentence. However, it does offer an option for avoiding gendered constructions.

Less inclusive:	More inclusive:
"The author of a communication must have direct and reliable evidence of the situation **he** is describing."	"The author of a communication must have direct and reliable evidence of the situation being described."

A checklist for gender-related revisions (adapted from The Writing Center – University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill)

Consider the following questions when reviewing or writing documents or communications:

1. Has "man" or "men" or words containing them been used to refer to people who may not be men?

2. Has "he," "him," "his," or "himself" been used to refer to people who may not be men?

3. If someone's sex or gender has been mentioned, was it necessary to do so?

4. Have any occupational (or other) stereotypes been used?

5. Has same kinds of information and descriptions been provided when writing about people of different genders?

[End of Annex A of the IHO Resolution 1/2020 as amended]