

Paper for Consideration by Council

Making IHO Events More Inclusive

Submitted by:	United Kingdom, New Zealand, Australia
Executive Summary:	
Related Documents:	A3 2023 G 06.14 EN SWPHC report to A-3 Decisions of the 3 rd Session of the IHO Assembly
Related Projects:	

Introduction / Background

1. At the 3rd IHO Assembly in May 2023 the South West Pacific Hydrographic Commission (SWPHC) made a request to the Assembly that resulted in Decision 21;

The Assembly tasked the Council to discuss the request from the SWPHC for the provision of mechanisms to ensure greater inclusion and participation of all Member States at IHO meetings, in particular the IHO Assembly and come up with solutions as soon as possible.

2. This paper seeks to present ideas on potential mechanisms that could improve participation to support the Council in progressing this task.

Analysis/Discussion

3. The IHO delivers its work programme through a broad variety of events and activities from the formality of Assembly to less formal activity of Project Teams. The Council and Committees (IRCC, HSSC) have been operating as in-person events in recent times. But a mix of in-person and hybrid events continue along with remote meetings for smaller sub-groups.
4. The COVID-19 pandemic forced the community to change how these activities are conducted and we used technology to keep working despite huge challenges. This brought with it benefits as technology evolved and allowed greater participation, diversity and inclusion which can support the development of colleagues and allow for more dynamic decision-making. However, the unique benefits of human interaction meant that it became more difficult to build the relationships that effective collaboration relies upon.
5. A number of IHO member states, who already struggle to secure resources in support of their hydrographic functions, may be less able to attend in-person meetings; allowing representatives to participate in hybrid events maximises the impact of those events while ensuring broad participation. Furthermore, many IHO member states are required to consider the environmental sustainability and carbon footprint of any business travel. By providing for hybrid options, we allow member states to make their own decisions on participation in line with their national or organisational requirements.
6. We have reached a stage where the value of face-to-face engagement is recognised by many in support of building trusting relationships and tackling difficult issues. However, technology allows us to engage a much broader group by extending to additional participants through remote connections. The UK and NZ consider that a mixed approach across the various bodies of IHO is necessary in order to effectively deliver our work.
7. The challenge we face therefore is finding the appropriate format for our activities whilst enabling an inclusive environment for all MS. Noting that of 98 member states 42 were not represented at A-3 Annex A of this paper seeks to provide some ideas for discussion and Annex B seeks to consider the risk posed by making such changes or not doing so. Building on the experience of the South West Pacific RHC, we may also give consideration to structuring meeting agendas and content in a way which

reflects ‘items for information’ – which lend themselves more to being broadcast online, versus items for discussion – which benefit more from face-to-face interaction.

Conclusions

8. It is important to ensure the widest possible contributions to the work of the IHO and operate in a way which reflects our desire to be more inclusive.

Recommendations

9. This paper recommends that each body of the IHO should consider and agree the format of its events and that this should be included as part of meeting agendas.
10. It is further recommended that a guideline on provision of “basic hybrid” meetings is developed to ensure hosts can support these events without excessive cost. A basic hybrid is considered to mean facilities where remote participants can follow discussions by hearing and seeing the content presented but without the extensive facilities such as additional screens, and audio-visual support to provide a fully immersive hybrid meeting.
11. We further recommend that for IHO Assembly the event should be made accessible so that proceedings can be observed remotely, and that MS may vote by postal ballot in elections of the Secretary-General and of Directors.

Justification and Impacts

In addition to the financial and environmental cost travel connections for some member states continue to pose a limiting factor to attending in person events. The discussion at A-3 is noted and this supports greater inclusion and participation of all Member states within IHO.

Impacts include the need for hosts to provide remote facilities. The development of a dedicated guideline on basic hybrid meetings is considered to mitigate this impact. For committees and subordinate working groups the impact is considered limited as many are already utilizing remote meetings. The impact for Assembly is more significant due to the changes proposed and further analysis of these impacts will be needed.

Action Required of Council

The Council is invited to:

- a. note and discuss this paper,
- b. Consider the potential changes detailed in Annex A

Annex A Summary of IHO Bodies and Event Formats

Event	Current Format	Potential Changes			
		Location	Benefits	Procedure	Benefits
Assembly	In-person event.	No change suggested.	Hosting by IHO Secretariat in Monaco allows IHO staff to support.	<p>Provide a remote video stream of selected sessions so that registered MS (and Observers for open sessions) can follow proceedings in real time and/or through recordings published after the event due to time zone challenges.</p> <p>Although electronic voting could be considered at this stage more work would be needed to understand the technical solutions and their practicality.</p> <p>For elections consider a cut off for nominations before the event to permit postal ballots held by an appropriate intermediary. 10 days is suggested based on Article 19 of the General Regulations.</p>	<p>Increased awareness. Potential attendees can build an understanding of how the Assembly is conducted prior to attending. Member States unable to attend in-person can participate to some extent.</p> <p>Greater participation and engagement in IHO decisions across Member States.</p>
Council	In-person meeting held at the IHO Secretariat.	Consider being hosted by Member State or alternated with IHO Secretariat.	Allows spread of geographic locations to be used.	Provide a remote video stream of selected sessions so that registered Member States can follow proceedings in real time and/or through recordings	Greater participation and engagement in IHO decisions across Member States. Also supports attendance by

				published after the event due to time zone challenges	wider Secretariat staff.
Committees (HSSC, IRCC)	In-person meetings	No suggested change. These events already rotate geographically.	N/A	Provide a remote video stream of selected sessions so that registered MS can follow proceedings in real time and/or through recordings published after the event due to time zone challenges. Permit provision of pre agreed briefs remotely.	Greater participation and engagement in IHO decisions across Member States.
Working Groups	Mix of in-person and hybrid events	No suggested change	N/A	Define a short guideline for basic hybrid meetings and encourage Working Groups to consider all formats for their meetings to maximise participation.	Participation is maximised whilst minimising the burden on hosts through the provision of a clear guideline.
Project Teams	Mix of in-person and hybrid/remote events	No suggested change	N/A	Working groups should decide the format of their meetings themselves.	Participation is maximised and the groups themselves can judge the appropriate format based on their composition and activities.

Note 1 - Regional Hydrographic Commissions are considered out of scope as these are not formally IHO organs and each has their own statutes.

Annex B - Risk Analysis

Risk	Impact	Potential Mitigations
Active participation is reduced in cases where member states rules do not allow travel when hybrid facilities are available	Workplan progress is slowed.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Guidelines for Chairs on best ways to facilitate hybrid meetings, including input from online attendees.
The cost and effort of providing hybrid facilities discourages hosts.	IHO events do not engage across a broad geographic footprint which is important for engagement and growing the IHO membership.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Develop a short guideline for basic hybrid meetings that hosts can follow. • Encourage working groups and other subordinate bodies to consider all formats based on their specific circumstances.
Reduced engagement in IHO from members states who are not able to travel.	IHO discussions do not include all perspectives, and this could lead to a reduction in IHO membership and reduced progress of the workplan.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Provide streaming of some events and a basic hybrid option for others. • Allow working groups and other subordinate bodies to decide the format based on their specific circumstances.