

Subject: Reflection topics for the SPRWG

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Dear all,

I propose to share some thoughts, and questions or requests (hereafter in **bold type**, answers or comments would be appreciated before the 3rd of April), which could be taken into account for the work we have before us.

They are inspired by your first comments, but are under my own responsibility. They may need more development, however at this stage, I just prefer to raise the issues, to see if you feel they are useful for our work and deserve closer review.

1. Stakeholders' views, how the strategic plan should include them

Stakeholders are mentioned in the current strategic plan (see strategic directions 1[1] and 3[2]) mainly as targets for IHO's advocacy on the importance of hydrography. A more "two-ways" approach could be envisaged, and I propose to consider is the way our organization is taking into account the expectations of bodies outside IHO. Of course, IHO's primary stakeholders are the IHO Member States; however, as the activities within the scope of IHO have an impact on those of many other stakeholders, including other international organisations, the question arises as to how we should include their subjects of concern. I see several ways:

- Collect what they may have already formally expressed. Examples include the recent IMO Strategic Plan, the IOC Medium-term Strategic Plan 2014-2021, or the IALA Strategic Vision 2014-2026 (documents will be made available on the SPRWG website). This type of document is useful for a clear understanding of the organization's objectives, but may lack detail regarding specific areas of the IHO.
- Gather, from the experience of our working group members, what we know about stakeholder expectations.
- Strengthen our understanding of their expectations with stakeholders: I feel that it is a necessary step, probably to be undertaken once we have made progress in our analysis.

Would you be willing to make contributions to the SPRWG on stakeholders' expectations?

I think that it is important that IHO posture as a player among the other international organizations involved in the oceans and marine data (see beneath §2). It will help to continue to gain visibility, which I believe is the key to "hydrographic awareness" (see beneath "Communication" §4).

Nevertheless, important stakeholder communities may not be fully represented by those IO. **Besides mariners (see below), with which other communities should we engage (oceanographers, public maritime authorities, etc.)?**

For mariners, we would probably agree that electronic navigation has changed the "supply chain" of nautical information/documentation to seafarers. This change inevitably changed the relationship between the national HOs and their clients (if only because there is an ECDIS or an ECS between the HO and the mariner), and the national HS have reconfigured the way they deal with seafarers according to their own strategy. I propose that we

investigate the impact this has on our organization. To start, I propose (suggested by contributors):

- **Should IHO focus more on how what it provides (for example, but not only, WEND) is used?**
- **What could be the “added value” of IHO in such a perspective?**

2. Data, and the posture of IHO

The “data” matter echoes concerns of member States, of business and of public organizations (e.g. the move from “process –centric” to “data-centric” organizations). Data are identified as a ground for improving public governance, and at the same time are seen as a “fuel” for businesses and economic growth. Technical challenges are not absent from this landscape (e.g. “big data” and the “flooding” of data from modern sensors). Moreover, confidence in data is a key issue for their users, be they public administration, citizens or businesses.

For a long time, the main ocean data base has been the content of nautical charts and of their companion documents (tide tables, etc.): hydrographic data was the ocean data. Nowadays, other international organizations or initiatives deal with data on the marine environment. Even the understanding of “hydrographic data” may differ, according to one’s background (fi “Hydrography” is, in English, understood as “hydrology” by most oceanographers). Furthermore, there is no general ocean data policy, making more complex the exchange of information on which much of the cooperation between IHO members is based.

The role of IHO in relation with other international organizations / initiatives leads to the question:

- **What should be the scope and the role (added value) of IHO in the field of marine data field?**

3. Speed of technology

The speed of technology, not unrelated to the previous topic, has an impact on our customers and our own processes. This double challenge has many consequences. To give just a few examples: hydrographic tools (e.g. GNSS and MBES) have simplified the art of hydrography and brought it within the reach of many, which opens up new possibilities and can “disrupt” the traditional economic models of national hydrographic offices; sensors provide ever-increasing amounts of data, posing new challenges for data processing; human-machine interfaces are constantly evolving, creating gaps between the general HMI standard and professional tools.

We may then wonder whether this speed of technology does not constitute a strong pressure on our organization: should the IHO go faster, make it simpler? These are well-known injunctions to our national organizations. Nevertheless, we must consider the specific rules of intergovernmental organization, and I think that it is important, before opening this trail, to have some reflections on “what for”. In other terms:

- **What would be the subjects / processes / circumstances etc. in which we believe that “faster, simpler” would have a beneficial impact on IHO’s activity?**

4. Communication

Communication has been highlighted by the Council as an important matter. From discussion with representatives from other organizations, I feel that there is a close connection with the “hydrographic awareness challenge”, pervasive in the current IHO strategy and work programme. We all know that communication efficiency is strongly linked, beyond the excellence of the cause it serves, to the relevance of the communication strategy to the goals pursued, and to the way in which it is implemented. The question stemming from this is:

- **whether we should consider communication as an auxiliary to the strategic plan or one of its main pillar?**

5. Scope of the strategic plan

Finally, another subject that I think we should have in mind, although perhaps a little premature, is the level of “operationality” that we think the strategic plan should have. This is much related to the effect we expect from a revised strategic plan, if any. To fix the ideas, here are some options (not exhaustive):

- a) Strategic directions (SD), without specific milestones, though associated with indicators to measure progress;
- b) Objectives contract, that could range from a) setting some target values (3 years? 6 years?) for the indicators mentioned indicators, to b) adding some identified goals implementing the desired progress along the SD. There are two issues, the first of which is to my view not too difficult to overcome:

- keep good articulation with the IHO Work Programme, the establishment of which is ruled by the Convention on the IHO;
- ensure consistency with the expected resources, those specific to IHO and those to which Member States

would be prepared to commit to achieve the goals.

There are of course other important matters that need of course careful consideration, such as capacity building. When they are in the main current focus of the IHO, I guess that the discussion will be more on the way of implementing related strategic directions than on the overall objective. Nevertheless, do not hesitate to comment on these subjects which are not mentioned in this mail.

Best regards,

BF

[1] *"1. Strengthen the role and effectiveness of the IHO": "engaging the various stakeholders ... in order to ensure a more inclusive approach to decision-making and the optimum use of high fidelity data"*

[2] *"3. Raise global awareness of the importance of hydrography": "bringing the value and importance of hydrography ... to the attention of relevant ... stakeholders ..."*