

**Twenty-eight session
New York, 28 April – 2 May 2014**

Item 5 of the Provisional Agenda

Reports of the liaison officers and international organizations

Report by the International Hydrographic Organization *

* Prepared by Michel HUET, International Hydrographic Organization

28th Session of the UN Group of Experts on Geographical Names (UNGEGN)
New York, USA, 28 April – 2 May 2014

Report by the International Hydrographic Organization

This is a brief report on the activities of the IHO in naming sea features provided to the UN Conference on the Standardization of Geographical Names. 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 available from the GEBCO website (www.gebco.net) and the IHO website (www.iho.int). SCUFN is 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 10th UNCISG conference and the 27th session of UNGEGN in August 2012, SCUFN held the following meetings:

1. The 25th meeting of SCUFN took place in Wellington, New Zealand, on 23-27 October 2012 and was jointly hosted and organized by Land Information New Zealand (LINZ) and GNS Sciences. The meeting was chaired by Dr SCHENKE and attended by 23 participants, including ten of the 12 SCUFN members (from Argentina, Brazil, Chile, China, Germany, Japan, Rep of Korea, New Zealand, Russia, and United States). The meeting welcomed LCdr. Felipe Barrios (Chile – IHO delegate) as a new member.

The Sub-Committee considered some 170 undersea feature names, including name proposals from institutions in Argentina, Brazil, China, Italy, Japan, Rep of Korea, New Zealand, Russia, United Kingdom and United States. It eventually accepted 124 new names for inclusion in the GEBCO Gazetteer of Undersea Feature Names, IHO-IOC publication B-8, which is maintained at the IHB.

The meeting noted with satisfaction the significant progress made in the development of a web-based map interface and on-line database for the GEBCO Gazetteer, thanks to the efforts and support of the US National Geophysical Data Center (NGDC) and the co-located IHO Data Centre for Digital Bathymetry (DCDB).

The meeting agreed a list of new and revised definitions and images for undersea feature generic terms, as well as User’s Guide for Preparation of Undersea Feature Name Proposals, for inclusion in IHO-IOC publication B-6 *Standardization of Undersea Feature Names*.

2. The 26th meeting of SCUFN took place in Tokyo, Japan, on 23-27 September 2013 and was hosted and organized by the Japan Hydrographic and Oceanographic Department (JHOD) of the Japan Coast Guard. The meeting was chaired by Dr SCHENKE and attended by 28 participants, including nine of the 12 SCUFN members (from Argentina, Brazil, China, Germany, Japan, Rep of Korea, New Zealand, Russia, and United States).

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

The Sub-Committee considered 107 undersea feature names, including name proposals from institutions in Brazil, China, Japan, Rep of Korea, New Zealand, Norway, Russia, United Kingdom and United States. It eventually accepted 84 new names for inclusion in the GEBCO Gazetteer.

The on-line GEBCO Gazetteer (Internet version of the GEBCO Gazetteer) was presented and released during the meeting. It can be accessed via the GEBCO website (www.gebco.net/ > Data and Products > Undersea Feature Names > view and download). It provides access, through name search, to any undersea feature name in the Gazetteer and its associated details, including showing the feature geometry on a background bathymetric map. The underlying database is maintained by a network of appointed editors under coordination of an administrator who is currently the SCUFN secretary from the IHB.

3. The 27th meeting of SCUFN has been planned on 16-20 June 2014 at the International Hydrographic Bureau (IHB) in Monaco.

4. A new edition 4.1.0 of IHO-IOC publication B-6 *Standardization of Undersea Feature Names*, English/French, was released in September 2013. It includes, in particular, an updated list of undersea feature terms and definitions; a bilingual name proposal form; and guidelines for the preparation of name proposals. It is available on the GEBCO website (www.gebco.net/data_and_products/undersea_feature_names/documents/b6_ef_ed4.1.0_2013.pdf). Other language versions are planned, such as E/Spanish, E/Russian, E/Chinese, E/Japanese, E/Korean ...

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). Over the past decades, several attempts to prepare a 4th edition of the publication were unsuccessful.

An IHO Working Group on S-23 was established in 2009 with a view to updating the current edition. It failed to achieve its goal, mainly due to political and diplomatic lobbying by some members of the WG. The 2012 IHO Conference decided not to take any further action on this matter and the S-23 WG has been disbanded.

Democratic People Republic of Korea has submitted a proposal for consideration by the 5th Extraordinary International Hydrographic Conference (Monaco, 6-10 October 2014), with a view to seeking a new way forward for the S-23 issue.

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.