

**Twenty-ninth session  
Bangkok, Thailand, 25 – 29 April 2016**

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**Item 5 of the Provisional Agenda**

**Reports of the liaison officers and international organizations**

## **Report by the International Hydrographic Organization**

Submitted by IHO\*

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**29<sup>th</sup> Session of the UN Group of Experts on Geographical Names (UNGEGN)**  
Bangkok, Thailand, 25 to 29 April 2016

Report by the International Hydrographic Organization<sup>1</sup>

This is a brief report on the activities of the International Hydrographic Organization (IHO) in relation to the naming of undersea features. 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 (IOC) of UNESCO, as co-owner organizations, in supporting the work of the Sub-Committee on Undersea Feature Names (SCUFN) of GEBCO<sup>2</sup>. Reports of SCUFN meetings, as well as any new editions of the outcome products issued under SCUFN responsibility, are provided to the UNGEGN Chair/Secretary on a regular basis, in accordance with the SCUFN Terms of Reference (ToRs). These ToRs include to “*Maintain close liaison with the UN Group of Experts on Geographical Names, the focal point of which shall be invitations to attend meetings of the Sub-Committee, and with international or national authorities concerned with the naming of undersea features*”. The IHO-IOC Publication B-6, Edition 4.1.0, September 2013, English/French version<sup>3</sup>, provides the international standards (Guidelines, Proposal Form, Terminology) for the naming of undersea feature names.

SCUFN is tasked with selecting the names to be used in the outcome products of the IHO-IOC General Bathymetric Chart of the Oceans (GEBCO) project and on international nautical charts. These names, widely used in scientific publications also, are made available in the GEBCO Gazetteer of Undersea Features Names ([www.gebco.net](http://www.gebco.net) → Data and products → Undersea feature names → view and download). SCUFN-related documents are available from the dedicated GEBCO website ([www.gebco.net](http://www.gebco.net)) and the IHO website ([www.iho.int](http://www.iho.int)). The SCUFN is chaired by Dr. Hans Werner SCHENKE, Alfred Wegener Institute for Polar and Marine Research (AWI), Germany, and comprises 12 members nominated by the IHO and the IOC. The Sub-Committee has its secretariat at the International Hydrographic Bureau (IHB) in Monaco. It meets once a year. Since the 28<sup>th</sup> session of UNGEGN in April-May 2014 in New York, SCUFN has held the following meetings:

**1. The 27<sup>th</sup> meeting of SCUFN** was hosted at the International Hydrographic Bureau (IHB), the secretariat of the IHO, in Monaco, from 16 to 20 June 2014. The meeting was attended by 27 participants, including nine of the 12 SCUFN members, and 15 observers.

The Sub-Committee considered 74 new undersea feature names submitted by various bodies and supporting organizations: Brazil (3), China (19), Denmark (1), France (1), United Kingdom (3), Germany (2), Japan (23), Republic of Korea (2), Malaysia (4), New Zealand (12) and Russian Federation (4).

A new on-line Gazetteer was used as part of evaluating the various proposals and all the proposed names, which were accepted, have been subsequently included in the Gazetteer.

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<sup>2</sup> General Bathymetric Chart of the Oceans, a joint IHO-IOC project.

<sup>3</sup> B-6 is also available in English/Spanish, English/Russian, English/Japanese, English/Korean, English/Chinese ([www.iho.int/iho\\_pubs/IHO\\_Download.htm](http://www.iho.int/iho_pubs/IHO_Download.htm)) then B-6).



The Sub Committee also decided to consider the possible development of a future product specification for undersea feature names based on the IHO S-100 geospatial data transfer standard. This would address several harmonization issues between procedures and definitions used by SCUFN and other national/international organizations. The objective is also to avoid duplication, and improve efficiency and interoperability in the future.

**2. The 28th meeting of SCUFN** was hosted at the *Diretoria de Hidrografia e Navegação* (DHN), in Niteroi, Brazil, from 12 to 16 October 2015. The meeting was attended by 20 participants, together with 10 observers.

The Sub Committee considered proposals for 72 undersea feature names, submitted by various bodies and supporting organizations: Brazil (12), China (20), Japan (28), Republic of Korea (3), Malaysia (6), Russian Federation (1), Sweden (1) and USA (1). The Sub Committee decided to trial a fast-track procedure by using the proposals made by New Zealand related to 56 names that already appear on nautical charts. The Sub Committee was informed on this occasion that the National Geographical Names Board of Canada was in the process of submitting to SCUFN about 950 existing names for approval.

Thanks to the use, prior to the plenary session, of collaborative on-line reviewing tools developed by the Republic of Korea, the evaluation process was extremely efficient during the meeting. Associated Geographic Information System (GIS) files were also provided in advance, which enabled the SCUFN Secretariat to pre-load the data to the GEBCO Gazetteer database and perform some initial quality control and screening.

**3. The 29th meeting of SCUFN** is scheduled to be held from 19 to 23 September 2016 at the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration (NOAA) National Center for Environmental Information (NCEI), Boulder, Colorado (USA).

## II. Limits of Oceans and Seas

The IHO adopted 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 the 3<sup>rd</sup> edition, dated 1953, which is available from the IHO website ([www.iho.int](http://www.iho.int)). Despite the need for revision, several attempts, over the past decades to prepare a 4<sup>th</sup> edition of the publication have been 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 Working Group. The 18<sup>th</sup> International Hydrographic Conference held in Monaco in April 2012

decided not to take any further action on this matter and as a consequence, the S-23 WG was disbanded.

At the 5<sup>th</sup> Extraordinary International Hydrographic Conference (EIHC-5) held in Monaco, in October 2014, the Democratic People's Republic of Korea submitted a proposal with a view to seeking a new way forward for the S-23 issue. Decision No 5 made at the EIHC-5 was as follows: *“The Conference took note of the options, ideas and comments made by the Democratic People's Republic of Korea, Republic of Korea and Japan regarding the revision of S-23, but also recognized the resource constraints of the current Work Programme 2013-2017. The Conference agreed that the matter could be discussed again at the next Ordinary Conference/Assembly in 2017 if a proposal on the matter is made by any Member State.”*

**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.