

EXTRAORDINARY CONFERENCE OF THE EAST ASIA HYDROGRAPHIC COMMISSION

22-24 February 2005, Seoul, Republic of Korea

The Extraordinary Conference of the East Asia Hydrographic Commission (EAHC) was held at the Seoul Palace Hotel, Seoul, Republic of Korea on 22-24 February 2005 under the auspices of the National Oceanographic Research Institute. The Extraordinary Conference was attended by Chief Hydrographers and representatives from all of EAHC member states, China, Indonesia, Japan, Korea, Malaysia, Philippines, Singapore and Thailand. The International Hydrographic Bureau (IHB), Brunei Darussalam, UK and USA attended the Conference as an observer.

Two months before the Conference, the earthquake and subsequent Tsunami were brought tragic damage in the region. Indonesia, Malaysia and Thailand have presented their reports on the damage caused by the tsunami with a focus on the impact to navigational safety. Indonesia reported that the tsunami caused the significant changes of coastal areas and destruction of aids to navigation. Malaysia reported his country was not as seriously damaged by the tsunami, but has carried out a programme to verify the extent of the possible damage by carrying out surveys in selected areas of the Malacca Strait. The four nations (Indonesia, Malaysia, Singapore and Japan) joint programme to resurvey in the Malacca Strait to ensure the safety of navigation was proposed by Malaysia. Thailand also reported its damage caused by the tsunami. Vice Admiral Maratos presented the current status and activities of the IHB on the tsunami issue in South Asia and added that there was a need for greater coordination and communication between member states of IHO and mariners. US Naval Oceanographic Office reported on its ongoing hydrographic assistance to Indonesia, and UK Hydrographic Office presented the recent survey results conducted by its survey vessel, HMS Scott. Earlier discussions highlighted the need for better communication and coordination between MS and users during a natural disaster, Singapore proposed a mechanism Regional EAHC Assistance for Disaster Initiative (READI).

Many other issues were discussed in the Conference, such as SPWG issue, new membership, amendment to EAHC Statutes and SET. Issues related to the Strategic Planning Working Group (SPWG) of IHO were also discussed and the EAHC expressed strong support for the SPWG proposals. It was mentioned that Democratic People's Republic of Korea has officially applied to be a member of the EAHC. US requested assistance on how its membership could be included in the EAHC during the Conference. One of the main issues in the Conference was the amendment to EAHC Statutes. The meeting agreed that Mr. Parry OEI, Chief Hydrographer of Singapore Hydrographic Department, be elected as the new chairman of new working group for the amendment. Considering the importance of the statutes, Chairman requested all member states to participate in the new WG. The WG will prepare the revised draft statutes and submit to the Chair six months before the next ordinary EAHC Conference which would be held in September 2006.

Before the Conference, the 3rd South China Sea ENC Task-group (SET) meeting was held in Daejeon, Korea to finalize its works. Mr. NG Kwok-chu, Leader of SET, presented the SET's Final Report on its activities. The meeting agreed to adopt the SET Report and approved the four recommendations as follows: The ENCS would be released free of charge for navigation and research purposes. The SET Leader assumed the role as the Administrator to be responsible for the updating of the SCS ENC. The duration appointment of the Administrator would be determined by the EAHC. Chairman of EAHC was requested to submit an information paper to the IHO and IMO. Chairman noted that the Commission approved the distribution of the ENCs by 31 March 2005. The SCS ENC was the first joint EAHC project involving all member states of EAHC and the tasks were successfully completed under a tight schedule. Also the harmonization of the small scale ENC SCS with medium and large scale ENCs were proposed and Singapore was requested to formulate the detailed project proposal to be undertaken by the WG.

Two resolutions were adopted in the conference, "Request for Assistance for the Recovery Programme for Areas Affected by the Tsunami Disaster" and "Improved Input to GEBCO and Enhanced Coastal Bathymetric Data in Support of Tsunami Early Warning, Protection and Simulation", proposed by Indonesia and Japan respectively. Finally, the conference agreed that the 9th Conference of EAHC would be held in Seoul, Republic of Korea in September 2006.



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Reported by Mr. KIM Jung-Hyun (Korea)