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English

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**United Nations Group of Experts on  
Geographical Names**

**2025 session**

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Item 6 (c) of the provisional agenda \*

**Relationships, links and connections: International  
organizations, including academia**

**Report of the International Hydrographic Organization**

Submitted by the Liaison Officer, IHO\*\*

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Note: the views expressed in this report are the author's and not necessarily those of the U.S. Government

## Report of the International Hydrographic Organization

This is a brief report on the activities of the International Hydrographic Organization (IHO) in relation to geographical names and related topics.

### I. Undersea feature names

The International Hydrographic Organization (IHO) and the Intergovernmental Oceanographic Commission (IOC) of UNESCO jointly oversee the work of the Sub-Committee on Undersea Feature Names (SCUFN) of GEBCO<sup>1</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 relevant provision of the SCUFN Terms of Reference (ToR): “*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 4.2.0, October 2019, English/French version, provides the international standards (Guidelines, Proposal Form and Terminology) for the naming of undersea feature names.

SCUFN is tasked with selecting the names to be used in the 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 on-line 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 Yasuhiko OHARA, Hydrographic and Oceanographic Department of Japan (JHOD), and comprises 12 members nominated by the IHO (six) and the IOC (six). The Sub-Committee’s secretariat is provided by the IHO Secretariat in Monaco. The Sub-Committee meets annually. Since the 2023 session of UNGEGN, SCUFN has undertaken the following activities:

**1** In 2023, the 36th meeting of SCUFN was held from 6-10 November in Wollongong, Australia. In addition to the full SCUFN-36 Summary Report, the IHO Secretariat’s Bulletin Report may be obtained at: <https://iho.int/en/scufn36-2023> (Post Meeting Documents).

**2** In 2024, the 37th meeting of SCUFN was held from 24-28 June in Jeju, Republic of Korea. In addition to the full SCUFN-37 Summary Report, the IHO Secretariat’s Bulletin Report may be obtained at: <https://iho.int/en/scufn37-2024> (Post Meeting Documents).

**3** The 38th meeting of SCUFN is scheduled to be held in 10-14 November 2025 in Bali, Indonesia.

### II. S-130 Project Team

As reported in 2023, the Second IHO Assembly (A-2) (2020) approved the set of proposals from the IHO Secretary-General in his report on the informal consultation process for the future of IHO S-23 *Limits of Oceans and Seas*, a well-known publication frozen in its 3<sup>rd</sup> Edition since 1953. As part of the proposal approved at A-2, it was agreed to develop a new product specification and dataset to meet modern GIS needs: the S-130 *Polygonal Demarcations of Global Sea Areas*. An S-130 Project Team (PT) has been established under the authority of the IHO Hydrographic Services and Standards Committee (HSSC). The product specification will be S-100 *Universal Hydrographic Data Model* conformant and the dataset will use a system of unique numerical identifiers only. The scope of the work of the PT is strictly limited to technical issues only. The PT has been meeting since 2022 and plans to submit Edition 2.0.0 of the S-130 Product Specification to IHO HSSC-17 in May 2025 for endorsement. More information on the work of the S-130 PT is available here: <https://iho.int/en/s-130-pt>.

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<sup>1</sup> General Bathymetric Chart of the Oceans, a joint IHO-IOC project.

### III. Southern Ocean

The Third IHO Assembly (A-3) (2023) approved a new IHO Resolution (02/2023) on the *Recognition of the Southern Ocean and Consequences on the Limits of Some Global Sea Areas*.

Taking note of the acknowledged long lasting existence of IBCSO<sup>2</sup> - International Bathymetric Chart of the Southern Ocean as a regional mapping project recognized and supported by GEBCO and the dominant use of the denominator Southern Ocean by the international scientific community and media, the IHO recognizes the Southern Ocean as the global sea area surrounding the continent of Antarctica.

Noting the established northern limit of the IHO INTernational Charting Region M<sup>3</sup>, it is considered that the northern geographic limit of the Southern Ocean is defined by the parallel of Latitude 60°S. Consequently, the southern geographic limits of the Atlantic, Indian, and Pacific Oceans are identical with the northern geographic limit of the Southern Ocean. This joint geographic limit supersedes those mentioned in Publication S-23<sup>4</sup>, Ed. 3, 1953 for the areas concerned.

Since these limits have neither political nor oceanographic or, more generally, environmental significance whatsoever, Hydrographic Offices may continue to adopt their own limits as long as these limits remain technically consistent with the data model of the polygonal demarcation of global sea areas (IHO S-130).

**IV. The IHO will continue cooperating with the UNGEGN and the United Nations Committee of Experts on Global Geospatial Information Management (UN-GGIM)** in order to support any actions that may be required to further enhance safety at sea and the protection of the marine environment with geospatial maritime information.

### Points for discussion

The Group of Experts is invited to:

- (1) Take note of the report of the IHO;
- (2) Encourage proposals of undersea feature names to IHO/IOC SCUFN; and
- (3) Promote the work of undersea feature standardization within the programme of work of national names authorities.

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<sup>2</sup> <https://ibcsa.org/>

<sup>3</sup> IHO Publication S-4, section A-204.8 refers.

<sup>4</sup> See « The Oceans » on page 4.