

# ABLOS: THE IAG/IHO/IOC ADVISORY BOARD ON HYDROGRAPHIC, GEODETIC, AND MARINE GEOSCIENTIFIC ASPECTS OF THE LAW OF THE SEA

*A briefing paper for the IOC Advisory Body of Experts on the Law of the Sea (IOC-ABE-LOS)*

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## Introduction

ABLOS was established to provide a multidisciplinary forum for considering the interrelations between the Law of the Sea on the one hand, and marine science and technology on the other hand. Its mandate is to provide advice to its parent bodies and to the larger ocean community on issues of science and technology that are significant to the Law of the Sea, and vice-versa.

## General organization

ABLOS consists of nine members who are appointed by three parent bodies, and one ex-officio member. The parent bodies are international entities that are concerned with marine science and technology in a global context: the International Association of Geodesy (IAG); the International Hydrographic Organization (IHO); and the Intergovernmental Oceanographic Commission (IOC). The ex-officio member represents the United Nations Division of Ocean Affairs and the Law of the Sea (DOALOS).

A full description of the scope and objectives of ABLOS, including its Terms of Reference, is posted on [www.gmat.unsw.edu.au/ablos/](http://www.gmat.unsw.edu.au/ablos/)

The block diagram in Figure 1 illustrates the functional and reporting linkages between ABLOS, its parent bodies, and other groups. In essence, ABLOS members are mandated by their parent bodies to identify and review issues of concern. Findings and recommendations are reported back to the parent bodies, and to other groups as appropriate.

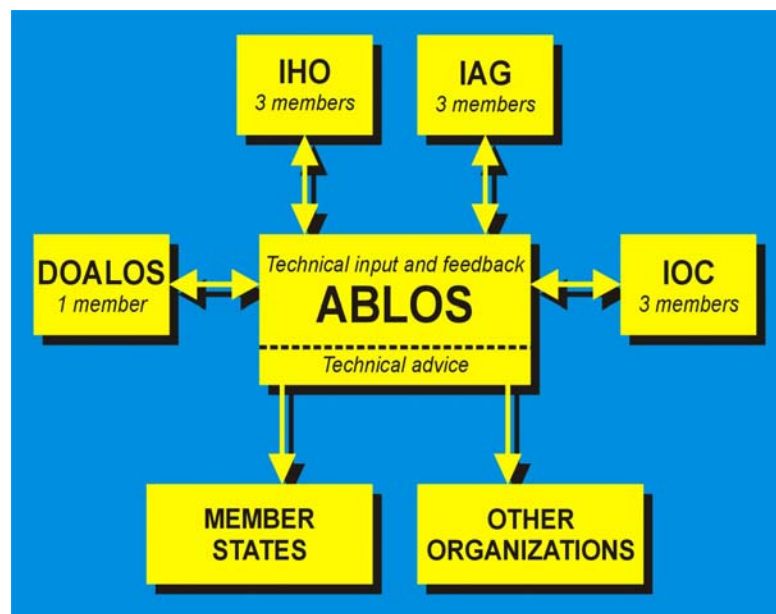


Figure 1

## Membership and objectives

The current ABLOS membership consists of specialists representing the following organizations:

<i>IAG</i>	Bjorn Geirr HARSSON, Norway Chris RIZOS, Australia (Vice-Chairman) Lars SJOBERG, Sweden
<i>IHO</i>	Chris CARLETON, United Kingdom Neil GUY, Monaco Tadahiko KATSURA, Japan
<i>IOC</i>	Samuel BETAH, Cameroon Ron MACNAB, Canada (Chairman) (Third representative to be designated)
<i>DOALOS:</i>	Alexei ZINCHENKO, United Nations

ABLOS objectives may be summarized as follows (full text in the Terms of Reference):

- C Offer expert interpretation of the hydrographic, geodetic and marine geoscientific aspects of the Law of the Sea.
- C Review state practice.
- C Promote the development of appropriate techniques.
- C Issue reports and publications.

## Current and prospective topics of interest

Figure 2 illustrates the nature and the scope of ABLOS deliberations. In brief, ABLOS operates in the zone of overlap between the technical and regulatory aspects of UNCLOS, bringing to bear the knowledge and expertise of its members, who are also free to consult with associates in the world community of specialists in marine science and technology. This is achieved by a variety of means, notably the organization of biennial conferences that focus on selected aspects of UNCLOS. To date, two international conferences have been held:

- C 1999: Technical Aspects of Maritime Boundary Delineation and Delimitation, Including UNCLOS Article 76 Issues.

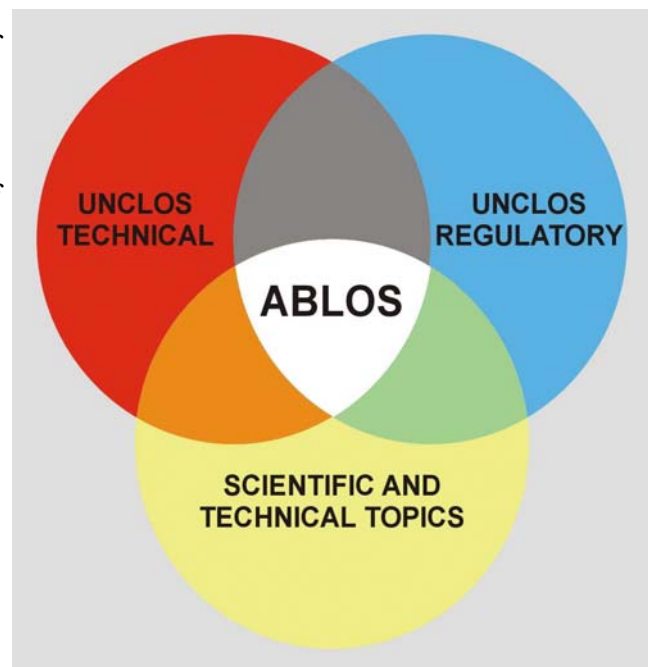


Figure 2

C 2001: Accuracies and Uncertainties in Maritime Boundaries and Outer Limits.

Both conferences were hosted by the International Hydrographic Bureau in Monaco, and attracted wide participation from the community of maritime nations. Proceedings for both events are posted for viewing on the ABLOS website, where they are also available for downloading.

Since the inception of ABLOS, its primary focus has been on matters related to maritime boundary delimitation, however members recognize that several other areas deserve examination and the provision of expert advice. These include but are not restricted to: the resolution of ice-covered shorelines; the quest for an internationally-accepted global vertical reference frame; marine scientific research in EEZs, on continental shelves, and on the high seas; training and transfer of technology; ocean mapping; and protection of the marine environment. In the context of these and other emerging issues, ABLOS is currently considering where and how best to focus its attention so that it may continue to deliver advice to its parent bodies and to the world oceanographic community in a timely and relevant fashion.

**Prospective linkages with IOC-ABE-LOS**

The mandates, compositions, and operations of ABLOS and IOC-ABE-LOS differ significantly, however in some ways their interests appear to overlap substantially. Therefore it would seem desirable to maintain a close communication between the two groups in order to exchange information on current topics of concern and to identify areas where joint action would be warranted. ABLOS is keen therefore to engage in a constructive dialogue with IOC-ABE-LOS, and is open to suggestions for future collaboration on topics of mutual interest..