

# **TENTH ABLOS BUSINESS MEETING**

## *Minutes*

International Hydrographic Bureau

Monaco, October 26-27, 2003

### **Participants and affiliations**

#### *Members*

Chris CARLETON, IHO (UK)  
Carlo DARDENGO, IHO (Italy)  
Bjorn Geirr HARSSON, IAG (Norway)  
Ron MACNAB, IOC (Canada), Chairman  
Chris RIZOS, IAG (Australia), Vice-Chairman  
Steve SHIPMAN, IHB (Monaco, ex-officio)  
Lars SJOBERG, IAG (Sweden)  
Shin TANI, IHO (Japan)  
Alexei ZINCHENKO, DOALOS (UN, ex-officio)

#### *Observers*

Mark ALCOCK, Geoscience Australia (Australia)  
Suryajit KANDAL, National Hydrographic Office (India)  
Katsuhiro KUSUNOKI, Hydrographic and Oceanographic Department (Japan)  
David ROBERTSON, Geoscience Australia (Australia)  
Robert SANDEV, DOALOS (UN)

#### *Apologies*

Samuel BETAH, IOC (Cameroon)  
SHI Xuefa, IOC (China)

### **1. Opening statements and meeting arrangements**

Chairman Ron Macnab called the meeting to order, inviting Steve Shipman to welcome participants on behalf of the IHB, and to explain logistical arrangements for the meeting.

### **2. Designation of the rapporteur**

Chris Carleton was nominated and agreed to be rapporteur.

### **3. Review of agenda and suggestions for new topics**

The agenda (Annex 1) was approved, with one item added: 15. Date and time of next meeting.

### **4. Review of documentary material**

The chairman reviewed the list of documentary material (Annex 2), to which five items (Annexes 8 to 12) were added in the course of the meeting.

## **5. Review and approval of minutes of the 2002 Business Meeting**

Three items were singled out for attention and/or revision:

1. Section 5, Financing members' participation. The proposed letter bringing this matter to the authorities of the ABLOS parent bodies was not drafted. The Chairman promised to prepare a draft for review, signature, and onward transmittal by the incoming Chairman Chris Rizos.
2. Section 9, CLCS confidentiality. Alexei Zinchenko proposed several revisions to this section, which were duly prepared and included in this report as Annex 8. (See also Section 10 below)
3. Section 14, Recommendations to IAG, IHO, IOC. The covering letter that was to highlight topics of particular interest to the parent bodies was not drafted, although some members did provide copies of the minutes to their respective contacts within these organizations. The Chairman proposed to draft a letter containing a bulleted list of information items of particular interest to the parent bodies, along with suggested action items. This draft would be forwarded to the incoming Chairman for review, signature, and onward transmittal.

## **6. ABLOS membership**

The Chairman asked members to review the current membership list (Annex 4) and to indicate necessary revisions and corrections. Attention was drawn to the fact that Carlo Dardengo and Shin Tani were newly appointed by the IHO to replace Tadahiko Katsura (Hydrographic and Oceanographic Department, Japan) and Neil Guy (IHB, Monaco), and that Don Grant was appointed by IAG as a replacement for Bjorn Geirr Harsson. The Chairman proposed and members agreed that formal letters of thanks would be sent to the three retiring members.

It was also agreed that Steve Shipman, who has been fulfilling a crucial liaison function between IHB and ABLOS, would be formally inscribed as an ex-officio member.

## **7. Preparations for the Third ABLOS Conference**

Steve Shipman described logistical and other preparations for the Conference, scheduled for October 28-30. At summer's beginning, a major concern was a seeming lack of interest in the Conference, as registered by a low rate of registration returns. However by summer's end, the situation had reversed itself quite dramatically, with the number of confirmed registrations steadily reaching toward the maximum of 80 attendees and finally surpassing it.

Eventually, new seating arrangements were devised in the IHB meeting room in order to accommodate an extra 15-20 attendees, however even with the new setup, it proved necessary to start a waiting list for individuals who wished to participate, but whose applications for registration were received too late to guarantee a seat. In the meantime, the IHB team prepared conference handouts and registration kits for 95+ confirmed registrants.

In responding to a question concerning the Conference's financial aspects, Steve Shipman estimated that registration payments would amount to about 7000 Euros, once all anticipated

expenses had been met. A financial report would be filed after the Conference, at which point members would be consulted concerning the disposition of those funds.

On behalf of ABLOS, the Chairman thanked Steve Shipman and members of his IHB associates for their efficient handling of local arrangements, and added his personal thanks to members of the Conference Organizing Committee (Chris Rizos, Bjorn Geirr Harsson, and Chris Carleton) who worked together effectively as a far-flung team.

## **8. Revisions to the TALOS Manual**

Having organized and chaired the first meeting of the TALOS Editorial Committee on October 23-24, Steve Shipman outlined progress to date. In his remarks (contained in Annex 10), he pointed to specific issues that required feedback from ABLOS, notably the need to identify a Committee chairman, as well as volunteers to review/update several sections of the Manual.

Members expressed satisfaction with the work done during this first gathering of the Editorial Committee. The Chairman conveyed the members' collective thanks to the three Committee members who participated in this meeting (Steve Shipman, Carlo Dardengo, and Lars Sjoberg). Pointing out that the Manual is in reality a communal undertaking by ABLOS, he asked members to respond positively to requests for assistance or information that might be directed to them by the Editorial Committee.

## **9. Chairman's report: attendance at international meetings**

The Chairman summarized the highlights of six meetings that took place between April and September, which dealt with various aspects of UNCLOS, notably Article 76. His remarks are summarized in Annex 5.

## **10. Follow up: CLCS confidentiality**

Following discussion of this topic at the Ninth Business Meeting, ABLOS members received communications that expressed alternative viewpoints, and which recommended a re-wording of the minutes. By that time, it was not possible to comply for a variety of reasons.

It was noted that at its last session in April 2003, the Meeting of States Parties had addressed the issue, as reported in Paragraph 86 of SPLOS/103 (Annex 6). The matter was also touched upon in the Fall 2003 Newsletter of the International Law Association (Annex 7). During a discussion of this topic, Alexei Zinchenko offered to clarify things by revising selected portions of the Minutes of the Ninth Meeting, and his suggested revisions are included in Annex 8. He also provided an extract of a talk that he delivered at the Reykjavik Conference in June (Annex 9).

## **11. Focal points for ABLOS activities in 2003-2005**

The Chairman then invited members to discuss prospective initiatives with a view to (a) defining the scope and objective of ABLOS activities in the near term, (b) informing the Board's parent bodies of emerging issues that will require attention, and (c) alerting the appropriate segments of

the marine R&D community of unresolved problems that could impede progress, or which could benefit from a collective response. This discussion was a continuation of one that began at the Ninth Business Meeting, motivated by the desire to ensure that ABLOS maintain an action plan that is timely and relevant. The following topics were debated.

*Scientific consensus on ridge issues in different parts of the world*

This topic arose from a suggestion that was advanced recently at the Fourth International Conference on Arctic Margins (ICAM-IV) in Halifax, Canada, where a special session on Article 76 in the Arctic Ocean exposed conflicting viewpoints concerning the geological character of the Lomonosov and Alpha-Mendeleev Ridges, and raised questions about the appropriateness of characterising these features as ‘natural prolongations’ of adjacent landmasses. It had also been noted that the CLCS, in its Scientific and Technical Guidelines, did not define the general principles that would underlie the formulation of answers to these questions, stating instead that it will look into the issue of ridges on a case-by-case basis.

Anticipating that similar ambiguities would likely arise in other geographic contexts, it was proposed that the marine geoscientific community initiate a broad debate that would focus on the problem in a variety of continental margin settings, in the expectation that such a concentration of scientific attention would promote the development of a body of information that could facilitate the task of the CLCS when considering future submissions where ridges constitute significant components. One mechanism for achieving this would be to organize conferences and/or workshops that assembled regional experts, whose collective views and knowledge could provide both a perspective and a framework for the CLCS when assessing outer limit claims that encompassed ridge features.

Members considered that the proposed strategy might well benefit the CLCS by engaging the broader scientific community in the ridge problem, and by defining more precisely the range of options that had to be considered in submissions where ridges were invoked to substantiate extended outer limits. It was also agreed that ABLOS could play a role in this process through advocacy (i.e. promoting more research and debate on the issue) or through direct involvement (i.e. by helping mobilize conferences and/or workshops).

Alexei Zinchenko offered to report this proposition to the CLCS, and to advise that ABLOS is prepared to render constructive assistance in its realization.

*Article 76 and marine scientific research*

Concern has been expressed in scientific quarters about the potential impact of the creation of extended continental shelves on the conduct of marine scientific research. At present, marine scientific research is conducted in the areas of the high seas beyond 200 nautical miles from the coast without being subjected to the regime contained in article 246 of UNCLOS, which deals with marine scientific research in the exclusive economic zone and on the continental shelf. Those areas may eventually become areas of the extended continental shelves of coastal States and thus fall under the provisions of this article. Marine scientific research involves operations with ships, autonomous underwater vehicles, or instrumented free-drifting buoys.

In this regard, it should be noted that in accordance with article 77 of UNCLOS:

- "1. The coastal State exercises over the continental shelf sovereign rights for the purpose of exploring it and exploiting its natural resources.
2. The rights referred to in paragraph 1 are exclusive in the sense that if the coastal State does not explore the continental shelf or exploit its natural resources, no one may undertake these activities without the express consent of the coastal State."

Article 246 stipulates that:

- "2. Marine scientific research in the exclusive economic zone and on the continental shelf shall be conducted with the consent of the coastal State."

There is a concern that not all members of the research community are aware of the potential procedural complexities involved in obtaining permission to engage in scientific work within other coastal states' continental shelves.

It was agreed that this matter should be brought to the attention of the parent bodies of ABLOS, and could be usefully explored at the next biennial conference. In the meantime, the new Chairman will perform the necessary groundwork to collect relevant information concerning the matter, and to disseminate it to members of the Advisory Board."

#### *Global vertical reference network*

For a wide variety of reasons, there is a global need to develop a uniform and common approach to the problems of defining sea level and of developing seamless DTMs between land topography and the seabed. It was reported that IAG has sponsored the formation of a new international working group to address the problem. Chris Rizos provided documentation describing this initiative (Annexes 11 and 12). Steve Shipman of IHB is a member of that group, and has agreed to keep ABLOS advised of developments.

#### *International cooperation in ocean mapping*

With many coastal states contemplating or engaged in extensive bathymetric mapping for Article 76 purposes, it is expected that large quantities of depth observations will be collected in deepwater areas over the next several years. Many of these data sets could no doubt contribute to improved descriptions of seafloor morphology in regions where little is presently known, and custodians of that information should be encouraged to submit their holdings to data centres so they may be combined with observations collected by other countries with a view to upgrading existing maps of global bathymetry. Similar recommendations were put forth at the GEBCO Centenary Conference earlier this year, and it was considered that it would be useful if ABLOS lent its support to these propositions. It was agreed that ABLOS would recommend to the IHB that a circular letter be sent to member states, encouraging them to contribute their new bathymetric holdings to established world data centres for use in furthering international knowledge of the seafloor.

### *Invited participation in training initiatives*

This matter was raised at last year's business meeting, when IOC coordinator Dienaba Beye tabled a letter from Executive Secretary Patricio Bernal, inviting ABLOS participation in the development of an Article 76 course based on the training curriculum developed by the CLCS. This initiative was undertaken specifically at the request of the group of African coastal states, and it was formally approved by the IOC Assembly earlier this year. It is understood that the invitation still stands for ABLOS members to become involved, in their own personal capacities, in the design and delivery of the course materials.

### *Deposit of charts and lists of coordinates in digital form*

In light of rapid technological developments, it is considered to be feasible and desirable that depositary instruments in electronic format could supplement the deposit of charts and lists of geographical coordinates in hard copy. DOALOS is studying possible solutions from the technical perspective. It is becoming evident that this issue needs to be addressed by the Meeting of States Parties to UNCLOS. It was suggested that ABLOS might be able to render some assistance in this respect, through the provision of technical advice or expertise.

## **12. Topics and recommendations for inclusion in report to parent bodies of ABLOS**

It was agreed that copies of these Minutes be sent to executives of the parent bodies, accompanied by a covering letter that (a) signals issues of particular importance to each body, and (b) highlights matters of general interest for information or for possible action. The outgoing and incoming Chairmen agreed to work together in the preparation of draft covering letters appropriate to each parent body, and to circulate copies to members for review and comment prior to despatching them to their final recipients.

## **13. ABLOS executive changes**

The end of the Third Biennial Conference signals the termination of the present Chairman's term, and the accession of the current Vice-Chairman Chris Rizos to the Chairman's position for the 2003-2005 term. In keeping with the principle of rotating executive positions among the representatives of the three parent bodies, IHO representative Shin Tani was nominated to the position of Vice-Chairman, and confirmed by acclamation.

## **14. Other business**

No other business was proposed for consideration.

## **15. Date and site of next meeting**

It was agreed that it would be left to the discretion of incoming Chairman Chris Rizos to consider options, and to recommend a time and a venue for the 2004 Business Meeting.

## **16. Close of meeting**

Admiral Maratos of the IHB made a short address in which he spoke positively of the contributions of ABLOS, and pledged the continuing support of the IHO. The Chairman thanked participants for their contributions to the discussions, and expressed appreciation to IHB staff for their dedication and unfailing good humour in hosting this meeting of ABLOS.