

PROPOSAL 4 – Rewrite of the IHO Strategic Plan – submitted by the United Kingdom
Croatian additional comment submitted during discussion A-1, 24 April 2017

Before presenting the key considerations relating to PRO 4, it should be pointed out that Croatia recognises and appreciates the efforts made by representatives of the IHO Member States and Secretariat through all organisational bodies in the accomplishment of Work Programmes resulting from the strategic directions set out in the IHO Strategic Plan since its adoption in 2009.

In spite of usual and expected difficulties while implementing certain tasks, and the fact that some issues are still pending (ENC gap, ENC overlap, S-100), it can be said that in the seven-year period the IHO has certainly achieved its main strategic objectives. Namely, 2018 will be the last year for implementation of ENC and ECDIS carriage requirements for ships. Among the most illustrative examples of these achievements is the fact that at present numerous ships safely navigate by sea all over the world using only ECDIS and ENCs without any paper charts. The IHO has significantly contributed to this revolutionary achievement in a transition from the paper era of marine navigation into the digital one. Therefore, it will always be recognised as an international organisation which has adopted some unique ENC and ECDIS related standards, whose implementation ensures uniformity and reliability of essential digital navigational aids on ship - ECDIS and ENC.

Back in 2009 the IHO, including national hydrographic offices, was faced with a number of challenges in achieving highly set targets. One of the biggest problems was a lack of overall capacities, human, material and financial ones. From the perspective of a small hydrographic office such as the Hydrographic Institute of the Republic of Croatia, with archipelagic waters and several very busy international fairways and approaches to main ports, this objective (ensuring high-quality ENCs) sometimes appeared impossible to reach. However, fortunately, with correct methodological approach, special efforts by the staff and well organised business processes, Croatia as well as most other members have almost completely achieved the objectives of providing end users with high-quality ENCs.

As set out in the proposed WPs for the next planning period, it is beyond doubt that the hydrographic community is expected to be further engaged in ENC and ECDIS related key issues, primarily in resolving existing problems as well supporting the accomplishment of e-Navigation concept.

Following the proposed amendments to the IHO Strategic Plan, Croatia as well as the IHO is aware of new challenges concerning other key areas (Blue Economy, environmental issues, crowd sourcing and disaster response management) to which the hydrographic community is (legitimately) expected to contribute.

However, following the report analysis in all the three WPs for the period 2012-2016, in particular those parts of the report indicating the reasons for failing to realise what was planned or for the delay in realisation, Croatia considers that it is necessary to carry out a comprehensive analysis of all relevant IHO documents, including one of the most important – the IHO Strategic Plan.

At the moment Croatia would not discuss the level of revision to the IHO Strategic Plan, but wishes to indicate the need for preliminary conceptual considerations of possible strategic directions in respect of new thematic areas where the IHO is expected to act. The starting point for such considerations can be an analysis of the above mentioned key reasons for failure to accomplish the tasks planned so far, and deciding on where to target organisation's efforts to eliminate obstructions and weaknesses. This concerns not only unrealised tasks set out in WPs for the previous planning period but also the tasks to be defined for newly recognised thematic areas.

It can be observed that a lack of resources (expert and administrative staff and financial assets) has been one of the main reasons for failing to accomplish some of the tasks planned so far. If it is expected that the same capacities will be sufficient to accomplish additional (new) thematic tasks that should be indicated in WPs for the next cycles, it is easy to conclude that their realisation will be doubtful for the same or similar reasons.

From this point of view, before any intervention (a modest revision or a full rewrite) in the Strategic Plan, the following questions should be considered at conceptual level:

1. Whether the IHO efficiency can be improved by increasing overall capacities, under the condition that the necessary financial resources would be provided exclusively from other sources, and not by increasing the membership dues paid by the IHO Member States.

2. Whether the IHO effectiveness can be improved by reducing the number of tasks related to new thematic segments, and alternatively by setting priorities.
3. Whether one of the solutions would be a partial or complete transfer of responsibility and implementation of some tasks not directly connected with the safety of navigation (ENC, ECDIS, e-Navigation) to other organisations or sectors.
4. The last but perhaps most important question - whether it is possible to revise the Strategic Plan (moderate revision or a full rewrite) only by specifying new topics (tasks) and linking them only with existing or additional strategic directives and assumptions, without amendments to strategic objectives being required, and thus without the need to initiate the procedure for amending Article II of the IHO Convention (The object of the IHO).

Conclusion

Firstly, if the IHO is designed as an authoritative organisation with clearly defined strategic objectives primarily related to the provisions of the SOLAS Convention (Reg. 9 of Chapter V), being responsible for their coordination and/or realisation, which has been well-established and recognised through its work for almost a century now, then it could remain within this scope, maintaining its current status and reputation, and promoting the performance of its main strategic objectives, mission and vision.

Secondly, if consent is reached about the need for concrete (not only promotional) engagement of the hydrographic community to other new areas where the results of hydrographic activities can be widely applicable, then it will be necessary to undertake a substantial revision to the IHO Strategic Plan, consequently the Capacity Building Plan and other related documents and regulations, perhaps even the Convention. In doing so, due account should be taken of the IHO weaknesses and limitations already identified in the realisation of current tasks related to the safety of navigation.