

FIG Working Week 2015 – Sofia, Bulgaria

Commission 4 - Hydrography

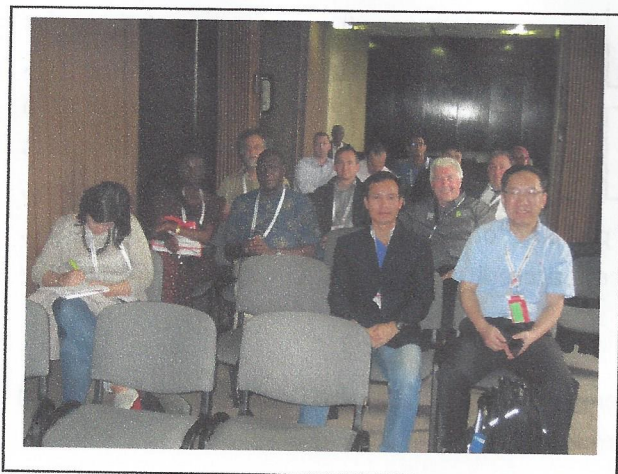
Representatives from the Hydrography Commission National Committee (HCNC) recently attended the International Federation of Surveyors (FIG) Working Week in Sofia, Bulgaria over the period 17-21 May 15. The Working Week was held in the National Palace of Culture (NPC) which was the same venue when Bulgaria hosted the 1983 FIG Congress gathering.



Two key HCNC objectives for this 2015 conference week was to network with FIG Commission 4 (Hydrography) (<http://www.fig.net/organisation/comm/4/index.asp>), including engagement with the new incoming Commission 4 Chair Ms Angela Etuonovbe (Nigeria), and to seek approval of the Working Group (WG) 4.1 Work

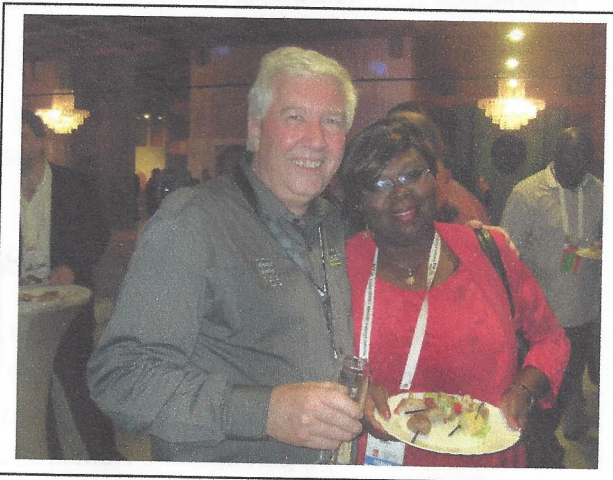
Plan as part of the wider Commission 4 work programme for the period 2015-2018.

Commission 4 Engagement



Commission 4 annual meeting

In line with the conference theme of 'From the Wisdom of the Ages to the Challenges of the Modern World', the Commission 4 annual meeting convened during the afternoon of Monday 18 May at the NPC with some 26 hydrographic representatives in attendance.



HCNC Chair Simon Ironside with Commission 4 Chair Angela Etuonovbe during the Welcome Reception at the National Museum of History

The meeting agenda included the Chair's report, an update and general overview of the 2011-14 Commission 4 Work Plan, subordinate WG activities and reports, and an outline of the proposed Commission 4 Work Plan 2015-2018. There was also some discussion relating to IHO liaison (capacity building), activities pertaining to the International Board on Standards of Competence for Hydrographic Surveyors and Nautical Cartographers (IBSC) in terms of hydrographic standards, and future FIG/WG events likely to involve Commission 4.

The Working Week's hydrography programme kicked off in earnest the following afternoon with an interesting and informative session on hydrographic solutions with presentations from Germany, Ghana, Saudi Arabia, and Nigeria. Subsequent technical sessions over the next three days included presentations and active participant discussions in the areas of:

- disaster and risk management (Nigeria, Germany, Bulgaria and Turkey);
- marine and cadastral management (Nigeria, Austria, and Canada/China); and
- issues in hydrography (Malaysia/India, Belgium, Australia).



Conference participants at technical session TS04A – Hydrographic Solutions

The four dedicated sessions, which were both informative and generally well supported, encompassed a broad selection of hydrography-related subjects. Presentations included topics as diverse as the importance of having a hydrographic surveying capability in developing an internal waterways transportation system in Ghana, wetland management for the Ikorodu Local Government Area in Lagos, Nigeria, and water-induced soil erosion modelling for medium watersheds in Yen Bai province, Vietnam, to more general areas of interest in relation to coastal risk analysis of areas around the Black Sea due to rises in sea levels,

the lessons learnt from parametric sub-bottom profiling of debris fan fields in Lake Traunsee, Austria, and the implications resulting from the recent accreditation for the Category B hydrography programme in Belgium.

The Commission 4 dinner was held on Tuesday evening in conjunction with Commissions 5 and 6, in the Sofia CBD at the Restaurant Manastirska Magernitsa.

Working Group (WG) 4.1 – Standards and Guidelines in Hydrography

During the 2014 FIG Congress in Kuala Lumpur, Australia agreed to take on Chair responsibilities of the then Commission 4 WG 4.2 to provide ongoing Commission oversight of, and input to, hydrographic standards and guidelines. Recognising the waning focus on hydrographic standards in recent years and that, perhaps, the standards aspect of Commission 4 activities had not functioned for some years, it was acknowledged that having an enduring mechanism embedded within Commission 4 which could effectively input into such guidelines and provide stakeholder feedback to IHO-sponsored reviews of hydrographic standards, remained an important Commission 4 deliverable. Commission representatives subsequently agreed to rename WG 4.2 recognising the priority hydrographic standards and guidelines deserved as part of wider Commission 4 activities/outputs.

Having been renamed and re-prioritised, WG 4.1 now forms one of three working group fora within the Commission 4 work programme for 2015-2018:

- WG 4.1 - *Standards and Guidelines for Hydrography* (Chair: Peter Barr [Australia])
- WG 4.2 - *Maritime and Marine Spatial Information Management* (Chair: Jonathan Li [Canada])
- WG 4.3 - *Blue Economy* (Chair: Gordon Johnston [UK])

The aim of WG 4.1 is to:

- assist in the development and recognition of standards of competency for hydrographic surveyors;
- assist in the development of technical standards and guidelines;
- assist with the review of standards and guidelines; and
- promote the need for and benefits of, professional hydrographic surveyor certification.

WG 4.1's Work Plan 2015-2018 was presented at the Commission 4 annual meeting by the HCNC Vice Chair Michael Beard on behalf of the WG 4.1 Chair Peter Barr who was unable to travel to Bulgaria. Having been endorsed, the plan outlines the following standards-related work that will form the focus of WG 4.1 efforts over the next four years:

- broaden the membership of WG 4.1 to ensure its legitimacy as an active international professional body;
- support the IHO through the work of the Hydrographic Services and Standards Committee (HSSC) by participating in subordinate working groups in reviewing standards and guidelines, in particular;
 - S44 - *IHO Standards for Hydrographic Surveys* (February 2008)
 - S100 - *IHO Universal Hydrographic Data Model* (January 2010)
- support FIG members on the IBSC in reviewing/updating competency standards, namely;
 - S5 - *Standards of Competence for Hydrographic Surveyors* (December 2014)¹
- represent Commission 4 on the FIG Standards Network; and
- support the work of other Commission 4 WG and participate in major Commission 4 events.

The WG 4.1 Work Plan has now been incorporated into the overarching Commission 4 Work Plan 2015-2018 (<http://www.FIG Commission 4 – Term 2015-2018 – Work Plan>). The Chair of WG 4.1 will provide a progress report at the next FIG Working Week in Christchurch, NZ in May 2016.

WG 4.1 - Challenges

In moving WG 4.1 forward in coming months, a number of challenges were highlighted during the tabling of the plan. Each will need to be resolved in order to re-invigorate the group and establish it as an effective and meaningful contributor to hydrographic standards and guidelines. Some of the issues include:

¹ S5A - *Standards of Competence for Hydrographic Surveyors Category A* and S5B - *Standards of Competence for Hydrographic Surveyors Category B*.

- **WG membership** - a requirement to recruit volunteers to sit on the WG which will require engagement at an international level (not just Australasia);
- **methodology** - agreement on the best approach to take in realising WG reviews and inputs (ie. through the Commission 4 Chair or direct liaison authority with and participation in, HSSC/IBSC standards fora);
- **internal WG arrangements** - the need to develop and inculcate internal WG 4.1 mechanisms to convene the group as and when required in order to facilitate reviews of hydrographic standards and guidelines;
- **HSSC/IBSC engagement** - an understanding of how best to arrange for WG 4.1 representation through the IBSC and HSSC WG fora in relation to Standards S5, S100 and S44;
- **relevance of WG 4.1** - mitigation efforts to ensure beneficiary organisations (eg. IHO), particularly those without subordinate WG (eg. IBSC), actually consider and take onboard WG 4.1 feedback; and
- **ongoing funding** - the urgent need to secure consistent funding appropriations (through SSSI and/or FIG) to fully support the duties of the Australian Chair and to help deliver against the endorsed Work Plan over the period 2015-2018.

WG 4.1 - Next Steps

Following a conference back brief to the WG 4.1 Chair at the end of May, and ahead of the next FIG Working Week in Christchurch, NZ in May 2015, the focus of WG 4.1 is to now leverage the success of the FIG Working Week 2015 and build on the endorsed WG 4.1 Work Plan through the following specific activities:

- establish appropriate WG 4.1 representation at an international level;
- develop WG 4.1 Terms of Reference (ToR) that will address how the WG can best engage the HSSC and the IBSC, understand what HSSC sub-WGs might WG 4.1 participate in, and detail the internal arrangements required within the WG 4.1 construct to best facilitate and communicate input in reviewing hydrographic standards and guidelines;
- confirm arrangements with the HSSC and arrange for WG 4.1 to be represented on existing/potential S100 and S44 WGs;
- confirm arrangements with the IBSC regarding WG 4.1 input to S5;
- secure SSSI/FIG funding lines for the period 2015-2018 inclusive (to allow the WG 4.1 Chair to attend future FIG Working Weeks/FIG Congress events in NZ [2016], Finland [Helsinki] in 2017, and Turkey [Istanbul] in 2018);
- WG 4.1 (and HCNC) to liaise with the IHO South West Pacific Hydrographic Commission (SWPHC) to arrange for WG 4.1 representation at SWPHC events and SWPHC input into the WG 4.1 ToR; and
- arrange for the WG 4.1 membership, ToR, its Work Plan and any activity/progress reports to be hosted, promulgated and updated on the FIG Commission 4 website.



International participation in technical session TS07A – Issues in Hydrography



Hydrography technical session TS06A – Marine and Cadastral Management

In summary, HCNC participation in FIG Working Week 2015 achieved its desired objectives in terms of networking, hydrographic community engagement, and obtaining endorsement of the WG 4.1 Work Plan for 2015-2018. There is no doubt of the relevance of WG 4.1 and that the reviewing aspects of standards and guidelines within Commission 4 need reinvigoration; it is in the interests of stakeholder organisations, beneficiaries and the wider hydrographic community that there be some contribution to the standards process. It is important there also be broad, coordinated representation to the HSSC and the IBSC on hydrographic survey standards and guidelines as and when required, particularly when such standards and guidelines come up for periodic review. While there are certainly issues involved in realising this through WG 4.1 and to have WG 4.1 accepted as part of the review process, such challenges are by no means insurmountable.

Equally, there is little doubt there exists an important role for Commission 4 in helping progress the review of hydrographic standards and guidelines. To this end, the re-prioritisation and reinvigoration of WG 4.1 as a dedicated Commission 4 body represents a significant opportunity where the greatest benefit can initially be realised by assisting the IHO in its ongoing efforts and endeavours to develop contemporary relevant standards and guidelines such as S5, S44, S100 that appropriately reflect hydrographic best practice, developing professional knowledge, and emerging techniques and technologies.