

Heads of National Hydrographic Offices
representing IHO Member States

IHO File N° S1/6100/2026

Monaco, 28 August 2026

Dear Colleagues,

As my term as IHO Secretary-General is drawing to a close, I find myself reflecting on my time of service to the Organization.

My journey with the IHO actually began in the mid-1990s, some thirty years ago. As a young engineer, I contributed to the launch of the then-new ECDIS technology based on IHO standards. Since then, I have closely witnessed and, to a considerable extent, participated in the remarkable transformation that hydrography has undergone.

In my inaugural address following my election as Secretary-General at the First IHO Assembly in April 2017, I referred to the phrase in the preamble of the recently revised Convention, *“the desire to pursue intergovernmental cooperation in hydrography,”* as encapsulating my understanding of the role I was about to assume.

This was the mission before us at a time of accelerating globalization driven by digitalization. As a technical and consultative organization operating worldwide, it was not sufficient for the IHO merely to follow developments; it needed to lead the way and remain at the forefront of the hydrographic domain.

Indeed, the IHO of today is markedly different from the Organization I took the lead of almost a decade ago. Membership has grown beyond the historic milestone of one hundred Member States. The range of stakeholders and maritime sectors relying on hydrographic information has expanded significantly beyond navigation alone. The means by which we serve these needs have evolved, as have our methods of communication, our corporate identity, and the digital services operated by the Secretariat for the benefit of Member States and the wider maritime community.

Strategically, however, the most important achievement has been the preservation of the IHO standardization framework as the globally recognized and unchallenged foundation for the encoding and distribution of hydrographic information, a unique position among intergovernmental organizations. But ocean mapping has advanced considerably too, the IHO enjoys an excellent reputation among international partners, and collaboration with industry has reached an unprecedented level.

Together, we are now in a realistic position to pursue the broader vision of a Digital Twin of the Navigable Waters. Achieving this vision will continue to depend on strong international cooperation within our community and close collaboration across sectors.

Looking back on this remarkable journey of transformation gives me a profound sense of personal satisfaction and fulfilment. Throughout my tenure, I have endeavoured to serve the Organization with loyalty, commitment, impartiality, and objectivity. Looking back, I am deeply grateful for the support, understanding, cooperation, and, above all, friendship that I have consistently received from you.

On 1 September, I will hand over my responsibilities as Secretary-General to Rear Admiral Luigi Sinapi, who was elected by the Fourth Assembly. I have every confidence that he will continue to guide the Organization along the path of continuity and evolution in addressing the extraordinary challenges ahead. I encourage you to extend to him the same support and trust that you have so generously afforded me.

In just a few days, I will bid farewell not only to my position as Secretary-General, but also to my years of service in national and international public institutions. I will carry with me the fondest memories of an exceptionally rewarding period of my professional life.

Firmly believing that *“the best time is yet to come,”* I will continue to follow with great interest the work, progress, and future achievements of the Organization.

With my sincere gratitude and best wishes,



Dr Mathias JONAS

Secretary-General

1st September 2017 – 31 August 2026