

Statement made by the IHO Secretary-General on behalf of the Representatives of the Member States of the IHO

In relation to a call for action and the need to increase scientific knowledge, many in this room may be unaware of the poor state of knowledge of the depth and shape of the sea floor. We have higher resolution maps of the Moon and Mars than we have for most of the world's oceans and coastal waters. The depth in about 50% of the world's coastal waters and more than 85% of the oceans has never been measured - the depths that you see on the world's maps are mostly estimated or inferred.

Knowledge of the shape and nature of the seafloor plays a role in almost every human endeavor in, on or under the sea. Thus, in our view, the lack of knowledge and data about the depth and shape of the seafloor significantly weakens the ability to progress a number, if not most, of the targets in SDG14.

On behalf of the representatives of the 87 Member States of the IHO, I encourage all those engaged in programmes in support of SDG14 to measure the depth of the seafloor as best they can and to share the data that they collect. The IHO can provide the advice, the global data repository, the protocols and advice on how to do this effectively, usually at minimal cost and without impacting on other seagoing activities.

The IHO looks to the Call for Action to include encouragement to all those engaged in addressing and pursuing the specific SDG14 targets by cooperating and incorporating in their activities, the ongoing measurement of the fundamental underpinning environmental data such as meteorological and oceanographic information, and in particular, the measurement of the depth of the seas and oceans. An open, inter-disciplinary, multi-parameter, data gathering approach - measure once – use many times, will, without doubt, contribute significantly to ensuring that the SDG14 targets are achieved.