

# *The South China Sea Electronic Navigational Charts*

*Contributed by Hong Kong, China*

The South China Sea (SCS) is covered with paper charts produced by littoral Member States (MS) of the EAHC as well as by some countries outside the region. MSs of the EAHC have produced large scale ENC covering their own waters, particularly their major ports. However, official small scale ENCs are not yet available.

The IHO WEND Committee held its 8th meeting in March 2004 and passed a resolution urging ***"Regional Hydrographic Commissions should develop, where not yet existent, ENC production schemes and time schedules for the ENC production for small scale coverage and prioritised routes and ports, and should report the details to IHB as soon as possible."***

Japan hosted a seminar on the Publishing of ENC in SCS for International Navigation, concurrently with the 8th WEND meeting. MSs of the EAHC attended and concluded that the lack of small scale ENCs need to be resolved urgently and agreed that MSs should cooperate closely under the framework of the EAHC.

In July 2004, the EAHC held a meeting in Thailand to discuss the production of small scale ENCs covering the SCS. The meeting agreed to form the SCS ENC Task Group (SET) to carry out the production under the following principles :-

- 1) SCS ENCs are used for safety of navigation and research purposes;
- 2) copyright of the SCS ENCs rests with the EAHC; and
- 3) SCS ENCs will be available to all the MSs of the EAHC, countries in the region and users at no charge. It is not for commercial use unless permitted by the EAHC.

A tight schedule was fixed for the SET to accomplish the tasks of :- production, quality check, conducting sea trial and lining up the updating mechanism. The SET would report the progress and submit recommendations to the EAHC in the February 2005 Extraordinary Conference. Subject to EAHC's approval, the SCS ENCs can then be launched officially.



**1st SET Meeting, 23-24 September 2004,**



**2nd SET Meeting, 2-3 December 2004, Hong Kong**

Despite the participation in the SET was voluntary, all MSs had sent representatives to join the task group and every member actively took part in the project. The SET met in Singapore and Hong Kong in September and December respectively to discuss the technical issues and resolved many obstacles through mutual understanding and co-operation. Some MSs generously shared the latest survey data and it was remarkable that all SET members had been working together very closely. Only because of their joint effort it was possible to deliver the SCS ENC's for sea trial by end of December 2004. Most important of all, the common objective of facilitating up-to-date chart information for the safety of navigation had been achieved.

Some shipping lines with vessels equipped with ECDIS and trading to ports in the region had joined the sea trial. These vessels had been very cooperative and came back with very encouraging feedbacks after they had used the SCS ENC's for passage planning as well as for navigation. The SET continued to check the quality of the SCS ENC's and to update the ENC's with Notices to Mariners (NTMs) issued by the MSs. By the time this article is published, the SET should have held the third meeting prior to the EAHC Extraordinary Conference.

The SET targeted to launch the final version of the SCS ENC's in March 2005. The ENC's can be distributed by a variety of channels, such as download from MS's websites. The SCS ENC's should be updated on a continuous basis after they have been released. In order to keep the SCS ENC's up-to-date, a systematic means of collecting NTMs from MSs and transform the chart corrections into updating files would be introduced.



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