



INTERGOVERNMENTAL OCEANOGRAPHIC COMMISSION
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Item 4.1 of the Provisional Agenda

PROGRESS REPORT ON THE GEBCO GOVERNANCE REVIEW (2023)

Summary

Further to Executive Council decision EC-55/3.1 (2022) and the establishment of the GEBCO Governance Review Project Team, this document prepared by the IHO/GEBCO Secretary provides details of the work completed to date on the GEBCO Governance Review and the proposed next steps.

Financial implications: none

The proposed decision is referenced Dec. A-32/4.1 in the Action Paper (document IOC/A-32/AP Prov.). The IOC Assembly is requested to take note of these developments. The Executive Secretary would present the outcomes of the GEBCO governance review to the Executive Council at its 57th session in 2024.

Introduction

1. In light of the changing ocean policy landscape, the growing visibility of GEBCO, thanks to the increasing involvement of stakeholders, a renewed GEBCO communication strategy, as well as the work of the Nippon Foundation – GEBCO Seabed 2030 Project (Seabed 2030), the GEBCO Guiding Committee (GGC) at its 38th meeting (GGC38, April 2022) decided to create a project team to conduct a governance review of GEBCO (referred to as the GRPT). This project team was to be led by the GEBCO Secretary (Chair) and supported by the IOC GEBCO Representative (Vice Chair). In doing so, the GGC noted that “*whilst this was clearly a much needed and worthwhile endeavour*”, it could be a significant undertaking and the project team “*should be cautious not to make it too detailed or over burdensome*”. As such it was agreed that the aim should be to create “*a repeatable continuous improvement process rather than just a standalone report*”.

2. The core elements of the review are stakeholder mapping and engagement, mapping of the existing organization and functional structure, a review of the legal structure and framework, a gap analysis of existing governance instruments, a review of the financial status and the identification of findings and recommendations.

3. It is clear from the work undertaken so far that this has indeed proven to be a complex task which has had to draw on significant resource from both IHO and IOC Secretariats. It was therefore decided to defer final delivery of the findings to GGC40 (November 2023) before onward reporting to the parent organisations.

4. This report provides an update on the progress made to date including initial findings and next steps.

Process – work to date

5. Following the endorsement of the proposed creation of the GEBCO Governance Review Project Team (GRPT) by the IHO’s Inter-Regional Coordination Committee (IRCC)-14 and the IOC Executive Council at its 55th session, work on the Governance review commenced. It was agreed that the initial work would be focused on mapping GEBCO’s organisational and functional structure which would allow a gap analysis of the various governance instruments to be started with initial findings identified. Given the size and complexity of the task, it was necessary to initially focus on the core entities within the GEBCO Programme (being the sub-committees) and their relationship to their parent organisations.

Alignment to Strategy

6. At GGC38 and GGC39 it was acknowledged that ordinarily a governance review of this type would be undertaken against some form of organisational strategy to ensure that it could be properly implemented. Further, it was noted that until the new GEBCO Strategy reached an initial level of maturity, it was unlikely that the governance review would be completed.

Initial Considerations

7. In order to identify the initial set of findings presented in this paper, a series of questions were developed to ensure a consistent and repeatable approach was taken to what a largely qualitative assessment process is:

- Do the relevant governance instruments exist?
- Are the governance instruments up to date and do they adequately support the work of the group or committee?
- Is the work plan clear, current and logically structured?

- Is the work of the GGC and Sub-Committees appropriately structured in terms of programme delivery hierarchy?
- Is the membership of the group or committee appropriate and are there any barriers to effective contribution?
- Are any relevant working practices sufficiently clear, formalised and fit for purpose?

External Advisory Panel

8. The GEBCO GRPT ToRs and RoPs state that *“the project team is empowered to identify suitably qualified members of an External Advisory Panel (EAP), and to engage them as required in order to provide assurance to the GGC (and the bodies to which the GGC is accountable) that the work that undertaken is of sufficient quality, is impartial and is objective in its recommendations”* (cf. [IOC/EC-55/3.1.Doc\(4\)](#)). The GRPT considered carefully how they would make use of such a resource, and it was decided that they would be best employed as an external or peer review of the final report.

9. To date, three positions identified have been filled with only a representative from industry remaining to be appointed. Currently the Expert Advisory Panel is constituted of:

Legal Representative – Dr Virginie Tassin Campanella, Avocat à la Cour (Paris Bar) & EU/EFTA Attorney-at-Law (Zürich Bar), Vice President of the Scientific Council of INDEMER (Monaco)

Financial Representative – Mrs Sandrine Brunel, IHO Secretariat

Academic Representative – Dr Paul Elsner, University of London

Industry/Private Sector Representative – [TBC]

Summary of Initial Findings

10. Based upon the initial organisational and functional mapping of the GEBCO programme, the following initial findings have been identified.

Organisational Mapping

11. The GEBCO programme at its core consists of a Guiding Committee and five sub-committees. Over time, a number of associated bodies and project activity have come into existence; the most prominent of which is the Nippon Foundation – GEBCO Seabed 2030 Project.

12. In order to assess the status of the associated governance (and instruments), an organisational mapping exercise has been undertaken. *Figure 1* is an ‘organogram’ showing the functional structure and reporting lines of the modern GEBCO community. There were over 25 functional relationships identified and these have all been described and codified. Within the core GEBCO bodies, a gap analysis of governance instruments has been undertaken.

13. The initial findings described below were presented to GGC39 for discussion. They are presented by organisational entity. Each finding has been categorised by ‘type’ and where appropriate, a recommendation for onward action suggested. It should be noted that the suggested recommendations (where made) were to stimulate discussion and are subject to agreement by those bodies affected and ultimately endorsement by the GGC40.

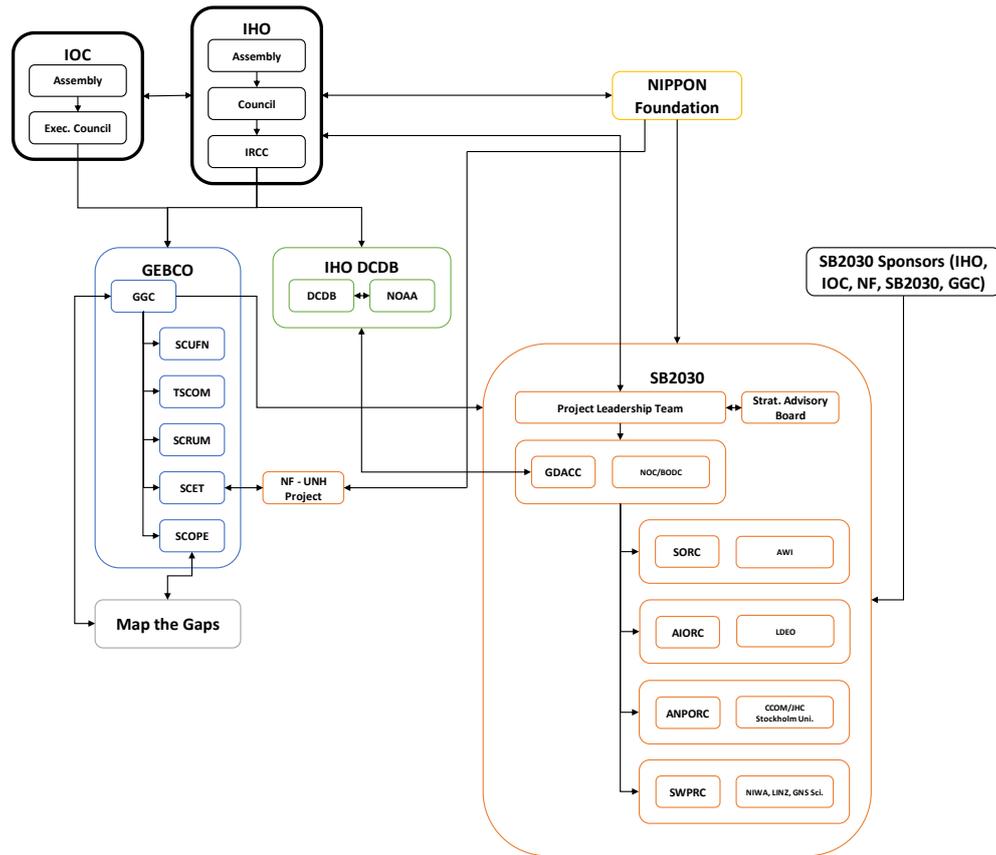


Figure 1 – GEBCO Programme and associated entities functional structure

GEBCO Programme Work Structure

14. Within the organisational structure described above, a review of the GEBCO work plan(s) has been undertaken. A key component of this activity was to consider the programmatic hierarchy and reporting mechanisms. The initial observations are that the work plan has become very complicated, with many work items, many of which need to be prioritised and potentially consolidated into more manageable packages. Further consideration will be given to the need for a dedicated programme board and more regular financial reporting/forecasting.

Parent Organisations

15. The review of existing governance instruments showed that the MoU between the two organisations predated key developments such as the UN Decade of Ocean Science for sustainable development (2021–2030) and Seabed 2030.

GEBCO Guiding Committee (GGC)

16. The main themes relate to the membership of the GGC and the way that the modern portfolio of work is structured. The nature of the findings identified is largely a reflection of how the work of the GEBCO programme has evolved over recent years into complex portfolio of different work items.

Technical Sub-Committee of Ocean Mapping (TSCOM)

17. TSCOM (with perhaps the exception of Sub-Committee on Undersea Feature Names—SCUFN) has the largest and most complex programme of work. As such, it has a number of functional relationships and dependencies on external entities. A number of the findings relate to how these relationships could be formalised and the potential for consolidating work items. It is likely that the latter will only be possible once the GEBCO strategy has been completed.

Sub-Committee on Regional Undersea Mapping (SCRUM)

18. The main issue identified in relation to the work of SCRUM is largely the same as for other activities/bodies such as TSCOM and Seabed 2030. In discussion with the SCRUM Chair Team it became evident that this is likely to be an exercise in clarifying the wording in the work plan as opposed to materially adjusting any activity.

Sub-Committee on Outreach and Public Engagement (SCOPE)

19. The main issues identified surround the interaction between SCOPE and the other GEBCO bodies, including the parent organisations. Given the purpose of SCOPE is to coordinate and support the outreach and communication requirements of the GEBCO Programme, strong coordination with the other GEBCO bodies is essential. Further, the Parent Organisations being IGOs that are accountable to their Member States, there is a need to have a more effective means of supporting the work of SCOPE. It is felt this could be achieved by the creation of a new category of participation/membership for the Communication leads of the parent organisation, together with the formalisation of a process for review planned communication material.

Sub-Committee on Education and Training (SCET)

20. SCET is the newest Sub-Committee and is still in its initiation phase. As a consequence, the only finding relates to the need to review the ToRs once the new GEBCO Strategy has been developed.

Next Steps

21. The initial findings presented in this paper have been discussed with the Chair Teams of the GEBCO bodies concerned. Due to the complexity of activity, and despite significant progress in completing core elements of the review, the GEBCO Guiding Committee still needs to discuss the final report and recommendations at its 40th Meeting in November 2023, prior to consideration by the parent organizations in 2024.