***WORLD HYDROGRAPHY DAY 2020***

In 2005, the General Assembly of the United Nations (UN) adopted Resolution A/60/30 on oceans and law of the sea, which in particular welcomed the adoption by the IHO of the World Hydrography Day, with the aim of giving suitable publicity to its work at all levels and of increasing the coverage of hydrographic information on a global basis.

The World Hydrography Day which is celebrated on 21 June each year, provides an opportunity to reflect upon the significant role Hydrography plays in our lives. It is foundation to all the activities undertaken in the oceans and seas like maritime trade, protection of the marine environment, coastal zone management, marine spatial data infrastructures, defence & security, resource exploration, tourism, fisheries etc. Thus Hydrography is an important enabler towards achieving the government’s vision of developing blue economy as one of the main pillars of development.

The IHO has chosen as its theme for world Hydrography Day 2020: ***“Hydrography – enabling autonomous technologies”***. The theme highlights the pivotal role of hydrography in autonomous technologies.

Mauritius is a maritime state with a large Exclusive Economic Zone (EEZ) of around 2.3 million square kilometres. In addition, an area of 396,000 square kilometres of seabed in the Mascarene region is jointly managed by the Government of Mauritius and Republic Seychelles as endorsed by the United Nations Commission on Limits of Continental Shelf in 2011. Mauritius being signatory to International Maritime Organisation (IMO) Convention of Safety of Life at Sea (SOLAS) has national and international responsibilities to provide necessary services for enhancing safety of navigation in its area of jurisdiction. Furthermore, in order to align with sustainable development goals SDG14, as promulgated by the United Nations, hydrographic data is considered vital in supporting the conservation and sustainable use of ocean, seas and marine resources.

The Mauritius Hydrographic Service (formerly Hydrographic Unit) has been established in 2013 under the aegis of the Ministry of Housing and Land Use Planning with the vision to *provide credible hydrographic services in Mauritius through indigenous capacity building for efficient & safe maritime transport, safety of navigation management of coastal zone, exploration & exploitation of marine resources, tourism, environmental protection and scientific research.*

Mauritius Hydrographic Service has incessantly pursued its goals and objectives through synergy with national stakeholders, assessment & prioritisation of national hydrographic requirements, asset operationalisation and management as well as training /human resource development.

Mauritius Hydrographic Service has been carrying out surveys for various stakeholders in our waters for projects of national importance. Mauritius Hydrographic Service has now the capacity to survey areas critical for shipping and surface navigation, carry out underwater search operations for wreck/ obstruction detection and survey extremely shallow lagoons surrounding the mainland and outer islands for supporting economic/ tourism related activities and is now working towards attaining medium and deep sea survey capability. In addition, significant progress has been made towards hydrographic support for scientific research & disaster management, physical modelling, sale of updated nautical products and developing expertise in matters related to maritime domain.

Mauritius Hydrographic Service has a clearly defined roadmap for expansion of its services in terms of providing hydrographic support to outer islands, transition to GIS based data management techniques, adding marine cartography capacity, developing Maritime Safety Information Services Framework and developing deep sea survey capabilities. Recently, Mauritius Hydrographic Service has acquired a Multi Beam Echo Sounder system that will enable the production of more detailed seafloor maps in less survey time and also meeting the stringent quality standards of the International Hydrographic Organisation. Mauritius Hydrographic Service has also acquired up-to –date processing and management software suits for efficient data processing and handling. The hydrographic information would be hosted in cloud server for efficient management and improving data security.

Assistance of India is also being obtained through a Memorandum of Understanding with Mauritius for the strengthening of Hydrographic Services in Mauritius. Thus, almost every year since 2006, Indian Naval Survey Ships have been deployed in our waters to carry out surveys covering major harbours, approaches to shipping intensive areas around Mauritius and outer islands. Based on these surveys, ten charts and Twelve Electronic Navigational Charts have been published by the National Hydrographic Office (NHO), India. The charts are available on sale at the Cartography Section of the Ministry of Housing and Land Use Planning. Further details may be obtained on the website of the Ministry.

**Ministry of Housing and Land Use Planning**

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