



39<sup>th</sup> ANNUAL MEETING  
OF THE  
NORTH-EAST ATLANTIC FISHERIES COMMISSION  
10-13 NOVEMBER 2020

**REPORT**

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## **1. Opening of the 39th Annual Meeting**

1.1 The President, Jacques Verborgh, European Union, opened the meeting welcoming all to the virtual platform that NEAFC was using. All Contracting Parties were represented.

## **2. Welcome address by the President and opening statements**

2.1 The President made an opening address. He included in his opening remarks in particular the sad passing away of Mr Sergey Belikov in September 2020. He noted Mr Belikov (Russian Federation) had greatly contributed to fisheries science and management in the North-East Atlantic, including his active work within NEAFC and his election as President of NEAFC in 2009. The President also welcomed the United Kingdom as a new Contracting Party to NEAFC.

2.2 Denmark (in respect of the Faroe Islands and Greenland), the European Union, Iceland, Norway, the Russian Federation and the United Kingdom made opening statements. Opening statements were also made by observers from Cooperating non-Contracting Parties (Bahamas, Canada Curacao and Panama), intergovernmental organisations (the UN Food and Agriculture Organisation, the International Maritime Organisation and OSPAR) and Non-Governmental Organisations (Marine Stewardship Council, the North Atlantic Pelagic Advisory Group, PEW and Seas at Risk with the Deep Sea Conservation Coalition).

## **3. Adoption of the agenda and appointment of rapporteur**

### **3.1 Adoption of the agenda and appointment of rapporteur**

3.1 The agenda was adopted in the form that had been circulated before the meeting (document AM 2020-01), no items were identified under AOB.

3.2 The Secretary was appointed as rapporteur.

### **3.2 Establishment and arrangements for Committees and other groups**

3.3 Arrangements were made for the Permanent Committee on Management and Science (PECMAS) to meet in the margins of the meeting in other virtual buildings.

## **4. Status of ratifications of amended NEAFC Convention**

4.1 The Secretary presented a report by the depository government on the status of the amended NEAFC Convention, document AM 2020-22.

4.2 The Secretary explained that the report from the depository government stated that the situation remained unchanged regarding the entry into force of the amendments to the Convention. The 2006 amendment had entered into force in 2013. The amendment adopted in 2004 would not enter into force unless the Contracting Party which had lodged an objection to the amendment would lift that objection. The Depository had also noted in its report, the accession of the United Kingdom to the Convention on 7 October 2020 (see also document AM 2020-23).

4.3 The Russian Federation thanked the Secretariat for the update and confirmed that its objection had not been lifted. The process regarding ratification of the amendment continued domestically. It hoped there would be an update at the next year's meeting.

## **5. Statistics on quota uptake and vessel activity**

5.1 The Chair of WG STATS, Thorsteinn Hilmarsson, Iceland, presented the output from the working group. The tables containing final catch statistics for 2019 were presented in document AM 2020-27. The tables containing the provisional monthly catch statistics for 2020 up to and including September, were presented in document AM 20202-44.

5.2 Both documents were noted by the Annual Meeting.

5.3 The Secretariat then presented the annual overview of bottom fishing in the Regulatory Area, document AM 2020-45. The NEAFC Monitoring Control and Surveillance Officer explained that the document contained analysis of data available in the MCS database of the Secretariat. This included graphical analysis of bottom fishing activity, i.e. number of fishing vessels reporting regulated deep sea species by Regulatory Areas/subareas and species. He explained that, following the conclusions of AM 2019, the Secretariat was analysing alerts of apparent bottom fishing activity in detail in the context of other data such as catch reports, vessel speed etc. This had greatly reduced the number of false positive alerts needing to be sent to Contracting Parties. Now only those alerts that the Secretariat assessed as not sufficiently clearly a false positive report were circulated.

5.4 The Annual Meeting noted the report of the Secretariat.

## **6. Report from the Permanent Committee on Management and Science, PECMAS**

6.1 The Chair of PECMAS, Karin Linderholm, European Union, presented the Committee's work under document AM 2020-36. A further meeting AM 2020-100 was held in the margins of the AM to finalise some recommendations and the scientific advice requests. She noted that the Committee had covered a series of points passed to it from WGFN in addition to the usual agenda. The Committee had considered ICES advice, noting in particular the use of NEAFC stock categories in the deep sea advice. It has also received analysis of aggregated deep sea catch data from the Secretariat.

6.2 PECMAS had adopted draft Recommendations presented under the relevant AM Agenda item 8 sub-items; deepsea fisheries, area management and other. In discussing advice requests PECMAS had agreed again the importance underlining the independence of the ICES advice from NEAFC. It had drafted non-recurring advice requests regarding the Rockall haddock box and on earlier ICES VME advice not acted on. It would also be expecting advice in 2021 on the evidence supporting a VME closure in the area of the current haddock box. It also asked for advice on WGFN identified issues on discards and bird bycatch. PECMAS had received ICES advice on deep

sea sharks, rays and chimaeras. NEAFC would continue its considerations on this at the next meeting under the collective arrangement.

## 7. Report by the Advisory Committee of ICES

7.1 Mark Dickey-Collas, the Chair of the Advisory Committee of ICES (ACOM), presented document AM 2020-56, the report of the Advisory Committee. The report explained the process to deliver and agree scientific advice to NEAFC. This included the 10 principles set out in the new framework for ICES advice. ICES also explained its priority areas for future development, maintenance of quality and stakeholder engagement processes. ICES then updated the meeting on the impacts of COVID 19 on its advice development noting minimal disruption this year, although some advice sheets had been abbreviated. It was continuing to address the impact of disruption to surveys, observer coverage, catch data etc on future advice. In other developments it noted its roadmap on developing advice on bycatch and a workshop on predictive habitat models. In addition, a workshop was planned in March 2021 on other effective area-based conservation measures (OECM), ICES highlighting the importance of NEAFC input to this.

7.2 The Annual Meeting thanked the ACOM Chair for a clear presentation

## 8. Scientific advice and management measures

### 8.1 Pelagic *Sebastes mentella* in the Irminger Sea

- 8.1.1 Report by the Advisory Committee of ICES
- 8.1.2 Relevant reports
- 8.1.3 Recommendations on management measures

8.1 Mark Dickey-Collas, the Chair of ACOM, presented the ICES advice for *Sebastes mentella* in the Irminger Sea (AM 2020-57). ICES explained the advice presented was as the 2019 advice that covered 2020/21. ICES noted that international peer review continued to endorse the findings. While ICES advised on both deep and shallow stocks, most of the catch was from the deep stock. ICES encouraged parties to provide all information and survey data on the species. It noted that the next available survey would be carried out by Germany and the Russian Federation (in 2021). Its advice, based on a consensus at ACOM, remained for a zero catch in 2021 for both shallow and deep stocks.

8.2 In discussion, some Contracting Parties thanked ICES for the clear presentation. The question was raised as to if any further improvements could be made to the data. The Russian Federation indicated that it had further data from 2018 and contradictory findings to ICES in its national analysis (see Statement of Russian Federation; document AM 2020-49). ICES explained that it had used Russian data in its work, although not used the same methodology as Russian scientists. Nevertheless, it hoped future surveys would provide further data, noting that any uncertainties in the data were not reflected in uncertainty in the overall advice, which had been agreed by consensus at ICES.

8.3 A proposal on the stock had been provided by Iceland and Denmark (in respect of the Faroe Islands and Greenland) (document AM 2020-37) for a zero catch in 2021. A further draft Recommendation with detailed measures was provided by the Russian Federation (document AM 2020-73) citing its view that it did not agree with the advice, pending further research.

8.4 Following discussions in the margins, there remained no consensus on the proposals. Both proposals were therefore put to a vote, in the order that they had been tabled.

8.5 The proposal by Iceland and Denmark (in respect of the Faroe Islands and Greenland) (document AM 2020-37) received four votes in favour (Denmark (in respect of the Faroe Islands and Greenland), Iceland, Norway and United Kingdom), one vote against (Russian Federation) and one abstention (the European Union). **The proposal for conservation and management measures for Pelagic *Sebastes mentella* in the Irminger Sea for 2021 (document AM 2020-37) was therefore adopted.**

8.6 The proposal by the Russian Federation (document AM 2020-73), received one vote in favour (the Russian Federation) and five votes against. It was therefore not adopted.

## 8.2 Pelagic *Sebastes mentella* in ICES Sub-areas I and II in the Regulatory Area

- 8.2.1 Report by the Advisory Committee of ICES
- 8.2.2 Relevant reports
- 8.2.3 Recommendations on management measures

8.7 Mark Dickey-Collas, the Chair of ACOM, presented new ICES advice for 2021 (document AM 2020-58). ICES advised a catch of no more than 66 158 tonnes in 2021 and 67 210 tonnes in 2022.

8.8 Two proposals for conservation and management measures for 2021 were presented.

8.9 Norway introduced the proposal from Norway and the Russian Federation (document AM 2020-47 Rev.1) which it explained was very similar to the previous year's proposal.

8.10 The European Union presented its proposal (document AM 2020-69), also similar to its proposal in the previous years.

8.11 Following further discussions between Contracting Parties both proposals were put to a vote in the order they were tabled.

8.12 The proposal from Norway and the Russian Federation (document AM 2020-47 Rev.1) received three votes in favour (Iceland, Norway and the Russian Federation) two votes against (Denmark (in respect of the Faroe Islands and Greenland) and the European Union) and one abstention (the United Kingdom). It was therefore not adopted.

8.13 The proposal from the European Union (document AM 2020-69) received one vote in favour (the European Union) three votes against (Iceland, Norway and the Russian Federation) and two abstentions (Denmark (in respect of the Faroe Islands and Greenland) and the United Kingdom). It was therefore not adopted.

### 8.3 Blue whiting

- 8.3.1 Report by the Advisory Committee of ICES
- 8.3.2 Relevant reports
- 8.3.3 Recommendations on management measures

8.14 Mark Dickey-Collas, the Chair of ACOM, presented the ICES advice on blue whiting (document AM 2020-59). ICES explained that the advice of a total catch not exceeding 929 292 tonnes was related to stock responses to changes in oceanography. Only a slight upturn in stock was noted and  $F$  in 2019 remained above the management plan. The report also noted that most landings were from pelagic rather than bottom trawl, with very little discarding. In recent years 10% of the catch was from the Regulatory Area. ICES informed the meeting that the International Blue Whiting Spawning Stock Survey was cancelled in 2020 due to COVID disruption, hence the advice was similar to 2019.

8.15 The European Union, which had chaired the coastal State consultations presented its proposal (document AM 2020-55) in accordance with the advice from ICES, noting this represented a 20% drop in catch.

8.16 **The proposal for conservation and management measures for blue whiting for 2021 (document AM 2020-55) was adopted by consensus.** It was noted that these measures were not fully comprehensive, as they did not include allocation among the Contracting Parties.

### 8.4 Norwegian spring spawning (Atlanto-Scandian) herring

- 8.4.1 Report by the Advisory Committee of ICES
- 8.4.2 Relevant reports
- 8.4.3 Recommendations on management measures

8.17 Mark Dickey-Collas, the Chair of ACOM, presented the ICES advice based on the Long-Term Management Strategy agreed by coastal States (document AM 2020-60). ICES advised that catches should not exceed 651 033 tonnes in 2021. ICES noted a good year class from 2016 would raise the biomass in future years.

8.18 Norway, the Chair of the coastal State consultations, presented its proposal (document AM 2020-42) in accordance with the advice from ICES. It noted that the relevant states had agreed the total allowable catch. It also noted in passing that while harvesting above  $F_{MSY}$  parameters, the ICES advice had shown that the fishing pressure was below  $F_{pa}$  in 2018, 2019 and 2020.

8.19 **The proposal for conservation and management measures for herring for 2021 (document AM 2020-42) was adopted by consensus.** It was noted that these measures were not fully comprehensive, as they did not include allocation among the Contracting Parties.

### 8.5 Mackerel

- 8.5.1 Report by the Advisory Committee of ICES
- 8.5.2 Relevant reports
- 8.5.3 Recommendations on management measures

8.20 Mark Dickey-Collas, the Chair of ACOM, made a presentation of the ICES advice on Mackerel (document AM 2020-61). The advice for 2021 was for a catch not exceeding 852 284 tonnes. ICES detailed its modelling to evaluate the Harvest Control Rule options under the management plan for the stock. This had highlighted that long-term yields within 1% of the maximum could be achieved with a lower target  $F$ ; these resulted in higher SSB with less interannual variation in yield and SSB. It noted catches in 2019 were below  $F_{msy}$  and above  $MSY B_{trigger}$ . ICES explained in response to a question that requests for its advice excluded considerations on allocation.

8.21 Norway, the Chair of the coastal State consultations, presented a proposal (document AM 2020-41) on management measures for the stock, noting however that no total catch had yet been agreed in consultations.

8.22 The United Kingdom then presented its proposal (document AM 2020-46) on management measures for the stock, which included a percentage cap on the catch in the Regulatory Area.

8.23 The Russian Federation also presented a proposal (document AM 2020-84) on management measures for the stock. These included elements related to transfer of quota between years.

8.24 In discussion it was noted by one Contracting Party that while consultations had not agreed a total catch, the basis of discussions had been to follow the ICES advice. Following further extensive consultations at the meeting, the three proposals were withdrawn by their respective proposers. This was in the prospect of further consultations on mackerel between the relevant states at the end of the month, which could be in due course followed by a written procedure of the Commission.

**8.25 The Annual Meeting therefore adopted the following statement with regard to mackerel: Recognising that the coastal State consultations on North-East Atlantic mackerel for 2021 have not yet concluded, and that those delegations have agreed to meet again on 25 November, NEAFC Heads of Delegations agreed: (1) to withdraw temporarily their proposals on the management of the stock; and (2) to meet again after the conclusion of those coastal State consultations to further consider appropriate management measures for the stock in the Regulatory Area in 2021.**

8.26 Iceland, while noting it was in accord with the agreed statement on mackerel, requested the floor to comment on the earlier United Kingdom proposal (document AM 2020-62). The view of Iceland was that proposing to limit the percentage catch in the regulatory area - for any fish stock- accorded coastal States less rights than non-coastal States. While supporting better regulation in international waters, it could not accept on principle any proposals in that in its view affected coastal State rights. The United Kingdom noted it did not share the Icelandic assessment. It saw better regulation in international waters as key part of better management of the fishery and looked forward to further discussion on the issues in the future.

## 8.6 Rockall haddock

- 8.6.1 Report by the Advisory Committee of ICES
- 8.6.2 Relevant reports



### 8.6.3 Recommendations on management measures

8.27 Mark Dickey-Collas, the Chair of ACOM, gave a presentation of the ICES advice on Rockall haddock (document AM 2020-62). ICES explained that catches should be no more than 6239 tonnes in 2021 with two proposed NEAFC management strategy catch scenarios. This advice represented a reduction of catch by 40% due to an expected decline in the stock due to low recruitment.

8.28 In discussion it was noted by the Contracting Parties that ICES advice had not been provided with regard to the measures to protect juvenile haddock nor on the need for a VME protection measures in case of absence of the need to protect juvenile haddock. ICES explained it was aiming to resolve the situation and would present advice on both aspects in 2021. Contracting Parties identified the need to roll over the existing measures on restricting fisheries to longlines, however it was also noted that the advice included a total catch limit. It was suggested that PECMAS could include in its agenda the need to reshape the framework for management for this stock.

8.29 The United Kingdom and the European Union tabled a proposal and on conservation and management measures for Rockall haddock (document AM 2020-67).

**8.30 The proposal for conservation and management measures for Rockall haddock for 2021 (document AM 2020-67) was adopted by consensus.**

## 8.7 Deep-sea fisheries

- 8.7.1 Report by the Advisory Committee of ICES
- 8.7.2 Relevant reports
- 8.7.3 Recommendations on management measures

8.31 Mark Dickey-Collas, the Chair of ACOM, made a presentation of the ICES advice on Deep-Sea Stocks (document AM 2020-63). ICES advice was as follows:

- NEAFC Category 1 (stock specific): Roundnose grenadier in Reykjanes ridge 574 tonnes (2020-23); Roundnose grenadier in Faroes/Hatton Bank 3177 tonnes (2021-22). Orange roughy (Category 1+2) was advised for zero catch.
- NEAFC Category 2 (no directed fishery): Advice was for zero catch for blue ling (2020-23), Tusk (2020-24) and roughhead grenadier (2021-25).
- NEAFC Category 3 (expanding fisheries): no fishery was identified, although it was noted alfonsinos had experienced some significant landings over the last decade.
- NEAFC Category 4 (areas primarily in EEZ): blue ling spawning closures should be maintained.

8.32 In discussion, ICES clarified that roughsnout and roughhead grenadier bycatch were included in the catch scenarios (although this had not been clear due to the abbreviated advice sheets used in this COVID affected year). On orange roughy, ICES clarified that while it had some data, it needed information at seamount level to assess local depletions – this was currently unavailable due to privacy issues in reporting on one vessel's activities.

8.33 The Chair of PECMAS then introduced a recommendation from PECMAS for measures restricting fisheries on blue ling during its spawning period (document AM 2020-35). **The proposal for regulatory measures for the protection of blue ling 2021 to 2023 (document AM 2020-35) was adopted by consensus.**

8.34 Norway then tabled proposals for grenadiers in the Hatton Bank and Rockall (a TAC of 2 620 tonnes - document AM 2020-39 Rev.1) and the mid-Atlantic ridge (a TAC of 574 tonnes - document AM 2020-40). Norway explained it based its proposal for the Hatton Bank and Rockall (document AM 2020-39 Rev.1) on the division in catches taken from the Regulatory Area and the EEZ, as set out in the advice from ICES. The European Union explained that, while it was willing to try to resolve the different approaches, it was not in a position to endorse the Norwegian proposals, given the European Union caught 92% of the total catch in the NEAFC RA. .

8.35 After further discussion, the proposal by Norway (document AM 2020-39 Rev.1), received four votes in favour (Denmark (in respect of the Faroe Islands and Greenland), Iceland, Norway and the Russian Federation), one vote against (the European Union) and one abstention (the United Kingdom). **The proposal for conservation and management measures for grenadiers in the Hatton Bank and Rockall for 2021 (document AM 2020-39 Rev.1) was thereby adopted.**

8.36 The proposal by Norway (document AM 2020-40), received four votes in favour (Denmark (in respect of the Faroe Islands and Greenland), Iceland, Norway and the Russian Federation), one vote against (the European Union) and one abstention (the United Kingdom). **The proposal for conservation and management measures for grenadiers in the mid-Atlantic ridge for 2021 (document AM 2020-40) was thereby adopted.**

8.37 The European Union then presented its document (AM 2020-83) on conservation and management measures for orange roughy (for 2021-2024). It explained it hoped to get agreement on a prohibition on the fishery in light of the advice from ICES. Denmark (in respect of the Faroe Islands and Greenland) stated its position on the stock was well known and its view was that the general recommendation on deep sea stocks was adequate in this instance. Following further consultations, the proposal was put to a vote. The proposal by the European Union (document AM 2020-83), received five votes in favour and one vote against (Denmark (in respect of the Faroe Islands and Greenland)). **The proposal for conservation and management measures for orange roughy for 2021 to 2024 (document AM 2020-83) was thereby adopted.**

## 8.8 Area management

- 8.8.1 Report by the Advisory Committee of ICES
- 8.8.2 Relevant reports
- 8.8.3 Recommendations on management measures

8.38 Mark Dickey-Collas, the Chair of ACOM, presented the ICES advice on Vulnerable Marine Ecosystems in the NEAFC Regulatory Area (document AM 2020-64). ICES explained that while there was no change to the existing VME closures advised, there was a significant improvement to the VMS data it received. After setting out the number of habitat records and the improvements in data flow, ICES proceeded to detail its summaries of fishing in or near closed areas or outside of existing fishing areas. In general ICES reported minor infringements, although

it reported low intensity bottom trawling in mid and southern mid-atlantic ridge and the use of bottom contact static gear in the Josephine seamount.

8.39 In discussion, several Contracting Parties raise the issue of the need for advice to go beyond reporting the presence of indicators. Instead there was a need to explicitly address whether there was a need to protect VMEs in the haddock box, as well as whether the borders would in fact remain the same for VME protection. It was explained that the VME Recommendation did not allow any bottom contact gear, whereas the haddock box Recommendation allowed long line gear.

8.40 ICES said it would aim to deliver the information as requested in 2021. It was also requested that the Secretary continue to bring this issue to the attention of ICES, noting the standing request for advice on the VME did not need to be amended.

8.41 The Secretariat then explained the system that it had put in place since the discussions at the AM 2019 which had highlighted a number of false positive alerts of bottom fishing in the areas outside existing fishing. These false positive alerts had now been greatly reduced as also explained by the Secretariat under agenda item 5. This explanation was supported by a Contracting Party, and ICES confirmed it was seeing better communications with the Secretariat on such data.

8.42 In response to an NGO question on observation and inference of VME presence, ICES explained that it was to hold a workshop in 2021 on matching indicators of VMEs to actual presence of VMEs. The NGO also highlighted the need not only to look at enforcement of VME measures as was being highlighted by ICES, but also the restoration of such habitats in light of high-level international commitments.

8.43 The Chair of PECMAS then tabled a proposal by PECMAS on a Recommendation to amend the Recommendation on the protection of vulnerable marine ecosystems in the NEAFC Regulatory Area (document AM 2020-34). It was explained that this had also been discussed at the WGFN and brought to the attention of PECMAS, with an aim of clarifying the degree and extent of area-based protection to VMEs offered by the Recommendation (19:2014). In welcoming the proposal the work of WGFN and its Chair was praised.

**8.44 The proposal to amend the Recommendation 19:2014 on the protection of vulnerable marine ecosystems in the NEAFC Regulatory Area (document AM 2020-34) was adopted by consensus.**

## 8.9 Other

- 8.9.1 Report by the Advisory Committee of ICES
- 8.9.2 Relevant reports
- 8.9.3 Recommendations on management measures

8.45 Mark Dickey-Collas, the Chair of ACOM, presented an overview of other stocks in the Convention Area (document AM 2020-66). In reporting on other issues ICES started with advice on spurdog (picked dogfish). The advice was for a zero targeted catch for 2021 and 2022 with bycatch not exceeding 2 468 tonnes. The assessment would be benchmarked in 2021.

8.46 ICES then reported back on a joint request from NEAFC and OSPAR for advice on deep sea elasmobranchs. The output from the advice included maps and shapefiles on 21 species. ICES noted that current measures aimed to avoid targeting of the elasmobranchs should be maintained, but also presented measures for potential mitigation of bycatch. It noted that selective gear would be difficult to implement, other measures such as exclusion or deterrent devices had potential but were not yet operational. Spatio-temporal management as well as consideration of particular net deployment practice could also be considered.

8.47 Lastly, ICES gave an update of progress on development of advice in response to a NEAFC request on the status of the ecosystem in a portion of the high seas of the central Arctic Ocean.

8.48 The Chair of PECMAS then introduced a recommendation from PECMAS for continuing a ban on targeted fisheries on spurdog (document AM 2020-82). **The proposal for conservation and management measures for picked dogfish/spurdog for 2021 to 2022 (document AM 2020-82) was adopted by consensus.**

8.49 The meeting then moved onto the consideration of a proposal by Norway and the Russian Federation on amendment of Recommendation 11:2015 on Shrimp Fisheries in the NEAFC Regulatory Area (document AM 2020-48).

8.50 Norway introduced the proposal to prohibit the use of collecting bags with shrimp trawl sorting grids under Recommendation 11:2015. Norway explained, as it had repeated in earlier years, it was concerned by the capture of non-target fish and juveniles that the Recommendation aimed at letting escape. Thus, the proposal was rectifying the current use of a collecting bag undermining the NEAFC recommendation on sorting grids. The Russian Federation supported the proposal.

8.51 Some other Contracting Parties did not support the proposal, stating that the use of a collecting bag was not a problem in itself as long as the fish caught by the bag represented legal fishing opportunities, and not, for instance, sorting in juveniles. One Contracting Party suggested the AM should consider the issue in light of further information, noting a draft request for advice was being considered by PECMAS 2 in the margins of the AM. It did not see this as a delaying action, but one that would enable progress in future years.

8.52 After further discussions between the Contracting Parties and following a vote (three (3) Contracting Parties for and three (3) Contracting Parties against), the proposal did not receive enough support to be adopted.

## 9. Report from the Permanent Committee on Monitoring and Compliance, PECMAC

9.1 The Chair of PECMAC, Thord Monsen, Norway, presented the Committee's work. He noted that PECMAC had held three meetings prior to the Annual Meeting (documents AM 2020-09, AM 2020-20 and AM 2020-68). Additionally, the Working Group on ERS Implementation had met 5 times over the year (documents AM 2020-04, 05, 06, 07, and 38) and the Ad Hoc Working Group on Flag State Performance had one meeting (document AM 2020-54). All these meetings had been virtual due to the pandemic. The Chair explained documents on

the Compliance Report, amendments to the Scheme, IUU lists and co-operating non-Contracting Party (CNCP) status would arise under the relevant agenda items.

9.2 The Chair then highlighted some discussions in the Committee. PECMAC had shared information experience on control measures applied throughout the pandemic as well as on the protective protocols to allow inspection both at Sea and at Port. WGFN had forwarded a number of issues to PECMAC, including on transshipment, marine litter, discarding, research activity and CNCP status. Some of these were being considered by the AM under separate proposals, while others, such as discarding and research vessels would return to PECMAC for further consideration. Regarding Port State Control PECMAC had agreed that the Secretariat should send an information document on the implementation of the PSMA in NEAFC to FAO, and also publish the paper on the NEAFC webpage. The Chair also gave an update on the request from the Commission, for Contracting Parties to carry out self-assessments on flag State performance. This process was still in progress while the Ad Hoc Working Group on Flag State Performance had agreed a process of developing the final synthesis report .

9.3 On the ERS, the Chair reported that VMS FLUX was now in production by NEAFC and all relevant European Union Member States were sending their VMS position messages to the newly operational NEAFC FLUX node. Lessons learnt regarding this process would hopefully ease transition for other Contracting Parties.

9.4 The ERS Implementation Group was continuing its work and proposals on updated implementation documents would be considered under agenda item 10. However, he noted there were some outstanding technical documents needed in order to meet the requirements of Recommendation 19:2019 and Recommendation 20:2020. These in particular related to date and time of transmission from the vessel which had been subsequently been updated in the UN CEFACT standard. The Chair noted that PECMAC had not been able to agree on a Version 2 of the implementation document on FLUX Fishing Activity related to this issue and would need guidance from the Annual Meeting.

9.5 The Chair noted that PECMAC had finalised one of the conditions established in Recommendation 19:2019 by agreeing on procedures to establish a level playing field during the transition period, with regard to having the same data made available for inspection purposes as is available in the current NEAFC Scheme. This was outlined in document AM 2020-33, provided for information.

9.6 In discussion, the Chair elaborated that, following the issue being referred to it by AM 2019 and the WGFN, there had been a proposal on transshipment considered at the 3 PECMAC meetings. However, no agreement had been reached. While one Contracting Party expressed disappointment at the lack of progress, another suggested that a return to the issue for further elaboration could help progress the differences.

9.7 The Annual Meeting noted the report of the Chair of PECMAC and thanked him and his Committee and the working groups for the effective work despite the restrictions of the Pandemic. The Annual Meeting noted that it would like the work on transshipments to continue at PECMAC. It also noted the level playing field document (AM 2020-33) as well as the preliminary report of the AHWG on flag state performance (AM 2020-54).

## 10. The NEAFC Scheme of Control and Enforcement

### 10.1 Implementation of the Scheme

10.1 The PECMAC Chair introduced the NEAFC Compliance report (documents AM 2020-86) which reported on the implementation of the NEAFC Scheme by both Contracting Parties and CNCPs. PECMAC had updated the annual reporting template to improve this process for CPs and was planning also to do this for CNCPs. It had also noted an improvement of the Secretariat's monitoring of bottom fishing activity in the Regulatory Area with a reduction in the number of false positive alerts in order to allow the Contracting Parties to better focus their investigations.

10.2 In terms of the content of the Compliance report, the Chair noted that the report included non-compliance from some of the Contracting Parties on the requirement to have an inspection vessel present in the Regulatory Area if that Contracting Party had more than 10 fishing vessels conducting fishing activities in the Area at the same time. He explained that discussing this issue, while PECMAC underlined that compliance was needed, it had also noted that the expectations expressed in the relevant Article did not necessarily match some of the practicalities such as the split in the Regulatory Area, the evolution of fisheries monitoring or the potential for cooperation on inspections between parties. PECMAC 2021 would therefore look at clarifying both the expectation and intention of this requirement.

10.3 The Chair explained there were a total of 701 Contracting Party fishing vessels 74 CNCP vessels notified in 2019. He noted that some Contracting Parties were below the benchmarks for the minimum percentage of frozen and/or fresh landings inspected. He also noted that most of the infringements in 2019 referred to Port State Control with a small increase compared to 2018.

10.4 Contracting Parties thanked the Chair for the report, noting a common desire for the level of compliance being equal between all parties.

**The NEAFC Compliance report for 2019 was adopted by consensus.**

### 10.2 Possible adoption of proposals from PECMAC

The following proposals were presented by the Chair of PECMAC:

10.5 **It was agreed** to amend the NEAFC Scheme of Control and Enforcement to add email-based systems as fallback option in the event that the NEAFC website was offline, as presented in document AM 2020-11.

10.6 **It was agreed** to add codes to Appendix 1b) to Annex IV of the NEAFC Scheme of Control and Enforcement; Type of Packing and Type of Container List, as presented in document AM 2020-17.

10.7 **It was agreed** that Article 7b of the NEAFC Scheme of Control and Enforcement be amended to include a general prohibition of discharging garbage at sea, as presented in document AM 2020-21.

10.8 **It was agreed** to amend Recommendation on Amending Recommendation 20:2020 on introducing the ERS Implementation document in Annex IX of the Scheme (FLUX Fishing Activities), as presented in document AM 2020-24. The details of the amendments were set out in the versioning section of the implementation document.

10.9 **It was agreed** to amend Recommendation on Amending Recommendation 21:2020 on introducing the ERS Implementation document in Annex IX of the NEAFC Scheme of Control and Enforcement (FLUX Vessel Position), as presented in document AM 2020-25. The details of the amendments were set out in the versioning section of the implementation document

10.10 The Chair provided further detail on the PECMAC proposal to amend the requirements in the NEAFC Scheme relating to CNCP status (document AM 2020-65 Rev1). This had followed up a request from AM 2019 as well as deliberations at WGFN. The proposal introduced a new category of general membership CNCP and active membership CNCP, the latter for CNCPs who want to operate fishing vessels (as defined by the Scheme) or research programmes in the Regulatory Area. A fee of GBP 5500 per year for active membership was also introduced by the amendments. The requirements would apply for applications from 2021 onwards.

10.11 **It was agreed** to amend the requirements in the NEAFC Scheme of Control and Enforcement relating to co-operating non-Contracting Party status, as presented in document AM 2020-65 Rev1.

### 10.3 Possible adoption of proposals from JAGDM

No proposals tabled

### 10.4 A- and B- lists of IUU vessels

10.12 The Chair of PECMAC reminded the meeting that AM 2019 had amended the Scheme to authorise the Secretary to place vessels listed as IUU vessels by specific RFMOs onto the NEAFC IUU A-list without delay for further consideration by PECMAC. PECMAC 2020 accordingly was recommending that the fishing vessels listed in document AM 2020-51 should be placed on the NEAFC IUU B-list in accordance with Article 44 of the Scheme.

10.13 In a further development the Chair explained that there had been an incident with a Panamanian fishing vessel in the Regulatory Area. This was described in document AM 2020-52. PECMAC had agreed to place the vessel on the NEAFC IUU A-list and would consider in 2021 relevant information available with the view to remove it from the NEAFC IUU A-list or recommend it to be placed on the NEAFC IUU B-list.

10.14 The report from the Chair of PECMAC was noted and **it was agreed to adopt document AM 2020-51 as the basis for amendment of the vessels listed on the NEAFC confirmed IUU B-list.**

### 10.5 Other

10.15 The Russian Federation presented document AM 2020-91 Rev2 (Norway and the Russian Federation) which proposed to introduce a Version 2 of the ERS FLUX Fishing Activities (FA) implementation document. It explained that the Commission had already adopted “Date and Time of Transmission” as an element to be included in FLUX ERS through Recommendations



19:2019 and 20:2020. Furthermore, this element was now included in the updated version of the UN CEFACT FLUX standard. Since agreement on including the date and time of transmission in the implementation document had not been achieved at PECMAC, the proposal was that the Annual Meeting adopted the NEAFC FLUX FA ERS Implementation Document version 2.0 as set out in document AM 2020-91 Rev2 and its annex. The annex also included business rules to test the presence of the date and time of transmission data element. In addition, the document set out a timeline for the introduction of ERS FLUX FA version 2.0 which would allow the three systems (NAF, ERS FLUX FA version 1 and ERS FLUX FA version 2) to run in parallel until all Contacting Parties had moved to a FLUX version that included the date and time of transmission data element.

Following further consultations, wording on the timetable for transition was agreed. Based on the understanding reached during the Annual meeting, the agreed approach did not amend the requirements and the timeline set out in Recommendation 19:2019 for the introduction of the ERS.

**10.16 Therefore, it was agreed to adopt the proposal for a Version 2 of the ERS FLUX Fishing Activities implementation document, as presented in document AM 2020-91 Rev2 (Annex R to the AM report), which included the wording: in order to provide an opportunity to plan and establish a timeline for the transition, the three systems will run in parallel until all Contacting Parties have moved to a FLUX version that includes the date and time of transmission data element.**

10.17 At the moment of adoption the European Union stated: The European Union can support the inclusion of a version 2 for FLUX/ERS in NEAFC, understanding that it will be an option for Contracting Parties and that using it does not impact any other aspect of what has been already agreed by the Parties in Recommendations 19:2019, 20:2020 and 21:2020, in particular the procedure and the duration of the transition period indicated in Recommendation 19:2019.

## 11. Cooperating non-Contracting Party Status

### 11.1 Possible renewal of cooperating non-Contracting Party status

11.1 The Chair of PECMAC set out the conclusions of PECMAC with regard to applications for renewal of CNCP status for 2021 (documents AM 2020-12 to -16). PECMAC had agreed to recommend the status of Bahamas, Canada and New Zealand to be renewed. Reservations had been expressed with regard to the renewals of status for Curacao and Panama and these had both been invited to provide more information to be considered by PECMAC. While Curacao had provided some additional information, the question of the renewal of CNCPs status had been forwarded to the Annual Meeting. The Chair explained that Panama had not provided sufficient information for its application as well as the incidents involving two Panamanian vessels in the Regulatory Area. Panama had been requested to provide further information. PECMAC had agreed (by consensus) to recommend to the Annual Meeting not to renew the status of Panama as CNCP for 2021.



11.2 The proposal to renew the status for Bahamas was agreed by consensus. **It was therefore agreed to renew the co-operating non-Contracting Party status of Bahamas for 2021.**

11.3 The proposal to renew the status for Canada was agreed by consensus. **It was therefore agreed to renew the co-operating non-Contracting Party status of Canada 2021.**

11.4 The proposal to renew the status for Curaçao was put to a vote; Denmark (in respect of the Faroe Islands and Greenland) and the Russian Federation voted in favour, the European Union, Iceland Norway and the United Kingdom voted against. It was therefore agreed not to renew the co-operating non-Contracting Party status of Curaçao for 2021.

11.5 Curacao indicated it would request further guidance to understand what information was missing to avoid the same situation in future. It was noted therefore that if any further guidance was available it would be sent to Curacao.

11.6 The proposal to renew the status for New Zealand was agreed by consensus. **It was therefore agreed to renew the cooperating non-Contracting Party status of New Zealand for 2021.**

11.7 The proposal to not to renew the status for Panama was agreed by consensus. It was therefore agreed not to renew the co-operating non-Contracting Party status of Panama for 2021.

11.8 Panama explained its difficulties in meeting deadlines for sending further information, in particular with respect to the incidents involving Panamanian vessels. It was noted that NEAFC procedures and deadlines nevertheless applied and Panama was able to apply again in 2021.

## 11.2 Possible new granting of cooperating non-Contracting Party status

11.9 No applications had been received in 2020 for new grants of CNCP status for 2021.

## 12. Report from the Working Group on the Future of NEAFC, WGFN

12.1 The Secretary introduced the very full report of the Working Group Future of NEAFC (WGFN) (document AM 2020-10) on behalf of the Chair, Terje Lobach (Norway) who had retired since the working group meeting in February 2020. He reminded the Annual Meeting that it had agreed in 2019 that WGFN should meet in 2020 with a revised Terms of Reference.

12.2 WGFN had discussed how to improve transparency of NEAFC to observers in line with best practice at other RFMOs. Following its discussion WGFN had proposed to the AM draft amended Rules of Procedure (document AM 2020-29, below). In proposing to amend the Rules of Procedure WGFN had reiterated the consensus that no observers should be allowed to FAC and, the view of the majority of Parties that in general no observers should be allowed at PECMAC.

12.3 WGFN had noted that while CNCP status remained a valuable element in NEAFC's Scheme, it would be useful to separate out the categories of membership into those with carrying out fishing activities in the RA and those wanting a more general co-operation status. It

had also considered the potential introduction of a CNCP fee. WGFN had forwarded the issue to PECMAC (see document AM 2020-65).

12.4 WGFN then discussed the United Nations General Assembly resolutions on fisheries. It agreed that many of the issues raised in the resolutions had been earlier addressed by NEAFC, but this was not documented clearly by NEAFC. An explanatory document was accordingly being developed, with input from PECMAC and PECMAS for further consideration by WGFN in 2021.

12.5 In light of the negotiations on a draft UN agreement on Biodiversity Beyond National Jurisdiction, WGFN considered it would be useful to amend the NEAFC VME recommendation (19:2014) to clarify the degree of protection that is afforded to 98% of the Regulatory Area. This was taken up by PECMAS (see document AM 2020-34).

12.6 In light of past and planned discussions on the Informal Consultation of State Parties (ICSP) to the United Nations Fish Stocks Agreement (UNFSA), WGFN discussed the ecosystem approach to fisheries management (referred to PECMAS) and RFMO performance reviews. WGFN agreed that some key best practice points should be sent to the Annual Meeting 2020 to be adopted as guidance for the next performance Review (document AM 2020-26). It also agreed to send a document on the NEAFC practice related to the ecosystem approach to the ICSP <https://www.neafc.org/other/31809>

12.7 In its busy agenda WGFN also considered preparations to the UN Workshop for the 5-year review of the implementation of the United Nations General Assembly resolutions on bottom fisheries, vulnerable marine ecosystems and deep-sea fish stocks. This workshop was delayed but NEAFC nevertheless sent the UN a detailed document on NEAFC's deep sea fisheries and VME measures <https://www.neafc.org/other/31810>

12.8 WGFN discussed other global and regional developments under the FAO and other RFMOs. These discussions included on: transshipment, referred to PECMAC; research vessels, referred to PECMAC and PECMAS; marine litter, referred to PECMAC (see document AM 2020-21); discards, referred to PECMAC and PECMAS and bycatch to PECMAS (see PECMAS requests for ICES advice for both discards and bycatch).

12.9 For the rest of the meeting, the collective arrangement and broader international developments were discussed, as well as the issue of how NEAFC communicated in this context.

12.10 In discussion, an NGO noted the usefulness of the exercise to identify NEAFC's actions and measures in relation to the UNGA resolution. It also highlighted the effective observership activity in PECMAS and suggested this would be useful in PECMAC too.

12.11 The Annual Meeting thanked the WGFN for its work, and in particular requested that its sincere thanks be sent to Terje Lobach taking into account his long and distinguished role in NEAFC, including in chairing various bodies throughout the years. It was also noted that the United Kingdom had been nominated to Chair WGFN to replace Norway.

#### **Guidance on the Performance Review**

12.12 The Secretariat then briefly introduced document AM 2020-26, which set out some guidance for the next NEAFC Performance Review based on the key findings of the Chair of the

14<sup>th</sup> ICSP of UNFSA. Points included on wide participation, selection of panels and the process for consideration and follow up of recommendations.

**12.13 The Annual Meeting agreed to take note of the guidance for use in the next NEAFC Performance Review as in document AM 2020-26 [Annex S to the AM 2020]**

**Amendment of NEAFC Rules of Procedure.**

12.14 The Secretariat introduced document AM 2020-29 which set out amendments to the rules of procedure relating to observers and the conclusion of the WGFN in adopting the amendments.

**12.15 The Annual Meeting adopted by consensus the proposal for amendment of the NEAFC Rules of Procedure as set out in document AM 2020-29.** In doing so, the Annual Meeting reiterated the consensus that no observers should be allowed to FAC and, the view of the majority of the Contracting Parties was that in general no observers should be allowed at PECMAC.

### **13. Request for scientific advice**

13.1 The Chair of PECMAS, Karin Linderholm (European Union) noted that members of PECMAS had met in the margins of the meeting for drafting and presented the following documents for requesting:

- Recurring advice from ICES as set out in document AM 2020-94
- Non-recurring advice from ICES on bird bycatch as set out in document AM 2020-95 Rev1.
- Non-recurring advice from ICES on discarding as set out in document AM 2020-96
- Non-recurring advice from ICES on the efficacy of the Rockall haddock closure in protection of juvenile haddock as set out in document AM 2020-97
- Non-recurring advice on VME advice in the Regulatory Area not acted on earlier as set out in document AM 2020-98.

13.2 The Meeting thanked the Chair and members of PECMAS for their diligent work in preparing the requests for advice.

**13.3 It was agreed to send the requests for advice to ICES, on the basis of documents AM 2020-94, 95 Rev1, 96, 97 and 98.**

13.4 The European Union then tabled document AM 2020-99, a proposal for a request to ICES for advice regarding the use of collecting bags in fisheries. The European Union explained that the draft request had been considered by the two PECMAS meetings, and while it had received various inputs there was still no consensus on final drafting. It therefore was proposing the request to the Annual Meeting for adoption. Two other Contracting Parties indicated that they believed consensus at PECMAS could have been achieved with more time, and possibly via correspondence. Norway explained that for that reason it would abstain from voting, even though not being against the proposal as such.

13.5 The proposal was therefore put to a vote. Four Contracting Parties voted in favour, (Denmark (in respect of the Faroe Islands and Greenland), European Union, Iceland, and United Kingdom), one voted against (Russian Federation) and one abstained (Norway). **The request for advice from ICES on the basis of document AM 2020-99 was therefore adopted.**

## 14. Report from the Finance and Administration Committee

14.1 The Chair of the Finance and Administration Committee (FAC), Áki Johansen, Denmark (in respect of the Faroe Islands and Greenland), presented the Committee's work. He explained that the FAC had met on 4 November (see documents AM 2020-03 Rev1 and AM 2020-50). Since the current Chair and vice-Chair (Kristján Freyr Helgason, Iceland) were unable to carry on in their roles, FAC had elected its new Chair, Kate Sanderson, Denmark (in respect of the Faroe Islands and Greenland), and its new vice-Chair Jake Round, United Kingdom.

14.2 The Chair invited the Annual Meeting to note the audited accounts for 2019. The FAC had also noted an increase in expenditure on the ERS in 2020, however the overspend had been approved by the President in consultation with the Chair of FAC. Despite this, the overall budget was forecast to be in surplus in 2020 due to less activity on some lines due to the Pandemic. The Chair also noted the agreed draw-down from the General fund in 2019 to offset part of the contributions. The Committee had agreed that the latest forecast for 2021 and 2022 was conservative in light of the uncertainties in the coming years due to COVID 19. The Committee therefore had invited the Annual Meeting to adopt the budget for 2021 and note the estimate for 2022. In terms of contributions the Chair noted that with the accession of the United Kingdom, its contributions had started from November of 2020 according to Article 17.6 of the Convention. The impacts of the changes at the end of this year would be taken into account in the contributions by Contracting Parties in 2021. The Chair reminded Contracting Parties that all contributions should be paid entirely by 1 April 2021. On the regular question of appointment of an Audit Committee the FAC recommended this be considered again at the Annual Meeting in 2021. The FAC recommended that Nexia Smith Williamson be reappointed to audit the accounts for 2020. Finally, the Chair updated the meeting on the status of Kaupthing, Singer & Friedland and other bank accounts.

14.3 The Annual Meeting:

- **Noted** the Audited accounts for the year ending 31 December 2019 and latest forecast of outturn for the accounts for 2020.
- Agreed the Draft budget for 2021 and took note of the draft budget estimate for 2022.
- **Agreed** that the FAC should reconvene if necessary if there is an Extraordinary Meeting of NEAFC during 2021.
- **Agreed** to apply Article 17.4c of the Convention with reference to annual contributions from Contracting Parties.
- **Noted** that Contracting Party contributions should be paid in full no later than 1 April 2021.

14.4 The President thanked the Committee, the Chair and the Secretariat for their excellent work. He thanked the Chair and Vice Chair in particular for their work on the FAC over the previous years, wishing the Chair all success in his move to a new post.

## **15. Election of President and Vice President**

15.1 The President introduced the agenda item explaining that the President and the Vice President were elected at the Annual Meeting in 2016 for a term of two years and then again in 2018. Their current terms were therefore expiring at the end of the year. Given the constraints of a virtual meeting, the President had consulted Heads of Delegation on nominations and seconding and the result was the nomination of Janet Nørregaard (Denmark (in respect of the Faroe Islands and Greenland)) as President. Janet Nørregaard was duly elected President of NEAFC for 2021 and 2022. The nomination for vice-President was Stefán Ásmundsson (Iceland). Stefán Ásmundsson was duly elected Vice President for 2021 and 2022.

15.2 All Contracting Parties congratulated the newly elected President-elect and vice-President-elect on their elections and look forward to their tenures. The Contracting Parties thanked the outgoing President for his long service at NEAFC in several roles and his highly effective and fair chairing in his role as President. Contracting Parties were looking forward to a more formal farewell with the President once physical meetings were able to proceed again.

## **16. Report from Joint Advisory Group for Data Management, JAGDM**

16.1 The Secretary introduced the JAGDM report on behalf of the JAGDM vice-Chair Natasha Barbour (Canada). He explained former Chair Leifur Magnússon (Iceland) had to give up his role in March 2020. JAGDM had met virtually twice in 2020 (documents AM 2020-08 and AM 2020-19).

16.2 As usual JAGDM considered technical issues and statistics on data communications for both NEAFC and NAFO.

16.3 JAGDM had discussed the NEAFC Business Continuity Plan (BCP) for the ERS FLUX Network to ensure resilience and avoiding loss of messages. This issue was forwarded to PECMAC and will be further considered next year. JAGDM had referred the issue of duplicate messages and sequencing of these to the ERS-Implementation group to find solutions through the business rules applied to message content. JAGDM had also considered detailed aspects of how to deal with down time and delivery failures for the ERS.

16.4 JAGDM considered Information Security Management at NEAFC including a risk management document as well as a suite of policies to bring it up to the standard of ISO 27001:2013. A more technical meeting of NEAFC experts was planned to consider the policies as a whole. In this context JAGDM also agreed to upgrade the password requirements for access the NEAFC and the JAGDM websites.

16.5 Finally, the Secretary noted that a Chair for JAGDM had not yet been identified since the departure of the Chair in March. This needed addressing as a priority, given the importance of data and security issues to NEAFC's work.

16.6 The Annual Meeting noted the report of JAGDM with thanks to the joint advisory group.

## 17. Report from the Working Group on Fisheries Statistics, WGSTATS

17.1 The Chair of WGSTATS, Thorsteinn Hilmarsson, (Iceland) presented the work of the group. He noted that the WGSTATS held one meeting in 2020. He referred the meeting to the final report of the working group, as set out in document AM 2020-18. It had agreed the catch statistics for 2019 and preliminary catch statistics for 2020, which were presented under agenda item 5. The Chair set out the new processes to facilitate reporting of catch and quota status together on the NEAFC website. The Chair noted the progress in accuracy and smooth running of aggregated catch statistics.

17.2 The Chair also introduced a document (AM 2020-28. Rev.1) from WGSTATS which proposed to remove the species mackerel, blue whiting and horse mackerel with stock code XXX (not regulated by NEAFC) from the Species List in Recommendation 2:2011 Monthly Statistics. These codes were not needed as NEAFC was regulating these stocks. The United Kingdom was also added to the relevant reporting tables.

17.3 The Annual Meeting noted the report and thanked the Chair and members of WGSTATS for their work. **The Annual Meeting adopted the proposal AM 2020-28 Rev1 from WGSTATS by consensus.**

## 18. Relationships with other Regional Fisheries Management Organisations

18.1 The Secretariat explained that in 2020 some of the meetings of RFMOs were cancelled or delayed due to the pandemic. The reports submitted by NEAFC observers at the remaining meetings of regional fisheries management organisations were noted as follows: CCAMLR (AM 2020-43), NAFO (AM 2020-32) NASCO (AM 2020-53), Pollock in the Bering Sea (AM 2020-90) and SEAFO (AM 2020-31).

18.2 It was agreed that the Contracting Parties would provide observer reports to the Annual Meeting in 2021 in the following way (subject to any delays to meetings in 2021):

CCAMLR – Norway

ICCAT – the European Union

ICES – Iceland

NAFO – Denmark (in respect of the Faroe Islands and Greenland)

NAMMCO – Norway

NASCO – the European Union

Pollock in the Bering Sea – the Russian Federation

SEAFO – Norway

## **19. Relationships with other international fora**

19.1 The Secretariat presented its report (document AM 2020-30) on relationships with other international fora. In doing so he noted that due to the COVID 19 pandemic the majority of the many international oceans' meetings planned for 2020 (the 'year of the ocean') have been postponed. Attendance via virtual meetings had continued with the Secretariat able to support the longer-term processes at more detailed/informal levels in the interim. Engagement included highlighting NEAFC and its Contracting Parties' progress and developments in implementing its objectives in fisheries management. NEAFC's experience, expertise and knowledge on fisheries and oceans and the role of regional cooperation was pertinent given ongoing developments in ocean governance.

19.2 The document set out the most significant of those meetings for the year from the last annual meeting. Highlights included engaging with OSPAR on marine protected areas and Other Effective Area Based Conservation Measures (OECMs). FAO and other workshops allowed highlighting the measures in NEAFC that achieved biodiversity conservation benefits. NEAFC had also engaged in workshops focused on monitoring and compliance, including on the UN CEFACT standard.

19.3 The Secretariat explained that the Common Oceans Programme, funded by the Global Environment Facility (GEF) under the lead of the FAO in collaboration with UNEP had finished at the end of 2019, but a phase two proposal was now progressing. NEAFC had been a partner in the programme and was continuing to engage in supporting the phase two proposal being considered by the GEF. If the second phase proceeded, NEAFC could consider involvement on the same basis as it had done previously, which involved 'in-kind' contributions of expertise and sharing of experience, aligned to the 'normal' objectives of the organisation.

19.4 The Secretariat concluded that while the timetable for meetings in 2021 remained very uncertain, it would continue to aim to prioritise attendance at meetings to be consistent with the earlier conclusions of the Commission. Where possible, the direct cost of Secretariat attendance at meetings and projects would be paid by their organisers.

19.5 It was noted that the meeting under the collective arrangement between competent international organisations had been cancelled in 2020.

19.6 The Annual Meeting noted the report.

## **20. Any other business**

20.1 None raised



## **21. Access to documents**

21.1 Under the NEAFC policy on access to documents from NEAFC meetings, Contracting Parties were invited to indicate any document as needing to be marked as an exception from the policy. No documents were proposed.

## **22. Arrangements for future meetings**

### **22.1 Annual meetings 9-12 November 2021 and 15-18 November 2022**

22.1 It was noted that NEAFC Annual Meetings were traditionally held during the second full week of November. Therefore the 40th Annual Meeting would take place on 9-12 November 2021 and the 41st Annual Meeting would take place 15-18 November 2022

22.2 Arrangements were being made to hold the Annual Meeting in 2021 at the Holiday Inn London Regents Park Hotel, Carburton Street, London, W1W 5EE.

### **22.2 Meetings in subsidiary bodies of NEAFC**

22.3 It was agreed that the timing of meetings of subsidiary bodies of NEAFC in 2021 would be as presented in the calendar in document AM 2020-92. In light of the uncertainty due to the pandemic however, changes could be made in consultation between the President, the Heads of Delegation and the relevant committee and working group Chairs. It was noted that the next year's Annual Meeting would continue with the pattern of 4 days duration, starting on Tuesday 9th November, with a Heads of Delegation meeting on Monday afternoon, 8th November 2021.

## **23. Press statements and other reports of NEAFC's activities**

23.1 It was agreed that the press statement from the meeting would be dealt with by the President and that the Secretary would support him in that task.

## **24. Closure of the 39th Annual Meeting**

24.1 In closing the meeting, the role of Odd Aksel Bergstad (Norway) in supporting the work of NEAFC was also noted. The President noted the meeting had included the new Contracting Party, the United Kingdom. He also noted a record number of participants to the meeting, which despite its virtual nature had been as close as possible to the experience of a physical meeting. Thus, the meeting had been able to agree management measures according to ICES advice that contributed to sustainable food. He again wished the new President all success. On a personal note the President reflected on his 30 years in fisheries management.

24.2 The President thanked all those from Committees, Working Groups and ICES for their contributions to the meeting as well as thanking all participants for a fruitful meeting. He noted that the agreed Recommendations for 2021 would be circulated to Delegations.

24.3 He thanked the PSA technicians for their expert facilitation of the virtual system and the Secretariat for their efficient work throughout the meeting and in its preparation.