

Contribution of the Northwest Atlantic Fisheries Organization (NAFO) to the UN Secretary-General's Report on oceans and the law of the sea, Part I, pursuant to the UNGA draft resolution A/70/L.22 on "Marine debris, plastics and microplastics".

The Northwest Atlantic Fisheries Organization (NAFO) is an intergovernmental fisheries science and management body. NAFO was founded in 1979 as a successor to ICNAF (International Commission for the Northwest Atlantic Fisheries) and has 12 Contracting Parties including: Canada, Cuba, Denmark (in respect of the Faroe Islands and Greenland), the European Union, France (in respect of St. Pierre et Miquelon), Iceland, Japan, Norway, Republic of Korea, the Russian Federation, Ukraine and the United States of America. The international fisheries managed by NAFO take place outside the 200 mile EEZs of the four coastal States.

NAFO cooperates with other international organizations, such as the North East Atlantic Fisheries Commission (NEAFC) and the International Council for the Exploration of the Sea (ICES), and routinely shares information with other fishery organizations and UN bodies such as the FAO.

I. Challenges posed by marine debris, plastics and microplastics;

NAFO is an international fisheries management organization with a remit to ensure the long term conservation and sustainable use of the fishery resources in its Convention Area and, in so doing, to safeguard the marine ecosystems in which these resources are found. As a result, the harmful effects of plastic debris, including discarded, lost or abandoned fishing gears, is a cause for concern.

II. Actions and activities that have been undertaken by your Organization in regard to the provisions of General Assembly resolutions on oceans and the law of the sea and resolutions on sustainable fisheries that relate to marine debris, plastics and microplastics;

Measures dealing with lost and abandoned gears stipulated in Article 13.10-14 of the NAFO Conservation and Enforcement Measures (NCEM) were adopted by the Fisheries Commission and became in force in 2013.

These measures outline basic protocol when the gears are entangled, lost or abandoned. Fishing masters are required to immediately report the incident, indicating the location and the circumstances to the flag State Contacting Party. The fishing masters must also include in the report their efforts in retrieving the fishing gear. Contracting Parties are required to notify the NAFO Secretariat about the incident. The Secretariat is required to post the information on the secure part of the NAFO website.

Since the measures became in force, there have been 5 incidents involving 5 different vessels. They occurred between November 2014 and June 2015. In these incidents, the masters reported the position where the gear was lost and made efforts to retrieve them. All incidents were reported in accordance with Article 13.10-13 of the NCEM. The Secretariat posted the reports in the secured part of the NAFO website pursuant to Article 13.14.

NAFO has implemented an "ecosystem approach to fisheries management" in support of UN General Assembly Resolution 61/105, under which consideration is given to activities, other than fishing, which may impact upon commercial fish stocks of the northwest Atlantic. In 2013, NAFO's Scientific Council made some steps to consider the impact of microplastics, however these were

judged to be of minor significance at present, relative to other anthropogenic impacts.

In 2015, NAFO's Scientific Council revisited this issue in the context of a literature review that outlined anthropogenic activities other than fishing that are occurring or have the potential of occurring in the NAFO Convention. As regards litter and micropolastics, seven stressors with potential effects were identified. NAFO noted in September 2015 that only limited expertise is available in the Scientific Council to follow-up on many of these issues.

III. Any suggestions for further action to prevent and significantly reduce marine debris, plastics and microplastics.

N/A