



Submission by the North-East Atlantic Fisheries Commission

regarding the report of the Secretary-General of the United Nations on Oceans and the Law of the Sea, pursuant to General Assembly resolution 72/73

The following is the contribution by the North-East Atlantic Fisheries Commission (NEAFC) to the preparation of the report of the Secretary-General of the United Nations on Oceans and the Law of the Sea, pursuant to General Assembly resolution 71/73 of 5 December 2017, as requested in a letter from Miguel de Serpa Soares, Under Secretary-General in charge of the Office of Legal Affairs, dated 11 May 2018.

In making this submission, account has been taken of the need to ensure that the document is as brief as possible. The submission therefore focuses on a few developments, activities and measures adopted in the key areas addressed in resolution 72/73, in particular since the last report by NEAFC in 2017.

The substantive part of the NEAFC submission is as follows:

Introduction/General

The North-East Atlantic Fisheries Commission (NEAFC) is the Regional Fisheries Management Organisation (RFMO) for the North-East Atlantic. The NEAFC Contracting Parties are Denmark (in respect of the Faroe Islands and Greenland), the European Union, Iceland, Norway and the Russian Federation. NEAFC's objective is to ensure the long-term conservation and optimum utilisation of the fishery resources in the Convention Area, providing sustainable economic, environmental and social benefits. The area covered by the NEAFC Convention stretches from the southern tip of Greenland, east to the Barents Sea, and south to Portugal. Recommendations adopted by NEAFC are legally binding. NEAFC Port State Control procedures apply to the use of ports of NEAFC Contracting Parties by foreign fishing vessels (including fish processing vessels and vessels engaged in transshipment) with catch on board of fisheries resources that have either been caught in the NEAFC Convention Area by foreign fishing vessels or that have not been previously landed or transhipped at a port. These NEAFC Port State Control procedures have been aligned with those of the FAO Port State Measures Agreement.

The North-East Atlantic is one of the most abundant fishing areas in the world. NEAFC has adopted conservation and management measures for fisheries for tens of different fish stocks, although three major stocks constitute the bulk of the overall catches, these being blue whiting, herring and mackerel. While NEAFC adopts management and control measures for target fish stocks, it also adopts measures to protect other components of the marine ecosystem (including biodiversity) from potential negative impacts of fisheries. NEAFC thereby contributes to the ecosystem approach to fisheries and the protection of marine biodiversity. This includes preventing significant adverse impacts on vulnerable marine ecosystems through area-based conservation and management measures. In that context, NEAFC has closed large areas to bottom fisheries, and implements strict restrictions for other areas.

NEAFC's conservation and management measures, including those related to other parts of the marine ecosystem, do not rely on NEAFC undertaking any scientific work but rather rely on the International Council for the Exploration of the Sea (ICES) for scientific advice. While maintaining a clear separation between the management and policy role of NEAFC and the scientific role of ICES, NEAFC is currently improving its cooperation with ICES, including regular bilateral meetings to discuss long-term developments, such as multispecies advice, possible climate effects and other ecosystem considerations. ICES therefore develops appropriate research programmes to meet longer-term issues raised by NEAFC, and takes these issues into account in presenting its advice to NEAFC.

Part II Capacity Building

None of NEAFC's Contracting Parties are developing countries, and NEAFC's core activities do not include capacity building in developing countries or other types of development cooperation. Nevertheless, NEAFC does take part in various projects aimed at capacity building in developing countries. This is primarily done by sharing NEAFC's knowledge and experience regarding fisheries management; fisheries monitoring, control and surveillance (MCS); and related fields. The NEAFC Secretariat also shares experience in other regions in support of capacity building and cross-sectoral engagement at the level of regional intergovernmental organisations and bodies.

Within the last year NEAFC hosted FAO meetings of the Port State Measures Agreement Working Group and the Global Record Working Group. NEAFC has cooperated extensively with the FAO to share NEAFC's expertise and experience regarding the use of port State measures as well as developments in electronic reporting systems.

Part X Marine biodiversity

Vulnerable Marine Ecosystems (VME)/ Deep Sea Species and Sharks

A comprehensive Recommendation on the protection of VMEs from bottom fisheries entered into force in 2014, consolidating earlier recommendations on closed areas from 2004 onwards. This Recommendation has been updated several times since then, including following annual recurrent advice requests to ICES for all available information on distribution of vulnerable habitats and fisheries activities relevant to the Regulatory Area. The most recent (2018) amendments, following ICES advice in 2017, have led to an extension of all current VME closures by 5 years to 31st December 2022. In addition to the temporal extension, a currently closed area (Hatton Rockall Basin; sponge area) was expanded in response to ICES advice. It should be noted in this context that the majority of the Regulatory Area is in practice closed to bottom fishing through either VME closures or areas that require exploratory fisheries to be undertaken before bottom fishing is allowed.

In 2017 NEAFC undertook an assessment of its deep sea fisheries data. This showed a strong decline in both catch and fisheries operations for deep sea fish in the Regulatory area over the last decade. NEAFC has also agreed a new Recommendation for 2018 on deep sea fisheries in the Regulatory Area based on the precautionary approach aiming to ensure that fisheries for species/stocks not subject to other conservation and management measures established by NEAFC only expand gradually.

Part XIII Regional Cooperation

Applying an ecosystem based management approach to oceans implies that all organisations involved in regulation/management of human activities in the marine environment are cooperating and coordinating actions under their different legal mandates. While NEAFC has become involved in

considering the effects of fisheries on the other parts of the marine ecosystem and on biodiversity, NEAFC's legal competence remains limited to managing fisheries. The fact that the vulnerable marine ecosystems that NEAFC is making efforts to protect can be affected by human activities other than fishing has led NEAFC to work with other organisations, with complementary legal competences, such as the OSPAR Convention for the Protection of the Marine Environment of the North-East Atlantic. Under a May 2018 Berlin meeting of the 'collective arrangement between competent international organisations on cooperation and coordination regarding selected areas in areas beyond national jurisdiction in the North-East Atlantic', NEAFC and OSPAR have continued developing their cooperation, including on sharing information on marine protected areas and on protection of rare and threatened deep sea sharks. The Berlin meeting was also attended by fisheries and marine environment intergovernmental organisations from other regions as observers.

NEAFC continues to cooperate with other regional organisations, thereby contributing to increased cooperation and coordination. This includes the continuing work of Joint Advisory Group on Data Management (JAGDM) held with the Northwest Atlantic Fisheries Organization (NAFO). The joint group is also open to other regional fisheries management organisations and among its primary objectives is to increase harmonisation in the technical solutions applied in different areas to enhance cooperation in particular on monitoring control and surveillance.

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