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## South East Atlantic Fisheries Organisation (SEAFO)

28 February 2020

### IMPLEMENTATION OF AN ECOSYSTEM APPROACH TO FISHERIES MANAGEMENT – SEAFO REPORT

#### **Introduction:**

The Convention Area of SEAFO are not rich in fisheries resources with about 2-3 % of the whole area being shallower than 2000m of depth. The fishing effort since 2005 never exceeded 5 vessels and 4 contracting parties in any one year. Since 2013, only Longline and Pot fishing were conducted with maximum catches of 60 tonnes and 196 tonnes respectively.

The fishing pressure in the SEAFO CA is therefor considered as very low. Due to the low level of exploitation, SEAFO finds itself in a data poor situation when it comes to stock assessment and ecosystem management.

#### **See the highlights below of the current situation in SEAFO (South East Atlantic Fisheries Organisation):**

##### **1. Experience in the implementation of an ecosystem approach to fisheries management, including in relation to:**

###### *a. Assessing the impacts of fishing on the ecosystem, including on associated or dependent species*

In 2006, the SEAFO Scientific Committee adopted the closure of 12 areas where VMEs occurred. These areas were all on seamounts and seamount complexes with summit depths shallower than 2000 m.

A research survey undertaken in 2015 with the *R/V Dr. Fridtjof Nansen* supported SEAFO by collecting information on the occurrence and distribution of VME indicator species. Survey Results were used as follows to improve understanding of the SEAFO CA and to make informed decisions on the status of existing closed areas and closing new areas:

This emphasises the continued need for ground-truthing and probably also a need for science-based advice underpinning fine-scale spatial management, preferably based on observations. With continuous support from the EAF Nansen program another survey was done in 2019 and another survey is proposed for 2020

###### *b. Addressing the impacts of fishing on the ecosystem, including on associated or dependent species*

From the 2015 Nansen Survey results: In three of the closures evidences was found of coral existing gardens that would likely satisfy the definition of VMEs as described in the FAO Guidelines (2009). The Commission accepted the recommendation from the SC to maintain the current closures.

In some knolls to the south and southeast of the Valdivia Bank the density and diversity was such that it would in all likelihood be classified as VMEs. The Commission accepted the recommendation from the SC to close this area, which was open for fishing, for all fishing gears except pots and longlines.

Two of the existing fishing areas on the Walvis ridge, was identified as practically bare rock without VME indicators. The SC and the Commission recommends that they remain open to fishing.

*c. Incorporating economic, social and cultural aspects*

The calculation of the financial contribution by each Contracting Party are based on whether the country is a developing country or not and whether it is actively fishing or not.

*d. Incorporating environmental factors affecting marine ecosystems, including adverse impacts of climate change and ocean acidification.*

This matter has not been addressed as such. SEAFO applies a precautionary approach in managing the CA.

**2. Lessons learned, best practices and challenges in the implementation of an ecosystem approach to fisheries management**

We realised and emphasises the continued need for ground-truthing and probably also a need for science-based advice underpinning fine-scale spatial management, preferably based on observations. With continuous support from the EAF Nansen program and other programs from the EU and UK more information will be available in future.

**3. Actions needed to further strengthen the implementation of an ecosystem approach to fisheries management, including to address particular challenges faced by developing countries through capacity-building in accordance with Part VII of the Agreement.**

Our main stumbling block is the lack of fishing activities and data. We are however using whatever data is available. For example, we have a collaboration project with the UK territories in the SEAFO CA to combine the bathymetry data we both have to do modeling on VME distributions. Part of this collaboration is to teach scientist from the developing country Contracting Parties in the modelling techniques.

Yours sincerely



Dr Lizette Voges

Executive Secretary

SEAFO