

NEAFC 24th ANNUAL MEETING

Agenda Item 1

OPENING STATEMENT BY NORWAY

President,

Firstly I will express on behalf of my delegation that Norway puts great emphasis on the important work of NEAFC. Although there has been disappointments with respect to lack of progress in agreeing on management measures NEAFC is a most necessary body for any future success in our common task; to establish responsible management regimes for our joint stocks in the North East Atlantic.

But this is not enough. NEAFC has to define a broader role for itself than just agreeing on how to allocate and manage fish stocks in its regulatory area.

Last year NEAFC made a great leap forward in this respect when we agreed on protecting a number of vulnerable high seas areas by closing them for further fishing. By the decision we took in this respect, the contracting parties took a broader responsibility first and foremost by agreeing on this concrete action, and secondly that this was the start on developing NEAFC into a tool for ocean management where we not only focus on the fish we shall fish, but also focus on the marine environment and the need to establish mechanisms for responsible marine management in the Convention area.

And the proposed amendment of the Convention we are to discuss at this annual meeting is an important follow up of last year decision and will set NEAFC up front as the regional fisheries management organization that take a broader responsibility.

NEAFC should not stop with this.

At the moment our nations faces severe problems from IUU fishing. Vessels fish without reporting to their flag state authorities, fishing vessels and transshipment vessels engage in uncontrollable activities in waters outside our national legislation. There are not only loopholes at sea; there are numbers of loopholes in national legislation. Port state authorities do not have the means or the necessary legislation to stop landings from IUU fishing, and some port states are directly reluctant to cooperate in order to stop this.

The issue of establishing a firm and effective legislative system and an effective control with fishing, transshipment and landing of fish is first priority for the new Norwegian Government.

It is our hope that NEAFC will show the path forward on this when this issue comes on our agenda later this week.

Further we need to address the increasingly alarming consequences of lost and abandoned gear, especially gill nets, continuing to fish on vulnerable deep sea species – for ever – to no use for anyone but with great harm to the fish stocks. NEAFC has to address this and seek regulations that promote and lead to sustainable and responsible fishing practices. Norway will raise this issue with strength when management measures for 2006 are to be discussed and agreed. Finally, president, we need to have a critical eye on our own performance. We should continuously aim at improving our work, at improving the results of our efforts to promote a better management of the living marine resources and the water bodies of the North East Atlantic. Therefore, Norway is of the opinion that NEAFC should embark on a performance review to be undertaken by an independent consultant and establishing a system for periodic review of NEAFC. We will revert with concrete proposals in this respect later at this annual meeting.

Thank You and I wish each and everyone a successful meeting.