

10th NORTH ATLANTIC FISHERIES MINISTERS CONFERENCE

COMMUNIQUÉ

Tórshavn 31 May 2005

The 10th Conference of Ministers of Fisheries of the North Atlantic (NAFMC) was hosted by Mr Bjørn Kalsø, Minister of Fisheries of the Faroe Islands, in Tórshavn, 30 & 31 May 2005. The conference was attended by the fisheries ministers from Greenland, Iceland, the Faroe Islands, and Norway. Canada the European Union and the Russian Federation were represented by senior fisheries officials.

Marking a decade of regular meetings of North Atlantic Fisheries Ministers, Mr Kalsø underlined the continued value of this forum as an opportunity for ministers to exchange views and share their experiences in fisheries management in the region, as well as to focus on North Atlantic issues in relation to global processes and trends in the conservation and management of living marine resources.

Ministers stressed the vital importance and value of fisheries across the North Atlantic in sustaining economies and in contributing to global food security and trade, noting that the North Atlantic has some of the most productive marine ecosystems in the world.

Discussions focussed on new approaches in international ocean governance and the present high profile global focus on ocean issues, including the adoption of resolutions by the UN General Assembly in November 2004 dealing with sustainable fisheries, and oceans and the law of the sea.

- ***Strengthening regional fisheries management cooperation in the North Atlantic***

In relating global commitments and on-going processes to specific challenges and priorities in the North Atlantic, Ministers agreed it was of utmost importance to strengthen regional approaches to fisheries management as the most effective way of ensuring long-term sustainability of fisheries.

The Canadian representative reported on the key outcomes of the Conference on High Seas Fisheries and the United Nations Fish Agreement (UNFA) held in St John's, Canada in May 2005. Consensus was achieved through the Ministerial and expert portions of the Conference that regional fisheries management organisations must be strengthened and modernised. Ministers discussed the next steps that need to be taken to this effect in the North Atlantic. Ministers agreed to work within the North Atlantic Regional Fisheries Management Organisations, in particular NEAFC and NAFO to review and strengthen these organisations

Ministers focussed their discussions on the urgent need to conclude agreements on unallocated fish stocks of major economic significance in the region, in particular the blue whiting and Norwegian Spring Spawning (Atlanto-Scandic) herring stocks in the Northeast Atlantic and redfish in the Irminger Sea and adjacent areas. Cooperative arrangements on allocation and long-term management need to be robust and transparent. The specific form of arrangements between coastal states for allocating shared stocks was discussed and the potential for new approaches was explored.

- ***Cooperation to deter, prevent and eliminate Illegal, Unreported and Unregulated fishing in the North Atlantic***

Ministers discussed the value of continued active cooperation across the North Atlantic in implementing the Monitoring and Control Schemes adopted by NEAFC and NAFO with the aim of deterring and preventing Illegal, Unreported and Unregulated fishing in the North Atlantic

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In this context they agreed to consider the possibility of establishing agreements between the Coastal States in the North Atlantic and the flag states of the vessels which engage in IUU fishing on the high seas of the North Atlantic with the view to authorising enforcement of management measures and relevant rules.

Further they agreed to approach all relevant Port States to ask them to prevent the landing and sales of fish caught by vessels not complying with these rules. The Ministers also agreed that measures to reduce and improve control on transshipments were needed in order to reduce IUU fishing. Finally the ministers agreed that the marketing and sales routes for illegally caught fish should be explored with the aim of advising the distributors to avoid trade in these products.

To facilitate this, it was agreed to establish an informal contact group to coordinate actions taken in this area, including within Regional Fisheries Management Organisations and the OECD High Seas Task Force and to report to the next meeting of North Atlantic Fisheries Ministers.

- ***Integrated approaches to ocean governance to ensure sustainability in fisheries***

Ministers shared their experiences in pursuing integrated ocean policies which take account of the relationship between fisheries and marine ecosystems, and which aim to involve a broad range of stakeholders in developing policies for the sustainable use of marine resources and the protection of the marine environment.

Ministers underlined the need to safeguard the biodiversity and productivity of marine ecosystems, including vulnerable marine habitats where fishing takes place, while stressing the need for increased research effort to provide a better scientific basis for ecosystem-based management decisions. They exchanged views on the role of Marine Protected Areas in the conservation of biodiversity but raised questions about their role as a fisheries management tool. Ministers also noted that account needs to be taken of all aspects of marine biodiversity and its sustainable use.

To be effective, integrated approaches to ocean governance require a high level of cross-sectoral coordination. Ministers therefore urged more active and dedicated coordination between all relevant bodies dealing with marine resource management, the marine environment and other uses of the ocean in the North Atlantic region, both on the national and international level.

In discussing recent developments and trends in global processes related to fisheries and the marine environment, Ministers underlined that the relevant fisheries expertise should be actively involved in fora dealing with issues related to marine resource conservation and management, trade in marine products, the conservation of marine biodiversity and marine environmental protection.

Ministers agreed that in all regional and global processes related to ocean governance, a strong and balanced focus should be kept on sustainable fisheries as a legitimate and valuable economic activity and a major factor in ensuring sustainable development in the North Atlantic.

The Conference participants agreed that the 11th Conference of Ministers of Fisheries of the North Atlantic will be held in Norway in 2006 and will focus on progress in strengthening Regional Fisheries Management Organisations, particularly with respect to combatting IUU fishing in the North Atlantic.