



**NEAFC**

**ADVISORY GROUP FOR DATA COMMUNICATION**

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**London**

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## REPORT AGDC

### 1 Opening

The Chair, Mr Gylfi Geirsson, Iceland, opened the meeting and welcomed everyone. He particularly welcomed the observers from NAFO and Canada. He asked the participants to introduce themselves. All Contracting Parties were represented

### 2 Appointment of rapporteur

The Secretariat was appointed rapporteur

### 3 Discussion and adoption of the agenda

The agenda was adopted, document AGDC 2007/02/01 rev1. The Norwegian representative informed that a Norwegian proposal on return messages would be dealt with under agenda item 5. The Secretariat suggested that a proposal for including speed and course in the position messages would be discussed under 8.

### 4 Data communication

#### 4.1 Exchange of information within AGDC

The Chair felt that using electronic communication within AGDC to deal with various issues was not very efficient. He called for a more lively electronic debate inter-sessionally. He asked if there were technical impediments. The Secretariat informed about the planned introduction of shareware, which may make it easier to communicate.

#### 4.2 Overall Scheme implementation

##### 4.2.1 Access to meetings' documents

The Chair asked about access to older meeting documents. The Secretariat informed that there had not been the capacity to undertake this, but it was still a priority.

##### 4.2.2 Access and data transfer into the inspectors site

The Chair asked the Secretariat to show the website on screen for consideration and inform the Group of any developments. The Secretariat gave the following overview:

#### ***Current Inspectors Area***

##### ***Basic improvements***

*The addition of Scheme Letters has improved the archive information available to inspectors. Forms for inspectors were updated to reflect changes in the articles of the Scheme and to make it possible to complete online and email to the Secretariat. The Inspectors Tracking Database had its comments field enlarged after a problem experienced by Icelandic inspectors over the summer.*

##### ***Developments***

*The login to the inspectors' site is in the process of being changed to allow for separate country logins. The simple access control that we currently operate has a low limit for individual logins so it is not possible at the moment to offer individual logins for inspectors. However, separate country logins that can be administered by trusted individuals in the countries in question go some way to improving the security and privacy of countries inputting data via the NEAFC*

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*inspectors' site. Inspecting party specific logins will be for inspectors entering OBS or INSP into the VMS and INSP database. NEAFC members with the generic login to the site will still be able to view the data but not to input it. It will take some administration from Contracting Parties in terms of disseminating the login details to get this up and running.*

*The facility to **enter OBS into the VMS via inspectors' site** is nearly complete, and has been tested by Trackwell and the Secretariat. This application needs now to be integrated into the new inspecting party specific log in before implementation.*

### **ETA: By the Annual Meeting**

#### **Possible future developments**

*1) View / Search pages for the inspectors' web-based inspection reports similar to the PSC search / view facility. Possibility of viewing OBS online, depending on decision.*

*2) Inspectors forms for annual reports could be laid out in an electronic format to be filed online and returned to the Secretariat. Content of forms could also be updated.*

#### **PSC Online Forms**

*Some research and testing of electronic PDF forms for the first step of PSC, as this does not require a signature and a stamp and would make it one less 'faxed' step which would improve legibility and potentially data validity. This was possible but required greater input from the FMCs involved, which would take considerable administrative time and might not work; this would also apply to the groundwork html. Competing priorities meant that research was shelved pending further direction.*

#### **PSC Database**

*The PSC system started with flat html pages but was soon upgraded to a basic database to allow for easier document upload and searchable results. The initial database covers PSC 1 and 2 forms but will soon include PSC 3 inspections results.*

#### **Requested Developments**

- 1) to allow for searching by country*
- 2) to show infringements on a PSC 3 summary page.*

### **ETA: end of the year**

#### **Developments through Implementation of Drupal CMS**

*Work has started to develop the NEAFC site as a whole by putting it into the Drupal Content Management System which is an open source CMS system that has its focus on community driven websites. The focus of this software is on community members being able to share information appropriately. Therefore it has sophisticated access control and user input possibilities, whilst still being simple to administer facets which are highly relevant to NEAFC.*

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For more information about Drupal and the test site, see <http://drupal.neafc.org>

*This development will offer a variety of improvements for users which have already been mentioned within PECCOE, AGDC and the Finance and Administration Committee, for example: improved search and archiving of documents, blogs and forums to help the discussion of ideas, circulating and commenting on documents and sharing informal information (for example on sightings of illegal vessels), flexible access control .*

*Requiring users (of any sort) to provide registration details before getting access to anything more than the most basic information could significantly improve NEAFC's direct contact with its wider groups of interest (e.g. NGOs or commercial fishing), but also raises a variety of philosophical questions about potential users and priorities.*

*It is envisaged that the Drupal CMS will raise the overall standard of the general NEAFC site and information and offer access control, but that the inspectors and statistics 'secure applications' would in terms of its construction continue to function for the time being as a separate site with the same graphic design. With greater experience of Drupal it will become clear if it would be worth re-writing NEAFC web applications to fit into this structure.*

The Chair thanked the Secretariat for the information.

The representative of EU-Denmark wanted to make sure that it was possible to make queries on all parameters, landings, etc. The Secretariat thought it would be easy to implement. The Icelandic representative felt that the comment part of the inspection report window was too small.

The Secretariat asked for comments on access to OBS messages. The representative from EU-Denmark thought this was a good idea, but that there was a question of timing and who had access. This would increase the transparency of the port state control system.

The Norwegian representative asked whether it was right that all FMCs had access to such an open web system. The Secretariat responded that it was felt to be more efficient for agencies to extract information from the system than have the Secretariat pushed data on them. It was possible to give permanent access to data instead of access only during active inspection.

The Norwegian representative thought that observation messages could be on the web. It was not necessary to change the Scheme with respect to other messages.

The EU representative urged caution. Pushing was necessary for reasons of evidence and we should look carefully into this. He supported the idea of more and more information being on the web. The representative from EU-Denmark did not see the need for a change in formal procedures. However, experience gained in using information on the web might lead to changes later.

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The Chair agreed with the EU and saw the potential in expanding the use of the web. The Chair urged participants to make comments. He personally wanted to congratulate the Secretariat for its services in this department.

### 4.2.3 Access and data transfer into the statistical site

The Secretariat informed that the facility has been available for some time. No test has been made with Iceland as envisaged. Software for testing was still lacking. The Icelandic representative had nothing to add.

The Norwegian representative informed that REP and JUR have up to now been reported automatically in computer readable form as NAF reports. Computer readable reporting must also be possible with the web facility, for instance by using spreadsheets with an agreed format. The Secretariat said this was easy to implement and would attempt to create an excel sheet that could be used for reporting. It is a general problem that inconsistent reporting formats were used. There could be possibilities of uploading spreadsheets directly or submit spreadsheets for uploading. The Norwegian representative thought there was a need to formalise the descriptions of how to report catch data. The representative from EU-Denmark also saw the need to formalise the reporting format and guidelines for using them.

The Chair recalled that there had been cooperation between the Secretariat and the Icelandic Fisheries Directorate and wondered what the result had been. The Secretariat had studied the Icelandic system, but the NEAFC system was more flexible than that of the Icelandic Directorate.

The Norwegian representative suggested that the Secretariat develop a model spreadsheet which could be tested by reporting agencies. This was agreed. It was stressed that it had to follow the mandatory requirements of the Scheme.

The Chair felt that the end product should allow Fisheries Directorates to set up automatic systems for reporting to NEAFC.

**Actions arising:** The Secretariat will develop a model spreadsheet for reporting catches and have it tested by reporting agencies.

## 4.3 PSC implementation

### 4.3.1 Communication Procedures

The Chair recalled that it had been felt that it was too ambitious to start with electronic communication. Now we have learned that fax communication causes problems because of illegibility. This calls for improvements and changes in the reporting system, including the use of the website.

There were two documents, AGDC 2007/02/03 and 05 that deal with this. He invited the Norwegian representative to introduce document AGDC 2007/02/05, a joint paper from Norway and the EU. She noted the problems in using fully electronic solutions for legal reasons. The proposals in the paper show technical solutions that have not been fully endorsed by lawyers.

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Two systems are described: a web-based system and PSC fully electronic forms. She described the details of the two solutions. She concluded that these were working papers, but she saw this as a start to solve some of the problems experienced during the first months the PSC system had been in force.

The Chair thanked the Norwegian representative. He was aware that there were doubts about using fully electronic systems. The representative from EU-Denmark had experience that communication systems on many vessels could not manage a fully electronic system and he warned against relying on agents, which did not know the facts on-board. The forms submitted were never perfect and communication back and forth was necessary.

The representative from Denmark (in respect of the Faroe Islands and Greenland) supported a fully electronic system and thought that it should be possible to implement it in the correct way.

The Chair noted that the paper had arrived late, so perhaps Contracting Parties had not had time to consider it. Improvements had to be introduced stepwise and there were several possibilities between a fully manual and fully web-based and electronic system. FMCs already had experience in processing manual paper messages into an electronic form.

He doubted that this issue could be taken further at this stage but invited comments in the coming months. The EU representative pointed out that the completion of forms onshore would solve many problems, but raised other fundamental aspects. The Chair had observed that increasing the electronic exchange of data increased the need for other controls. The Norwegian representative pointed out that more and more vessels do not have faxes.

**Actions arising:** AGDC will consider development of full electronic reporting in the Port State Control system over the coming months.

### **4.4 Control of catches of redfish in ICES I & II**

This had been discussed extensively in PECCOE and had lessons with respect to how some messages are reported to the NEAFC database.

### **4.5 Electronic Communication from Flag State FMCs to the NEAFC Secretariat**

#### **4.5.1 Information available for inspectors**

The Secretariat introduced AGDC2007/02/04. Reports in faxes in various formats caused problem for the Secretariat. This practice runs against the basic philosophy of the Scheme that envisaged a fully automated reporting system. It should be stated that seven years after the introduction of the Scheme there are still problems with the reporting of certain messages and reporting has deteriorated. Experience from the redfish catch monitoring, however, had shown that the system could work. 40 out of 57 vessels had reported according to the Scheme.

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The Chair pointed out that these quality problems not only caused problems for the Secretariat, but also impeded inspection services in their MCS responsibilities.

The Norwegian representative congratulated Iceland for highlighting this problem and hoped lessons would be learned. She asked the Secretariat why, in some instances, additional information provided on catches on non-regulated species was rejected. The Secretariat explained that it was a conflict with authorisation, but that could be solved. The representative from EU-Denmark thought that the FMC should stop messages offering unwanted information. Focus should be on regulated resources.

The Chair recalled similar discussions earlier, and generally inspectors would like to know about everything that was onboard the vessel. Norway had originally focussed on regulated resources, but now thought that it was useful to forward all information from the vessels. The representative from EU-Denmark saw this more as a question of what was part of the Scheme. The Chair of PECCOE admitted that the Scheme was not very clear in this respect, and the Scheme is legally constructed to focus on regulated resources although any additional information could be helpful.

### **5 Management of the North Atlantic Format (NAF)**

#### **5.1 NEAFC issues**

##### **5.1.1 EU evaluation of LA/LO vs. LT/LG**

This point had been raised by the EU a year ago. The problem was that LA/LO was not precise enough. LA/LO is now mostly used in manual messages.

The EU had nothing to add. The representative from EU-Denmark felt that the problem was solved with the introduction of the more precise LT/LG for automatic messages and manual messages were not a real problem. He suggested not changing anything. The Secretariat reported that all information that was sent to inspectors was in LT/LG, even if information had been received in LA/LO. There was no need to change the Scheme; problems could be sorted out directly.

The Chair concluded that the problem had been solved and there was no need for action.

##### **5.1.2 Finalizing a NAF standard that marries both NEAFC and NAFO data elements into a single composite list.**

This problem had been raised by NAFO. The Chair reminded the meeting that a table had been produced some years ago. He invited the NAFO observer to present document AGDC 2007/02/06. The NAFO Secretariat has now assumed a greater role in developing the website as agreed at the last AGDC meeting. The observer from NAFO informed that the aim of the composite list in the document was to ensure that all NAFO codes were included in the list displayed on the NAF website. He suggested that message types could also be included in the composite list.

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The Norwegian representative had expected that the use of two letter codes by all parties should be on the dedicated NAF website, not only those of NEAFC and NAFO.

The Chair went through the old composite list developed 3-4 years ago. He suggested that NAFO updates it in a similar format and places it on the NAF website. The observer from NAFO thought it would be easiest to put the information into a database. The Norwegian representative found the list useful, but perhaps there was too much detail. The important point was to show the use of all codes. CCAMLR actually uses NAF. The NAFO observer was not aware of any other VMS format standard that could be considered a global standard. It was envisaged that the name may change if it was established as a global standard - the Icelandic modification to the Norwegian modification of the Spanish extension to the Danish format.

The Secretariat reminded participants of earlier discussions of the XML format. In the SHEEL project NAF elements had been included in an XML format. The observer from NAFO did not see any problem in linking NAF to an XML format. If a database is established, a dynamic relationship had to be established with users for updating, so we are not stuck with 4 years old lists. There is a procedure in place, but it has not been used. The EU representative suggested that the procedure be adopted. AGDC will maintain oversight.

The Chair welcomed NAFO now taking over responsibility for running the website.

He asked for views of what information should be presented on the website. The Norwegian representative accepted the details in the table comparing NEAFC/NAFO use of codes, but not the main table which should show which codes are used and for what by all different users in a simple way. The Chair found the information in the composite list produced by NAFO useful. The representative from EU-Denmark would like to have information on concrete examples of use exemplified by strings.

NAFO plans to take the existing website and move to the NAFO server in cooperation with the NEAFC Secretariat. The next stage will be to establish a Google type search facility. He proposed that the results should be presented at the next meeting of the Group.

The Chair asked the Norwegian representative to inform about a change in the use of return messages with position messages and also another Norwegian proposal on error codes.

The Norwegian representative felt this was an appropriate follow up on the earlier Icelandic proposal. Norway used return messages for quality control, but the problem is that there are too many return messages for positions, especially after the increase in the frequency of position reporting from 6 to 2 hours. To make the return messages more useful, there should only be return messages for positions when there was something wrong. The other part of the proposal is perhaps more of a problem for AGDC. They had a proposal to amend the text in the Scheme accordingly. She pointed out that experience with electronic reporting with the EU lead them to propose making the reporting of additional information (RC and SQ) in the return message mandatory if these elements are in the report received by the Secretary.

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The representative from EU-Denmark did not see the need for any changes in the Scheme. It should be possible to accommodate the points made under the system. The Chair agreed. The return messages are optional. An arrangement directly between the FMC and the Secretariat should be possible. The Chair of PECCOE agreed. Norway would be very pleased if this was possible. She suggested that if a message with an error was accepted into the database, the Return Status (RE) of the return message should be ACK, acknowledged, instead of NAK, not acknowledged. The Secretariat did not see any problem in changing this.

**Actions arising:** NAFO will prepare a new NAFO-NEAFC composite list to go on the NAF website including two letter codes used by national administrations.

### 5.1.3 Discuss forwarding a request to CWP to enable the NAF standard to become the Global standard for VMS inter-communication.

The Secretariat described the FAO system as a depository of standards. It should be decided whether the NAF system has reached a stage where it has found a final form that does not need additions. It is used by states and some RFMOs. The Chair informed about an FAO questionnaire on the use of VMS to all states and RFMOs. One of the questions is about the format used. The information will be imported into a database which will allow easy access to see who uses what.

**Actions arising:** AGDC will consider when the NAF Format has reached a stage of completeness ready to become a CWP standard.

## 5.2 Other RFMOs Issues

### 5.2.1 Multiple Area reporting in the NAFO Area

This has been discussed extensively in STACTIC and in AGDC. The Chair did not see this called for basic changes to the NAF requiring changes in all systems with the cost implication for Secretariats and FMCs.

With reference to the in-depth discussion on this subject at various AGDC meetings, it is important to keep the reporting as simple as possible. The proposal from the Chair mailed to the group outlines five possible solutions.

It is the Norwegian view that it is important to keep the reporting as simple as possible and that reports should be submitted continuously to avoid summing up over long periods. Only if a vessel crosses boundaries so often that sending catch reports each time would be a heavy burden another option would be the one to recommend..

The observer from Canada thought that the easiest route should be found and that was to use two reports a day. This was accepted by other parties operating in the Area. This closes the matter.

**Actions arising:** AGDC has dealt with the matter and it will not appear on its agenda in future

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### 6 Relationship with other RFMOs

Reference was made to document EM2007/05 “NEAFC and the ecosystem approach to fisheries management and integration of fisheries and environmental policies. Global and regional processes and developments in the management of the Oceans”.

### 7 Any other business

The Secretariat drew attention to a proposal to include course and speed in position messages. All FMCs now have this information. A proposal could be brought to PECCOE before the Annual Meeting to propose this to the Commission.

The Chair felt this was a natural thing to include as this is already in bilateral reporting. The Norwegian representative could not see a problem, but this had not been discussed internally. Other parties agreed.

It was agreed to forward the proposal to PECCOE for decision.

Only five FMCs now use X.25. The Secretariat asked if there is a reason not to migrate to HTTPS. X.25 has been recommended by the Commission. There are economic implications. This raises the problem of whether we should find another back up system. The Norwegian representative informed that they can still use X.25 but would like to switch to HTTPS for all as soon as possible. The observer from NAFO informed that they had no possibility of using X.25. They did not see a need for a contingency system for HTTPS, which has backup facilities anyway.

The EU representative suggested that PECCOE be asked to propose to the Commission that X.25 be taken away as a protocol. This was agreed.

<b>Actions arising:</b> PECCOE will be asked to propose to the NEAFC Commission that X.25 is removed as a protocol.
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### 8 VDS Campaign – EU/JRC

Reference was made to the presentation in Bergen in April 2007. Marte Indregard of JRC presented the results of the VDS campaign of summer 2007 in the Irminger Sea and an experimental campaign requested by the Swedish Coast Guard on NEAFC duty in Division IIa.

The observer from NAFO asked if precision could be improved by obtaining imagery more frequently shortly after. The representative from JRC responded that the temporal resolution does not allow for that (not enough satellites). Precision can be improved by using imagery with a higher resolution, but these images have a swath width of only 100 km instead of 300km. A choice has to be made between resolution and coverage, and in the Irminger Sea the Radarsat-1 images with a swath width of 300 km and resolution of 50 m have been found to be the best choice.

The Chair thanked the representative of JRC for the presentation. He expected this type of exercise would be used more and more as one of the tools in MCS to

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supplement other tools. It may also be quite cost effective. The observer from Canada informed that they had also used this tool and considered the cost effectiveness.

### **9. Election of Chair**

The Norwegian representative nominated the incumbent Chair and this was supported by all Parties.

### **10. Date and place of the next meeting**

Dates will be decided at the Annual Meeting.

### **11. Closure of the meeting**

The Chairman closed the meeting, thanked everybody and wished them a safe journey home.