

REPORT OF THE 7TH MEETING OF THE AD HOC WORKING GROUP ON COMPUTERISATION OF THE NEAFC SECRETARIAT, AHWGC.

5 October 2004, 22 Berners Street, London W1T 3DY

1. Opening by the Chairman

The Chairman, Mr. Jacques Verborgh, EU, called the meeting to order at 09:53 am in the Board Room of 22 Berners Street and welcomed those delegations present. All Contracting Parties were represented, except Poland and Estonia. Some communications parties were not present. He particularly welcomed the delegation of the enlarged EU. He asked participants to introduce themselves. A list of participants is given as Annex I. He noted that the report from the Group's meeting last October had been presented to the 22nd Annual Meeting. The report from this meeting will be presented to the 23rd Annual Meeting of the Commission, 8 – 12 November 2004, and the findings of the Group will be taken to PECCOE.

2. Appointment of the Rapporteur

The NEAFC Secretariat was appointed rapporteur.

3. Discussion and adoption of the Draft Agenda

The agenda had been circulated in advance of the meeting and no comments had been received. Norway and Iceland submitted papers in advance. Greenland submitted a paper on confidentiality to PECCOE, which should also be discussed by the group under agenda item 7. With these comments and corrections, the draft agenda was adopted.

4. Secretariat's report on the implementation of the relevant provisions of the Scheme

The Chairman described the background for the reporting of messages and reports by Contracting Parties to the Secretariat.

The Secretariat introduced documents AHWGC 07/05, 07/06 and 07/07.

Document 07/07 gives statistics on the volume of messages. The seasonal pattern is repeated from earlier years, but the total volume in 2003/2004 was in excess of 270,000. When designing the system about 50,000 messages were foreseen.

Document 07/05 describes the situation with regard to implementation, as seen by the Secretariat. It lists the problems of data transmission. Nothing has changed significantly from previous years. Many problems pointed out in the paper stem from a lack of understanding of the working of the Scheme. The late arrival of information on the notification of vessels operating in the Regulatory Area is still a problem.

Document 07/06 tables data transmission by FMCs and also lists means of communication. It was noted that Iceland and the Faroe Islands now operate fully via HTTPS protocols and Greenland, Ireland, the EU and other parties have tested internet-based protocols.

The Secretariat informed the meeting that the VMS database server is now five years old and needs to be replaced, but this should not mean any change to users.

Seven out of 20 FMCs use return messages. Ireland and Poland now use return messages increasing the number of users from five to seven.

The Secretariat reported that four communication parties have implemented automatic entry and exit messages to date, and a number of others are in the process of implementation. The Secretariat was ready to accept COE and COX codes in April 2004 and Contracting Parties have a deadline of 1 December. The Chairman urged Contracting Parties to implement these new report types as soon as possible.

The Chairman asked about the possible upgrading of the NEAFC website. The Secretariat reported that there is already a secure area for meeting documents and that it wants to go further and create two additional secure areas:

- one for inspectors containing information about notified and authorised vessels on a real time basis, possibly lists of sightings of NCP vessels, inspections etc. A decision will have to be made as to whether the Secretariat will be solely responsible for entering information or whether FMCs will also be able to do this.
- the other is a secure area for catch statistics into which Contracting Parties could submit their provisional REP-JUR data.

The Secretariat noted there are still problems with the submission of provisional catch data.

The Secretariat also plans to create an independent NAF website in cooperation with NAFO, listing all those codes in use, including codes used nationally and bilaterally. More detailed proposals will be circulated later. The new secure areas and the NAF website should be up and running before the end of the year.

5. Progress Reports by Contracting Parties on computerisation and data communication

This agenda item is intended to give Contracting Parties and communication parties an opportunity to express their views on the situation, describe how they are attempting to improve implementation and present any particular problems experienced. Reference was made to document 07/05 with the Secretariat's observations.

The representative of the Russian Federation was quite satisfied with the situation and did not have any comments on the Secretariat's observations. They are the major user sending over 100,000 messages. At times, communication is very slow. The Secretariat noted that this seems to be a problem with the x.25.

The representative of Denmark (in respect of the Faroe Islands and Greenland) - Faroe Islands noted that the Internet connection to Iceland has made communication smoother.

The representative of Denmark (in respect of the Faroe Islands and Greenland) – Greenland has switched to a news VMS system and catch reporting is taken into the system gradually. It runs on an emulated X.25 via internet. X.25 expertise is vanishing and a number of users have problems. It is time to find other communication systems. They still have not implemented the COX COE codes. NAFO has adopted a proposal from Greenland, Iceland and Norway on the harmonisation of reports. He felt that many of the problems experienced are similar to those in NAFO and may be solved by harmonisation.

The representative of Iceland informed the meeting that nothing had changed from last year. He would look into the problems mentioned. He found that the use of HTTPS had been very successful and greatly reduced communication cost.

The Norwegian representative noted that nothing had changed with respect to reports from inspection vessels, but hopefully this will change in the near future. They had planned to test HTTPS, but this had not happened. There had been problems with return messages. The meeting was informed that this was the result of wrong configuration by the NEAFC Secretariat.

The communication partners of **the EU** reported.

The representative of the EU- DG Fish had not observed any major communication problems. They had carried out tests with HTTPS and were ready to switch to HTTPS.

The representative of Denmark-EU did not quite understand the first comment in the Secretariat's paper, but he would look more closely into this. With respect to other problems, especially the notification of vessels to EU-DG Fish, they would also be looked into.

The representative of the Netherlands reported that at the end of the year a new and better VMS system would be in place.

The representative of Portugal reported that they expect to solve the problems raised during the next year at the latest.

The representative of Sweden informed that they had introduced COX and COE and had experienced difficulties with return messages. They had not yet managed to filter messages.

The representative of Spain reported no changes from last year. They have had some problems with longitude and latitude but these will be corrected in the near future.

The representative of Ireland will pass the information in the Secretariat's paper to the relevant authorities. Ireland is undertaking tests with Internet protocols. A full testing with Trackwell will take place later this year.

The Chairman noted that there is still room for improvement, and urged Contracting Parties to continue tests with Internet protocols. NEAFC should officially consider allowing the use of other protocols through appropriate amendments to the Scheme.

Problems experienced with X.25 were reported and it was noted that even INMARSAT had problems with X.25 and reports are disappearing in the system. Messages are being sent from vessels and do not reach receivers. INMARSAT has improved the X.25 software, but it is unclear whether this has solved the problem with land-earth stations. INMARSAT was actually waiting for proposals from users.

It was asked whether the Secretariat could approach INMARSAT. The Secretariat noted they do not deal directly with land-earth stations, the FMCs do. The Secretariat does not have expertise in these matters either. It was informed that EU parties have had contacts with INMARSAT and expected improvement; this may not only be an X.25 problem. It was noted that it was up to the Contracting Parties to decide how they want to communicate with the land-earth station. A number of protocols are available.

6. Amendments to the NCP Scheme

- Proposal by Norway (This document will also be discussed by PECCOE)

The Chairman asked Norway to introduce 07/03. Norway noted that this proposal deals with the NCP scheme and, in a technical context only, amendments to Article 10 were relevant. The only thing of a technical nature was inserting the text “electronic reporting system (ERS)” and smaller corrections under 4 d), which brings the wording in line with the Scheme. With small corrections, the Group did not feel that the technical aspects of the proposal raised any concerns.

7. Amendments to the Scheme of Control and Enforcement

- Proposal by Norway (This document will also be discussed by PECCOE)

The Norwegian representative introduced document 07/04 and indicated that in Article 10 of the Scheme there should be no reference to VMS, as this article only deals with catch reporting. Instead the text “Electronic reporting system (ERS)” should be substituted.

The changes in Article 10d oblige the donor vessel in a transshipment to send a report 24 hours before, and the receiving vessel one hour after, the transshipment. The receiving vessel shall also report at least 24 hours in advance of any landing. This has consequential changes for Annex VII 4) the transshipment report, where four new elements have to be introduced i.e. new codes for estimated positions and time. These codes are already used in bilateral arrangements, but are still not part of the NAF. Similar new codes are required in the new port of landing report described in the proposed Annex VII 6). These changes will also apply to the NCP scheme.

Concern was expressed for extending the list of codes. Some delegations thought that there were simpler ways to get the necessary information to assist inspection.

It was agreed that more reflection is needed on the substance of port of landing and transshipment reports. From the technical point of view, consistency should be retained in data elements. The experts would like to keep the coding as simple as possible.

The Norwegian representative then introduced the second part of the proposal, which contains technical amendments to the Scheme that only affect the annexes.

The first part, 2.1, introduces three slashes to indicate a mandatory element with no value. This is already used bilaterally by Norway and the EU. The three slashes follow the field code. The meaning will be no information, not zero.

There was no support from other experts for this proposal.

In the next section of the proposal **the Norwegian representative** had looked into ways of presenting all two-letter codes in the Scheme. They should be listed in Annex VIII irrespective of their use, be it data transmission or logbooks. The proposal constructed this list in Annex VIII C1 and C2. There was also a need for an alphabetical list of codes - this was done in the proposal for Annex VIII C3.

It was suggested that the proposal should be seen in conjunction with the Icelandic proposal last year and the Greenland proposal on how to establish custodianship of the NAF format. The experts present complimented Norway on this proposal and supported the suggested way to present all two-letter codes.

The Norwegian representative then introduced 2.3 on return messages in Annex VIII. The point was to identify when the RET message was transmitted.

The representative of Denmark (in respect of the Faroe Islands and Greenland) – Greenland referred to the limited use of return messages and asked whether they should be optional as in NAFO. The change in protocol should lead to consideration of the possibility of making these messages optional.

The Chairman noted that there was still no unanimity around the table, although there was some movement.

The Norwegian representative introduced the last two sections of the proposal, These were also a tidying-up exercise.

There were no further remarks.

- Proposal by Iceland (This document will also be discussed by PECCOE)

The Icelandic representative introduced document 07/08 and explained that the proposal aimed at pinpointing the source of errors with a view to subsequently correcting messages. The error codes in the table had been developed in cooperation with the Secretariat and the IT provider. **The Norwegian representative** complimented Iceland on the proposal and found it to be a big improvement.

After questions about whether messages are still rejected from the database (under proposed error messages) there seemed to be general acceptance that parties which use return messages implemented these error codes as a tool to inspect sources of error.

- Document on confidentiality by Greenland

The representative of Denmark (in respect of the Faroe Islands and Greenland) – Greenland introduced document 07/10. It is a proposal to amend the Scheme to allow means of communication other than X.25 or X.400, as has been accepted by NAFO. The proposal does not mention specific protocols but just outlines the requirement of communication security.

Last year the opinion of the Group was that secure transmission protocols should be allowed on condition that they had been properly tested. This opinion should go into the Scheme without mentioning specific protocols. This will allow the Commission to make decisions on accepted protocols without changing the Scheme.

8. Management of the North Atlantic Format

The representative of Denmark (in respect of the Faroe Islands and Greenland) – Greenland introduced document 07/09 and informed the meeting that this was a further step to establish custodianship of the NAF. He proposed that the AHWGC takes on this task, establishing a communications advisory group for the North-Atlantic. He also proposed a recommendation for terms of reference for this group.

The Chairman noted that there seemed to be consensus between experts here and in other organisations and the establishment of a group for likeminded people to manage the NAF should not present a problem. He acknowledged the need for consulting colleagues at home, but there seemed to be consensus to go ahead and develop things further.

9. Report to the 23rd Annual Meeting

Based on the summary records, the report to the 23rd Annual Meeting in November 2004 was circulated by the end of the week starting 11 October 2004.

10. Date and place of the next meeting

It was agreed to propose to the Commission to keep open the option of a meeting in 2005 in London, in advance of the next PECCOE meeting.

11. Any other business

Mr Guido Lemoine, Joint Research Centre of the European Commission, made a presentation updating the results of IMPAST. Copies of the presentation can be requested from the NEAFC Secretariat. IMPAST has reported regularly to the AHWGC. He also reported on progress in the SHEEL project, which started in January this year and deals with electronic logbooks.

The Chairman thanked the presenter. He invited the JRC to update the Group again next year. Denmark (in respect of the Faroe Islands and Greenland)- Greenland asked about the real time aspect of satellite imagery. Does it mean that you can ask for a certain image of the Atlantic at a given moment? Mr. Lemoine answered that was not immediately possible. The Chair clarified that the real time aspect relates to period between the acquisition of the image and the delivery of the results to the FMC.

12. Closure of the meeting

The Chairman closed the meeting thanking participants for a constructive meeting and wishing everybody a safe trip home.

Annex 1



LIST OF PARTICIPANTS

Chair – Verborgh, Jacques

Secretariat

Hoydal, Kjartan

Neves, João

Partridge, Kate

Lewsley, Rachel

Denmark (in respect of the Faroe Islands and Greenland)

Kruse, Martin - Faroe Islands

Nedergaard, Mads – Greenland

Lillelund, Dorthe - Greenland

Estonia

-

European Union

Newman, Martin - EC

Renson, Patrick – EC

Bogelius, Anders – Sweden

Deacon, Jim –Ireland

Eliassen, Jorgen – Denmark

Lemoine, Guido – EU

Rios, Manuel – Spain

Teixeira, Alexandre – Portugal

Vonk, Harry - Netherlands

Iceland

Geirsson, Gylfi

Norway

Fasmer, Ellen

Poland

-

Russian Federation

Latyshev, Pavel

Povalukhin, Igor