



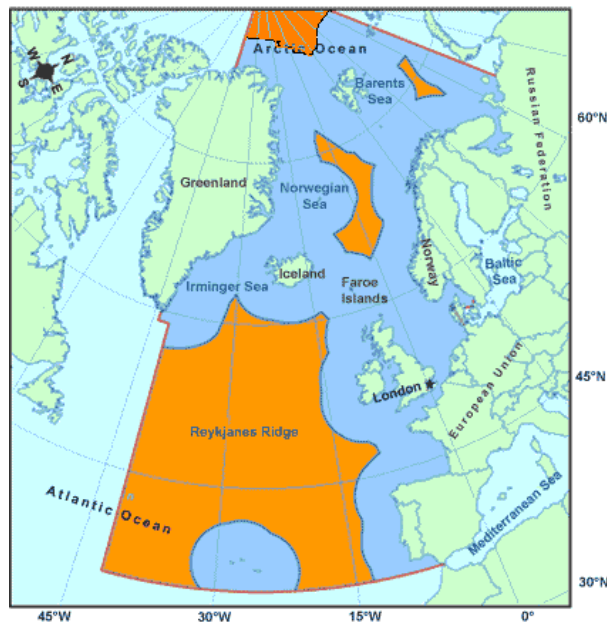
## North-East Atlantic Fisheries Commission

Contracting Parties: Denmark (in respect of the Faroe Islands and Greenland), the EU, Iceland, Norway and the Russian Federation

### PRESS RELEASE

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The high seas of the NEAFC Regulatory Area inside the NEAFC Convention Area in the North-East Atlantic are shown shaded on the map below.



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**NEAFC acts to protect Vulnerable Marine Ecosystems in the High Seas of the North East Atlantic and agrees measures and plans for all major fisheries in the NEAFC Regulatory Area.**

At its 27<sup>th</sup> Annual Meeting, held in London 10-14 November 2008, NEAFC put in place the last elements of a series of measures to protect Vulnerable Marine Ecosystems. A summary of actions taken by NEAFC to protect Vulnerable Marine Ecosystems in the High Seas of the North East Atlantic is attached. (page 6)

NEAFC adopted operational procedures on how fishing vessels should handle encounters with vulnerable ecosystems. These complement measures earlier this year **regulating bottom fishing activities in the high seas** of the NEAFC Area.

Scientific information on Vulnerable Marine Ecosystems, VMEs, has not been available to the extent NEAFC would have wished. Assessment of the risk of significant adverse impacts on them by fishing activities will be an ongoing process. The work in 2008 represents what can be done with the information and resources available. NEAFC will continue its assessments beyond 2008 as information and experience grows. Procedures for assessment have been brought into place and each Contracting Party is required to assess impacts for any proposed bottom fishing in 2009. The conclusion of the preliminary assessment is that **current bottom fisheries** practices in the NEAFC Regulatory Area **do not have significant adverse impacts on VMEs**, because the VMEs are inside the areas closed by NEAFC to bottom fishing.

To protect vulnerable marine habitats it was agreed to prolong the fishery ban in an area in the Reykjanes Ridge and four seamounts along the mid-Atlantic Ridge. This measure will be in force for the period 1 January 2009 to 31 March 2009. The Parties, prior to its expiration, shall review NEAFC policy on vulnerable marine ecosystems in general and this measure in particular. To this end, the Parties have agreed to meet in the context of the Heads of Delegations in NEAFC headquarters from 24 to 27 March 2009.

NEAFC recommended management measures for all fisheries in the Regulatory Area. Based on Coastal State Agreements, management measures for the **three major pelagic fisheries** - Norwegian Spring Spawning (Atlanto-Scandian) herring, blue whiting and mackerel - were agreed as were management measures for **Rockall haddock and deep-sea fisheries**. For **pelagic redfish** in the Norwegian Sea, an arrangement similar to that for this year was agreed. For **pelagic redfish** in the Irminger Sea, Coastal and Fishing States agreed to meet again in March 2009, to consider new scientific advice on stock composition, which may allow more mature measures to be brought into place for this stock in time before fishery starts in 2009.

A ban on using gillnets in waters greater than 200 metres depth was maintained as were measures to remove and dispose of unmarked or illegal fixed gear and retrieve lost gear to minimise ghost fishing.

Considering the poor status of the shark stock of Spurdog (*Squalus acanthias*) in the Northeast Atlantic the NEAFC adopted a ban on directed fisheries of spurdog.

NEAFC noted with satisfaction the continued results of the **NEAFC IUU (Illegal, Unregulated, Unreported) A- and B-lists**. These have wiped out IUU fishery in the North-East Atlantic by vessels of flags of countries that are not Contracting Parties to NEAFC. The transshipment activities that underpinned these fisheries have been brought under control by flag states, reefer registries and owners of reefer vessels. The **NEAFC Port Control System**, which was introduced on 1 May 2007, has continued to work seamlessly and is deemed to have led to a significant reduction in IUU fishing in the NEAFC area.

NEAFC put one new vessel, the RED, on the B-list. Another vessel name, a case of mistaken identity, was removed from the B-list.

In September 2008 NEAFC signed a **Memorandum of Understanding** with its environmental counterpart in the North East Atlantic, the **OSPAR Commission** (for the Protection of the Marine Environment of the North-East Atlantic). NEAFC is considering

**Terms of Agreement with the International Maritime Organization, IMO.** These are significant developments in a process aimed at increasing cooperation with intergovernmental organisations which monitor and regulate human activities other than fisheries in the marine environment.

The cooperative non-Contracting Party status of Canada, Japan, New Zealand, Belize and the Cook Islands was renewed for 2008. Two applications for cooperative non-Contracting Party status from the Bahamas and Panama are still being considered.

The NEAFC agreed to support the EU-funded project Technical eXperts Overseeing Third country eXpertise, TXOTX, thus supporting attempts to strengthen the scientific basis for fisheries management in developing countries.

Commenting on these developments, NEAFC President, Mr Stefán Ásmundsson (Iceland), said: *Progress in NEAFC continues because of the pragmatic and open-minded approach taken by its Contracting Parties to a number of today's issues and a general spirit of cooperation. Because of this it has been possible to create a solid framework to support sustainable fisheries where legal operators are well protected. With our extensive measures on bottom fishing activities in the high seas I am confident that NEAFC is fully prepared to meet all requirements in international law, technical guidelines adopted in FAO and the objective of its own Convention "to ensure the long-term conservation and optimum utilisation of the fishery resources in the Convention Area, providing sustainable economic, environmental and social benefits". In doing so NEAFC has responded to UN General Assembly Resolution 61/105, paragraphs 83-84.*

*Cooperation with OSPAR and IMO underlines the need to control all human activities with an impact in the marine ecosystems."*

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## More Details

	1000 tonnes	1000 tonnes	
<b>Main Fisheries/ stocks</b>	<b>Landings Regulatory Area 2007</b>	<b>Total landings Convention Area 2007</b>	<b>Management measure 2009</b>
Norwegian spring spawning (Atlanto-Scandian) herring	110	1,244	Overall TAC of 1,643 thousands tonnes
Blue whiting	272	1,182	Overall TAC of 543 thousands tonnes
Mackerel	24	358	Overall TAC of 511 thousands tonnes
Rockall haddock	1.4	3.2	Box closed to trawl fisheries to protect juvenile haddock.
Pelagic redfish in the Irminger Sea	43	64	Further discussion between Coastal and Fishing States planned in February/March
Pelagic redfish Norwegian Sea	12	12	Overall TAC of 10,000 tonnes to be fished in the latter half of the year. Scientific surveys continue
Deep Sea Fisheries	N/A	94	Effort less than 65 % of effort in earlier years

<b>Additional measures related to fishing</b>	<b>Period</b>
Ban on finning of sharks	2007 ---→
Closed areas to fishing gear on 4 sea mounts and one large area on the Reykjanes Ridge.	2005 ---→
Modification of Areas on the Hatton and Rockall bank closed to fishing to protect cold water corals.	2007- 2009
Ban of gill net fishing in depths over 200 m in the Regulatory Area	2006 --→
Interim measures banning directed fisheries for spurdog, <i>Squalus acianthias</i>	2009

The four main fisheries in the Convention Area are Norwegian spring spawning (Atlanto–Scandian) herring, mackerel, blue whiting and pelagic redfish. About 3 million tonnes have been taken in these fisheries. Catches of the three pelagic species in 2005 had a landed value of approximately 1 681 million USD from the Convention Area and 236 million USD from the Regulatory Area.

## The 27<sup>th</sup> Annual Meeting overview

1. The 27<sup>th</sup> Annual Meeting of the **North-East Atlantic Fisheries Commission** (NEAFC) took place in London between 10-14 November 2008 under the chairmanship of Mr. Stefán Ásmundsson, Iceland).
2. All Contracting Parties were represented: Denmark (in respect of the Faroe Islands and Greenland), the European Community, Iceland, Norway and the Russian Federation. Representatives from Belize, Canada, the Cook Islands, New Zealand, Sierra Leone, St. Kitts and Nevis, International Government Organisations FAO and OSPAR and two non-governmental organisations, Seas at Risk and WWF, attended as observers.
3. The Commission reviewed scientific information from the International Council for the Exploration of the Sea (ICES) concerning the status of fish stocks in the North-East Atlantic. Specific attention was given to reports on stocks under NEAFC's regulatory competence (pelagic redfish, blue whiting, Norwegian spring spawning (Atlanto-scandian) herring, mackerel, pelagic redfish in the Irminger and the Norwegian Seas, Rockall haddock and deep-sea species). The Commission also reviewed scientific information on Marine Ecosystems.
4. In 2003 NEAFC agreed on temporary measures to freeze effort in fisheries for fish species inhabiting deep waters in the Regulatory Area from 1 January 2004. This year NEAFC agreed to maintain a reduction in fishing effort in these fisheries by 35 % in 2009.
5. NEAFC agreed on management measures to control the exploitation of major fish stocks in the high seas (the NEAFC Regulatory Area). These measures include total allowable catches for Norwegian spring spawning (Atlanto-scandian) herring, pelagic redfish in ICES Sub-areas I and II, mackerel, blue whiting, Rockall haddock and deep-sea species. A meeting considering new scientific advice on pelagic redfish in the Irminger Sea will be held in February/March 2009 before the main fishing season. A ban on directed fishery for spurdog sharks was also agreed
6. NEAFC reviewed recent trends in the international management of marine resources, including the ecosystem approach and cooperation with other regional and global organisations. NEAFC especially addressed issues raised in the UN General Assembly, calling Regional Fisheries Management Organisations to protect vulnerable marine ecosystems, VMEs, and adopted measures controlling bottom fishing activities in the high seas of the NEAFC Area, defined existing and new fishing areas and concluded that earlier established area closures protected VMEs in existing fishing areas..

Meeting schedules for subsidiary bodies (Permanent Committees on Control and Enforcement, PECCOE, and on Science and Management, PECMAS) and working groups were adopted.

The 28<sup>th</sup> Annual Meeting is scheduled to take place in London 9-13 November 2009.

## **Summary of actions taken by NEAFC to protect Vulnerable Marine Ecosystems in the High Seas of the North East Atlantic.**

The need to protect vulnerable deep-sea habitats and species has been high on the NEAFC agenda in recent years. During this period NEAFC has requested scientific information and advice on vulnerable deep-sea habitats. This has not been available in a number of instances, pending more research. Consequently NEAFC has moved forward in a precautionary and adaptive manner.

The amendments to the NEAFC Convention and the London Declaration in 2006 created the formal basis for taking action, but in 2004 NEAFC had already prohibited bottom fishing in a large area on the Reykjanes Ridge (the northern part of the Mid Atlantic Ridge) and four seamounts adjacent to the Mid-Atlantic Ridge.

In 2007 NEAFC prohibited bottom fishing in three areas in the Rockall – Hatton Bank area to protect deep-water corals.

The NEAFC Permanent Committee on Management and Science, PECMAS, has adopted procedures to consider proposals for further closures. An important element is the scientific evaluation of proposals by NEAFC's provider of scientific advice, the International Council for the Exploration of the Sea, ICES.

Earlier NEAFC agreed to reduce effort in all deep-water bottom fisheries by 35 %.

NEAFC has prohibited fisheries with gillnets, entangling nets and trammel nets in depths below 200 m and introduced measures to remove and dispose of unmarked or illegal fixed gear and retrieve lost gear to minimise ghost fishing.

In July 2008 NEAFC adopted additional measures on bottom fishing activities in the NEAFC Regulatory Area. These were supplemented at its 2008 Annual Meeting with specific operational procedures. There are now clear procedures and rules in place on how to identify existing bottom fishing areas, exploratory fishing in new bottom fishing areas, how to assess bottom fishing activities, how to deal with encounters with vulnerable marine ecosystems and data collection protocols for observers onboard fishing vessels to increase knowledge of vulnerable habitats in deep waters.

In this regard, the NEAFC Contracting Parties recognise the importance of dialogue and collaboration with responsible fisheries operators and the value of industry information and experience in responsible fishing techniques, gear development, and implementation methods to avoid or mitigate significant adverse impacts on VMEs.

As mentioned above scientific information has not been available to the extent NEAFC would have wished. Assessment of the risk of significant adverse impacts by them of bottom fishing activities will be an ongoing process. The work in 2008 represents what can be done with the information and resources available. NEAFC will continue its assessments beyond 2008 as information and experience grows.

Procedures for assessment have been brought into place and each Contracting Party is required to assess impacts for any proposed bottom fishing in 2009. The conclusion of the preliminary assessment is that current bottom fisheries practices in the NEAFC Regulatory Area do not have significant adverse impacts on VMEs.

The NEAFC Scheme of Control and Enforcement has all the tools to monitor and control areas where bottom fishing is prohibited, making mandatory the provision of real time information on movements of fishing vessels available to Fisheries Monitoring Centres. This makes it possible to deploy inspection platforms in an efficient way. The renowned NEAFC black lists of IUU vessels and Port State Control Scheme ensure that free riders cannot operate in the North East Atlantic.

In September 2008 NEAFC signed a Memorandum of Understanding with its environmental counterpart in the North East Atlantic, the OSPAR Commission (for the Protection of the Marine Environment of the North-East Atlantic). NEAFC is considering terms of Agreement with the International Maritime Organization, IMO. These are significant developments in a process aimed at increasing cooperation with intergovernmental organisations, which monitor and regulate human activities other than fisheries in the marine environment.

NEAFC is confident that it is well prepared to meet all requirements in international law, technical guidelines adopted in FAO and the objective of its own Convention “*to ensure the long-term conservation and optimum utilisation of the fishery resources in the Convention Area, providing sustainable economic, environmental and social benefits*”.

In doing so NEAFC has responded to UN General Assembly Resolution 61/105, paragraphs 83-84.