

Statement by the NEAFC Secretariat at the United Nations Open-ended Informal Consultative Process on Oceans and the Law of the Sea - Tenth meeting 17-19 June 2009 UN New York

It has been very interesting to follow the discussion about ICP and its role over the two last days. Alan Simcock's very informative presentation on the development of ICP was very instructive and the points made by a number of States have made clearer the usefulness and role of ICP, but also which things ICP should avoid. It is also clear than in cases with undesirable outcomes it is not necessarily the ICP framework, which is at fault, but rather that discussions in ICP have lead to undesirable outcomes in the UN General Assembly.

Let me quote a former President of NEAFC.

"I think all Contracting Parties of NEAFC will agree that cooperating through regional fisheries organisations, as set out in international law and instruments, is a more efficient way to reach the target of sustainable fisheries development than hijacking the General Assembly of the UN to manage fisheries. The point must be to strengthen and support regional arrangements and organisations, not diminishing their role. "

Allow me also quote one of the NEAFC Contracting Parties at the 2005 UN General Assembly:

"It is the view of the Government of Iceland that the General Assembly should focus on specific issues that have global implications, and not on issues that fall within the purview of the sovereign rights of States or under the responsibility of regional fisheries management organizations. The General Assembly should address issues that are global in nature and can only be solved through global cooperation."

The RFMOs do not need global mandates. Their conventions already give them mandates and tools to perform their jobs according to international law. They do not need a UNGA resolution to prescribe to them what they already are obliged to do and can be held to account for.

The representation of RFB in general at the ICP has been very patchy and to some extent nonexistent. There has been a lack of a regional voice. This could be because of lack of resources or because RFBs see the discussions in ICP as duplication of discussions already had in FAO COFI and the biennial RSN meetings.

There is also a problem with the representation of civil society. The stakeholders that will have to shoulder the consequences of any measures coming out of discussions in ICP are not represented at the meetings. It is quite difficult to involve stakeholders in global discussions for a number of reasons. Regional and local discussions have a better chance to reach the correct participatory balance in decision processes. The big international NGOs have a strong presence at ICP, but it as it has been noted in other forums the connection between civil society and NGOs can be quite weak.