



Workshop to discuss implementation of paragraphs 80 and 83 to 87 of resolution 61/105 and paragraphs 117 and 119 to 127 of resolution 64/72 on sustainable fisheries, addressing the impacts of bottom fishing on vulnerable marine ecosystems and the long-term sustainability of deep-sea fish stocks

United Nations Headquarters in New York, 15 and 16 September 2011

A note by the NEAFC Secretariat

Introduction

The Workshop was convened in accordance with paragraph 128 of General Assembly resolution 64/72 of 4 December 2009. In attendance were representatives of 43 States, 19 intergovernmental organisations and other bodies, and 12 non-governmental organisations. Ms. Alice Revell, Permanent Mission of New Zealand to the United Nations, was appointed as Moderator of the Workshop.

Further information, including a summary by the moderator and all the presentations made by the panellists, can be found at:

http://www.un.org/Depts/los/reference_files/workshop_fisheries_2011.pdf

The thematic segments

The Workshop was divided into six different thematic segments. In each segment, there were a number of experts on a panel. Each panellist gave a presentation and following the presentations, there was general discussion. This provided participants with opportunities to make comments and/or ask panellists questions.

The NEAFC Secretary gave a presentation in thematic segment 3 and was active in the discussions in that segment, including answering questions by participants.

The six thematic segments, and the panellists of each segment, were the following:

Segment 1

Impacts of bottom fisheries on vulnerable marine ecosystems and the long-term sustainability of deep-sea fish stocks.

Panellists: Ms. Ellen Kenchington (Bedford Institute of Oceanography, Department of Fisheries and Oceans, Canada); Mr. Odd Aksel Bergstad (Institute of Marine Research, Norway); Ms. Merete Tandstad (Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations (FAO)); Ms. Karen Sack (Pew Environment Group) and Mr. Matthew Gianni (Deep Sea Conservation Coalition); and Mr. Alastair Macfarlane (International Coalition of Fisheries Associations (ICFA)).

Segment 2

Experience of States in addressing the impacts of bottom fisheries on vulnerable marine ecosystems and the long-term sustainability of deep-sea fish stocks

Panellist: Mr. John Brincat (European Commission)

Segment 3

Experience of RFMO/As in addressing the impacts of bottom fisheries on vulnerable marine ecosystems and the long-term sustainability of deep-sea fish stocks

Panellists: Mr. Andrew Wright (Commission for the Conservation of Antarctic Marine Living Resources (CCAMLR)); Mr. Stefán Ásmundsson (North East Atlantic Fisheries Commission (NEAFC)); Mr. Vladimir Shibanov (Northwest Atlantic Fisheries Organization (NAFO)); Mr. Shingo Ota (Interim Secretariat for the Conservation and Management of High Seas Fisheries Resources in the North Pacific Ocean (NPFC)); Ms. Karen Sack (Pew Environment Group) and Mr. Matthew Gianni (Deep Sea Conservation Coalition); and Mr. Ross Shotton (Southern Indian Ocean Deepsea Fishers Association (SIODFA)).

Segment 4

Experience of States and RFMO/As in cooperating to collect and exchange scientific and technical data and information and develop or strengthen data collection standards, procedures and protocols and research programmes

Panellists: Mr. Luis López Abellán (Centro Oceanográfico de Canarias, Instituto Español de Oceanografía, Spain); Mr. Pascal Lorance (French Research Institute for Exploitation of the Sea, France); Mr. Robert Brock (National Marine Protected Areas Center, National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration (NOAA), United States of America); Mr. Vladimir Shibanov (NAFO); and Mr. Shingo Ota (NPFC).

Segment 5

Experience of developing States in addressing the impacts of bottom fisheries on vulnerable marine ecosystems and the long-term sustainability of deep-sea fish stocks

Panellists: Mr. Osvaldo Urrutia (Subsecretaría de Pesca, Chile); Mr. Mario Aguilar (Comisión Nacional de Acuacultura y Pesca, Mexico); Mr. Robert Brock (NOAA); and Mr. Andrew Wright (CCAMLR).

Segment 6

FAO Programme for Deep-sea High Seas Fisheries

Panellists: Ms. Jessica Sanders (FAO) and Ms. Merete Tandstad (FAO)

Issues raised

At a two-day Workshop with 6 thematic segments and a great number of experts active in the discussions, obviously many interesting issues were raised. The intention here is not to attempt to cover as many as possible, but rather to highlight a few that may be of particular interest for

NEAFC. Those interested in more detail are advised to look at the UN website at the address provided in chapter 1 of this note.

It was widely noted that considerable progress had been made by States and RFMOs in the implementation of General Assembly resolutions 61/105 and 64/72. This includes the establishment of new RFMOs and the adoption of measures by RFMOs to limit bottom fishing activities. This also includes significant work by FAO. However, there was also consensus on a need for further action for the resolutions and the 2008 FAO International Guidelines for the Management of Deep-Sea Fisheries in the High Seas to be fully implemented.

It was generally considered that, if fully implemented, the resolutions and the FAO Guidelines provided the necessary tools to protect VMEs from significant adverse impacts due to bottom fishing and to ensure the long-term sustainability of deep-sea fish stocks. While some participants supported the view that there is a need for further development of global policy at the UN General Assembly, the view was more widely expressed that the most important issue now was to find ways of fully implementing what has been agreed, rather than developing the agreed texts further in the UN General Assembly. Due to the technical nature of many issues regarding implementation, the FAO was by many considered a more appropriate forum for any global cooperation and coordination that may be needed. There was general agreement that the actual actors that will undertake the implementation of the necessary measures are States and RFMOs.

Representatives of RFMO/As provided information on measures that had been taken to implement resolutions 61/105 and 64/72, including in regards to impact assessments, identification of VMEs, area closures and encounter protocols, as well as fisheries management measures, such as catch and gear limits. In some RFMOs, fishing areas had been divided into new and existing areas, and closures had been put in place where bottom fishing was not allowed. Efforts to identify VMEs within existing fishing areas were also ongoing. Action had also been taken in cases where RFMOs are being set up, but are not yet operational.

Regarding the approach taken by NEAFC (and NAFO), there seemed to be a widespread lack of understanding on some key points. This includes the concept of “new bottom fishing areas”, which some participants seemed to assume were not so different from “existing bottom fishing areas”. Several participants seemed to be confused by there also being “closed areas”, assuming that those areas that were not classified as closed were open with little real restrictions. The methodology of NEAFC (and NAFO) Contracting Parties collectively rather than individually assessing the potential impacts of bottom fisheries (and consequently classifying areas as “existing bottom fishing areas”, “new bottom fishing areas”, and “closed areas based on the conclusions) had not been fully understood by all participants either.

The workshop provided a good opportunity to explain several aspects of the approach used in NEAFC (and NAFO). Once it was more generally understood what NEAFC and NAFO had been doing they were generally praised for their efforts. There was criticism by representatives of NGOs, which was by and large based, on the one hand, on misunderstandings (such as the notion of there not having been any assessment of the impact of bottom fisheries) and, on the other hand, on an apparent preference for different procedural process rather than on the substance of the actual work. The fact that NGO representatives continued with their criticism after the misunderstandings had been corrected was not only surprising to the representatives of the NEAFC and NAFO Secretariats, but more importantly was met with unanimous denigration by representatives of States. There were examples of representatives of States asking questions for clarification of the representatives of the NEAFC and NAFO Secretariats, but none of them criticised the approach used.

Several participants stressed the need for transparency, including ensuring sufficient information is publicly available, regarding the actions taken by RFMOs to conduct impact assessments, identify VMEs, and adopt and implement measures to ensure the protection of VMEs. This is one of the points NEAFC may wish to look at in this context, not least in light of the lack of understanding of the NEAFC and NAFO approach there seemed to be among people who are involved in these issues in other regions.

Challenges in conducting high-quality science in areas beyond national jurisdiction were discussed, including the high costs of research and the need to prioritise research. The important role of RFMOs in collecting fisheries data was emphasised.

There was general agreement at the Workshop regarding the FAO having a very important role in the implementation of the resolutions and the FAO Guidelines. An important, albeit not very NEAFC-relevant, element in the role of the FAO relates to the capacity of developing States. Another element is the development of the VME database, which was widely emphasised. It was suggested that the database should also include information on areas where VMEs were not located. Participants were also encouraged to submit to FAO their list of vessels authorised to fish in areas beyond national jurisdiction.

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