1. **Opening of the meeting**
The Chair Gylfi Geirsson, Iceland, opened the meeting and welcomed delegates, stressing that this is the penultimate meeting and progress needs to be made.

All Contracting Parties were represented. The list of participants, document AHWG-ERS 2017-02-02 is annexed to this report.

2. **Adoption of the rapporteur**
The Secretariat was appointed as rapporteur.

3. **Discussion of the agenda**
The agenda was agreed as circulated in document AHWG-ERS 2017-02-01.

4. **Timeline for the implementation of ERS in NEAFC**
It was decided that this issue will be discussed at the June meeting.

5. **JAGDM**
JAGDM met in London last week. Norway thanked the EU for the presentation they gave at that meeting in accordance with the action plan.

The Secretariat noted that FLUX-TL is similar to the system NEAFC already has in terms of infrastructure very similar but additional work is needed. The Secretariat understood from the presentation that NEAFC would be an endpoint allowing EU member States (MS) to send data to NEAFC.

EU noted that a JAGDM meeting has been planned in Canada in June and asked about the agenda for that meeting. Norway replied there are a number of outstanding items and there may be additional items regarding ERS.
6. **Continued work on the FLUX UN/CEFACT implementation document for the context of NEAFC**

6.1. **Samples of NAF-XML of reports**
The Secretariat included document AHWG-ERS 2017-01-15, which was originally prepared for a JAGDM meeting as it had been requested from the previous ERS meeting that such examples be shown. This was a joint EU/Norway document however it is no longer relevant in its current state as it needs to be aligned with the latest version of the UN/CEFACT FLUX standard and for NEAFC context the implementation might be different.

6.2. **Answers to questions B04 & B18 from the previous meeting**
The Chair introduced documents AHWG-ERS 2017-02-20, 21 and 22 produced by the EU. The EU presented document 20. The questions in the document were addressed individually although few were resolve during the meeting. The Chair therefore asked participants to send their answers to these questions Comments were received from EU, Iceland and Norway and a revised version of document 20 has circulated showing the position of each Contracting Party.

7. **UN/CEFACT Proof of Concept**

7.1. **Acceptance criteria for Proof of Concept (POC)**
The Secretariat presented AHWG-ERS 2017-02-23 on ERS/FLUX proof of concept. Following the last meeting, the Secretariat has had discussions both internally and with its service provider, the results of which are given in document 23. It was noted that ERS 3.1 is not the same as CREWS.

The EU noted that the three documents are quite different, in particular document 24, querying the time range.

The Secretariat responded it is June but it will be on a prototype level at this time. Data will be checked as having been received in a readable format. The EU’s IT Department going for a timeline at end of June.

The Chair stated this should be clarified as a recommendation will be made to PECMAC in September for submission to the Annual Meeting.

Norway felt that CPs had asked for something simpler but would welcome this if it is possible and not too costly. The Secretariat reported that the proposal is to send messages according to the EU implementation of them and their scope will be narrowed. The EU felt the proposals in the document were possible and not very different from their proposal. It would not be difficult for them to send sample messages in the time.

Iceland queried:

1. Messages of some types can be sent, why not all? The Secretariat responded because of the time frame. The Secretariat can test the concept and errors can be identified but not in a position to build every message before June.
2. Extraction of queries – would we be testing that from CPs or just the Secretariat? The Secretariat responded that there will be a simple query which can be extracted.
The EU presented AHWG-ERS 2017-02-24 on the proof of concept. Envisage a longer period of sending VMS messages. The EU will provide samples of real messages presented in UN/CEFACT. Step 7 goes beyond the proposal made by the Secretariat. This will have business rules for EU only. If it is not possible to do this within NEAFC, the EU could demonstrate.

Iceland understood it was clear that the timing is June and that this meeting would specify proof of concept. Iceland has the view that POC would be the messages from the vessels in accordance with the Scheme – fishing trip, COE, CAT, COX and the availability of the data through queries. Iceland appreciates the limitation on the timeframe but feels that October is too late.

The Chair reminded the group that the Commission expects a system will be running next year. Regarding the transition period, the Chair feels that not all CPs will necessarily be using UN/CEFACT in parallel and a system is needed during the transition period. AHWG-ERS 2017-02-09 has a diagram showing the possible system during a transition period where CPs can communicate with the Secretariat in different “languages”. The group needs to agree on POC, what is expected and the timeframe. If this is postponed until October it will not be possible to take this to the AM. The EU has no intention to go for October.

The EU felt that the definition of POC is fundamental as it is different from bilateral agreements and the EU wanted to prove UN/CEFACT adequate. It is important to see from COE, CAT and COX but in UN/CEFACT, so everyone understands it, and it meets NEAFC’s requirements.

Norway presented document AHWG-ERS 2017-02-26 on acceptance criteria noting that after the demonstration of the POC in June it is important that it is evaluated by this group. Norway felt the paper should be clear for those outside the group. It is important to have some EU statistical information on the use of this format in reporting. The importance of following UN/CEFACT should be stressed. If a live demonstration is not available at the June meeting, Norway would like to see at least the open source view demonstrated by screen shots in a presentation.

Iceland referred that regarding timing this group should report to PECMAC in September which is why October is an issue.

The Chair suggested there could be an additional meeting of this group but would like to avoid this. Next meeting of this group is scheduled for early June. It is important to give something constructive to PECMAC for them to digest at the next meeting. The Chair also suggested that documents 23, 24 and 26 should be combined to arrive at a common paper prior to 7 June for agreement including a timeline for the introduction of ERS in whatever format.

The Secretariat is working on the assumption that it would be receiving data from the EU using UN/CEFACT. Various formats were discussed at the last meeting. NOT and AUT will be exchanged in NAF format and are integral to validation of the system. The group agreed that it would work together to prepare a draft common document.
The participants discussed thoroughly relevant issues and produced document AHWG-ERS 2017-02-26 Rev1.

8. Continued work on proposed amendments of the Scheme

8.1. Articles
The Secretariat introduced document AHWG-ERS 2017-02-03 on draft “Amendments to Articles of the Scheme”.

The participants discussed in detail all relevant articles of the Scheme that will require amendments. Changes to the document as a consequence of the discussions are reflected in document AHWG-ERS 2017-02-03 Rev 2.

The EU presented document AHWG-ERS 2017-02-16 on the “EU comments on the draft amendments to the Scheme”.

The participants discussed at length the implications of the draft amendments to the Scheme.

8.2. Annexes
The Chair presented document AHWG-ERS 2017-02-04 on “Annex IV – Recording of catch and fishing effort”. Once again the participants discussed this topic thoroughly and it was concluded that the relevant decisions on this matter will have to be taken by PECMAC.

The Chair presented document AHWG-ERS 2017-02-08 on “Annex IV and Annex VIII comparison”. The participants revisited the suggestion made at the previous meeting to delete Annex IV from the Scheme. It continues to be premature to conclude it at present.

The Chair presented document AHWG-ERS 2017-02-05 on “Annex VIII.4 - Transhipment”. The participants agreed to split TRA report into two to clearly distinguish reports from donor and receiver vessels. The format proposed in Document AHWG-ERS 2017-02-05 will therefore be included in a revision of AHWG-ERS 2017-02-03 which is the draft of Scheme changes to both Articles and Annexes.

The EU referred that document AHWG-ERS 2017-02-19 an “EU proposal on alignment codes” should be formally removed from the meeting as it is not the precise document that was sent and the information is correctly shown in 2017-02-20. EU highlighted that the alignment of codes proposed in this document consisted of a proposal as this was not formally agreed internally yet.
8.2.1. DCA blocks B and C
The EU presented document AHWG-ERS 2017-02-12 on “Reporting issues for static gear” already presented at the previous meeting. It considered that it is difficult to discern when fishing operation is completed and when gear is shot and retrieved in present bilateral ERS agreements but wanted to point out that if it is made mandatory it is not necessarily the most accurate information.

Norway presented document AHWG-ERS 2017-02-25 on “Norwegian proposal for possible block C of DCA” explaining the amendments. It is not proposing the content of Block C but size classes are listed for catch and discard. Code for species should be SN if that line is included. It was agreed that this document should update document AHWG-ERS 2017-02-12, reflecting comments made by the participants.

8.3. Sequence of reports
The Chair presented document AHWG-ERS 2017-02-06 as a reference document addressed to the group intersessionally to explain the current reports.

Participants discussed the document and the Chair noted that some issues will have to be decided by PECMAC.

8.3.1. Sending of logbook prior to inspection
The Secretariat presented AHWG ERS 2017-02-14 Rev1 as part of the information on the sequence of messages and reports and queried how the sending of DCA prior to inspection can be added to the diagram. Norway described their experience of using this system in practice, stating that it was done without formal time periods in which the DCA should be sent prior to inspection and without a formal prior notification period for the inspection. Norway stated that if for some reason the update was not available for the inspectors (e.g. wasn’t received by FMC) the inspectors took a pragmatic approach and it was not automatically considered a problem for the inspectors.

8.4. Corrections & cancellations

8.4.1. Bilateral approach compared to UN/CEFACT
The Secretariat presented document AHWG-ERS 2017-02-13 Rev 1 on “Overview of bilateral and UN/CEFACT approach to cancellation and correction”. It was noted that it was produced with the input from EU and Norway and circulated because the cancellation and correction procedures in the CPs are far ahead of NEAFC. The participants commented and the Secretariat took good note of the comments.

The Secretariat presented document AHWG-ERS 2017-02-14 Rev 1 on “Timeline for correction and cancelation”. The Secretariat produced timelines for what can be corrected and cancelled and this led to the time periods and how the corrected would work within this timeline. The Secretariat took note of the comments by the participants.
8.5. Roles and access
The participants did not produce any documents or presentations.

9. Discussion on requirements for the new NEAFC system
The Chair introduced document AHWG-ERS 2017-02-07 on “Proposal from PECMAC for an ERS for NEAFC”. There were no further comments by the participants.

9.1. Planning of requirements for the inspectors web interface including roles and access
The Secretariat continued to use document AHWG-ERS 2017-02-07 on this issue (page 6).

The Chair encouraged the participants to advise the Secretariat on the way forward.

Discussions were centred on the view that the Secretariat will need to have a hybrid system and how and what data will the inspectors be able to access. Additionally there is the need for clarification on some definitions on the role of the Secretariat.

10. Testing of the FLUX transportation layer and the VMS data exchange with NEAFC Secretariat
The Secretariat outlined the problem explaining that it has been fixed since moving servers. The secretariat confirmed that FLUX POS messages were received in test system using bridging to NAF. No further comments by the participants.

11. Preparation of a transition plan
The Secretariat briefly presented document AHWG-ERS 2017-02-09 on “Trackwell VMS proposed solution”.

The Chair drew the meeting’s attention to the diagram on page 3 showing flexibility of system during the transition period. This outline plan for a backwards compatible had been discussed at the February ERS meeting. The EU did not want to adopt the plan as they did not believe it would result in the adoption of a single format in the future, but that the system would run in ‘transitional formats’ permanently. Other Contracting Parties viewed the plan favourably.

11.1. Project Outline and Transition Plan
No documents were presented.

11.2. System(s) to be used during the transition period
The Chair considers it extremely important that the group has a common understanding on how there will be an operational ERS next year. We have still not decided what system to use. Four CPs have reservations on accepting UN/CEFACT as they need proof it is fully operational, feasible technically and financially. In order to advance the UN/CEFACT solution EU gives technical guidance and information to the other CPs.
This will be very relevant to the timeline. The Chair reminded the group that it has been urged to establish the system as quickly as possible within the first quarter of 2018 and asked whether this would be realistic for all CPs.

There was considerable discussion amongst CPs on finance, the timeline and the different elements required as well as the pros and cons of the two different systems.

The Chair noted that he does not yet have a clear indication on when decisions will be made as UN/CEFACT still under development. He feels it is unlikely that all CPs will go forward in parallel with UN/CEFACT and be ready by the end of 2019. He also noted that it would be difficult for some CPs to agree on taking up UN/CEFACT before seeing it fully operational. The Chair is concerned about the timeframe and noted that at the June meeting CPs will have the proof of concept and that CPs must do as much as possible between meetings.

11.3. Possible amendments of the NAF/XML
There was no discussion on the matter at this meeting.

12. Any other business
Regarding the documents from the previous meeting the Secretariat was asked to update them in the light of discussions and circulate them for comments.

12.1 Identification of sensitive documents
Document handling policy within NEAFC has been changed by Heads of Delegation. All documents will be made public after being presented to the Commission unless specifically restricted. Raising this issue on all agendas give CPs the opportunity to classify documents. The participants considered the Trackwell document (AHWG-ERS 2017-02-09) should be restricted.

13. Report to the April 2017 meeting of PECMAC
The Chair will report the work in process to the coming PECMAC meeting.

14. Date and place of the next meeting
The next meeting will take place in London on the 6 and 7 June.

15. Closure of the meeting
Before closing the meeting the Chair hoped that there is a better understanding of how to proceed. He urged CPs to work on the various documents before next meeting.

The Chair thanked participants and the Secretariat for their active participation and wished all a safe journey back home.