Request to ICES for Scientific Advice for 2020

1 Background

1.1 Requirements in the amended Convention
Reference is made to the Memorandum of Understanding of 2007 between NEAFC and ICES.

According to the 2006 amendment of the NEAFC Convention, the objective of the Convention is to ensure the long-term conservation and optimum utilisation of the fishery resources in the Convention Area, providing sustainable, environmental and social benefits.¹

When making recommendations for management measures the NEAFC Commission shall

a) ensure that such recommendations are based on the best scientific evidence available;
b) apply the precautionary approach;
c) take due account of the impact of fisheries on other species and marine ecosystems, and in doing so adopt, where necessary, conservation and management measures that address the need to minimise harmful impacts on living marine resources and marine ecosystems; and
d) take due account of the need to conserve marine biological diversity.

The Commission shall provide a forum for consultation and exchange of information on the state of the fishery resources in the Convention Area and on the management policies, including examination of the overall effects of such policies on the fishery resources and, as appropriate, other living marine resources and marine ecosystems.

The ecosystem approach has been reviewed regularly by the NEAFC Commission. There is general agreement that the way forward is incrementally adding elements that integrate environmental concerns in the fisheries measures.

1.2 International trends
The UNFSA UN Agreement on Straddling Fish Stocks and Highly Migratory Fish Stocks states maximum sustainable yield has developed into a limit reference point for fishing mortality in well managed fish stocks rather than a target. The “Plan of Implementation of the World Summit on Sustainable Development”,² Johannesburg 2002, agreed³ that, to achieve sustainable fisheries, stocks should be maintained or restored to levels that can produce the maximum sustainable yield and aim to achieve these goals for depleted stocks on an urgent basis and where possible not later than 2015.

1.3 Scientific basis for management measures for fisheries
UNFSA is prescriptive with respect to determining stocks status. Annex II of the UNFSA stresses the use of precautionary reference points. Two types of precautionary reference points should be used: conservation, or limit, reference points and management, or target, reference points. Limit reference points set boundaries which are intended to constrain

¹ Article 2 of the 2006 amendment to the Convention
³ 31. To achieve sustainable fisheries, the following actions are required at all levels:
(a) Maintain or restore stocks to levels that can produce the maximum sustainable yield with the aim of achieving these goals for depleted stocks on an urgent basis and where possible not later than 2015:
harvesting within safe biological limits within which the stocks can produce maximum sustainable yield. Target reference points are intended to meet management objectives. The ecosystem approach and, in general, the impact of fisheries on species other than target species and habitats is expected to be added and integrated into the measures already in place in the years to come. This involves area management for which NEAFC seeks specific advice.

### 2 Specification of requests

#### 2.1 Standard recurring advice

NEAFC requests ICES to provide advice on the status of fish stocks in the NEAFC Convention Area in accordance with the MoU between ICES and NEAFC as laid out in Annex I, II and III, with the addition regarding areas so that the first paragraph of Annex II should read as follows (addition to the text in Annex II in bold):

The recurring advice shall include information on the state of marine ecosystems and human impacts including historical developments in main parameters and information on the present state and recent development of stocks. The recurrent advice shall provide information on state of stocks and fisheries including - when available - historical developments in spawning stock biomass, total stock biomass, fishing mortality as well as landings and discards in the NEAFC regulatory area and within EEZs.

**NEAFC requests that ICES submit all the recurring advice no later than 1st October.**

*Advice on vulnerable marine ecosystems in the NEAFC Regulatory Area.*

This issue refers to [NEAFC’s recommendation 19:2014 as amended](https://www.ices.dk/ICESdocuments/2019/AM2019-96-08.pdf). The objective of that Recommendation is to ensure the implementation by NEAFC of effective measures to prevent significant adverse impacts of bottom fishing activities on vulnerable marine ecosystems known to occur or likely to occur in the NEAFC Regulatory Area based on the best available scientific information provided or endorsed by the ICES. The recommendation contains relevant definitions and refers to FAO International guidelines for the management of deep-sea fisheries in the high seas.

NEAFC requests ICES to continue to provide all available new information on distribution of vulnerable habitats in the NEAFC Convention Area and fisheries activities in and in the vicinity of such habitats, and provide advice relevant to the Regulatory Area and the above mentioned objectives.

The request for advice pertinent to NEAFC’s recommendation 19:2014 should also consider subareas of the Regulatory Area that are closed to fishing for other purposes than VME protection, e.g. the haddock box at Rockall.

*Status of the ecosystem in a portion of the high seas of the central Arctic Ocean*

NEAFC requests ICES to provide at suitable intervals information on and assessments of the status of the marine ecosystem in the portion of FAO Statistical area 27 located within the Arctic Ocean (ICES divisions 1.b, 2.b.2 and 14.a), which shall be coordinated with scientific activities under the Agreement to Prevent Unregulated High Seas Fisheries in the Central Arctic Ocean.

*Advice on Deep-Sea species.*

In the advice for deep-sea stocks ICES shall take account of NEAFC approach to conservation and management of deep-sea species and adopted in 2016. ICES shall provide information on the observed distribution of catches between the NEAFC Regulatory Area and EEZs, in addition to the distribution by the ICES statistical areas at the finest resolution available. ICES shall also inform of new and expanding fisheries, even if no stock-specific advice can be provided.

ICES is requested to include reference to the NEAFC deep sea species/stock categories in the relevant advice sheets.
Special attention should be paid to species/stocks for which fisheries change or new fisheries emerge, resulting in marked advice changes. NEAFC should be alerted to new and emerging fisheries that may develop rapidly.

2.2 Non-recurring advice

No non-recurring advice