PRESS RELEASE FROM THE 2019 ANNUAL MEETING OF
THE NORTH-EAST ATLANTIC FISHERIES COMMISSION

The 38th Annual Meeting of the North-East Atlantic Fisheries Commission (NEAFC) was held in London from 12 to 14 November 2019.

NEAFC is the intergovernmental organisation responsible for fisheries management in international waters in the North-East Atlantic. Its Contracting Parties are Denmark (in respect of the Faroe Islands and Greenland), the European Union, Iceland, Norway and the Russian Federation.

At the Annual Meeting, conservation and management measures for the year 2020 were adopted for a number of fish stocks. These include blue whiting, herring, mackerel, Rockall haddock and certain grenadiers. While the focus for the management measures is related to the economic, social and environmental objectives of these fisheries, NEAFC also took fisheries measures focused solely on conservation. These included extensions to 2023 of current prohibitions of fisheries directed at basking shark and porbeagle and also on fisheries directed at deep-sea sharks, rays, chimaeras.

NEAFC also signalled its concerns on environmental issues such as ghost fishing and plastic pollution through adoption of an expanded regulation on the removal and disposal of all unmarked or illegal fishing gears. This also complies with garbage and pollution regulations under International Convention for the Prevention of Pollution from Ships.

The protection of vulnerable marine ecosystems, such as deep-sea corals and sponges, continues to be an important issue for NEAFC. NEAFC has for many years closed bottom fisheries in all areas where VMEs are known to occur or likely to occur according to scientific advice. However, NEAFC regularly reviews the effectiveness of its binding recommendation on protection of vulnerable marine ecosystems. Such a review was carried out this year and the NEAFC measures in place were found to be effective in keeping bottom fishing from impacting areas outside defined existing fishing areas. Nevertheless, NEAFC has put in place actions to further improve its performance in protection of these ecosystems. These will include actions under monitoring control and surveillance, science, management and taking into account other international developments, for instance under the United Nations.

NEAFC continues to take steps towards implementing an enhanced monitoring, control and enforcement through developing an Electronic Reporting System (ERS). Development
of technical solutions and implementation for the ERS will continue in 2020 on the basis of arrangements at the meeting.

NEAFC’s cooperation with other international organisations was highlighted at the Annual Meeting. This included interactions in a wide variety of international meetings and governance processes. Recognising the importance of these international developments, NEAFC has now set up an internal process to carry out more strategic thinking on the implications for NEAFC of international oceans developments, including on fisheries and the environment, and how the organisation can best engage with these.

NEAFC also enhanced its international cooperation on combatting against Illegal, Unreported and Unregulated (IUU) fisheries through revising its regulations so that lists of IUU vessels from other regional fisheries bodies can be more quickly be integrated into NEAFC’s own lists. On a somewhat related issue NEAFC has also agreed to improve transparency of its activities by making available on its public website the list of vessels authorised to fish resources regulated by NEAFC.

Cooperating non-Contracting Party status for the Bahamas, Canada, Curacao, New Zealand, and Panama was renewed for the year 2019. These States will cooperate with NEAFC and, in some cases, deploy vessels for transhipment operations in the NEAFC Convention Area.

For further information on NEAFC please see www.neafc.org, or contact the Secretary of NEAFC, Darius Campbell, on +44 207 631 0016 or darius@neafc.org

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