ANNUAL MEETING OF NEAFC

13 - 17 NOVEMBER 2017

LIST OF PARTICIPANTS

President
Verborgh, Jacques

Secretariat
Campbell, Darius
Neves, João
Lewsley, Rachel
Hacker, Diane
van Heerde, Lauren
Partridge, Kate

Denmark (in respect of the Faroe Islands and Greenland)
Faroe Islands
Hansen, Jóannes (Head of Delegation)
Nørregaard, Janet (Vice President)
Gaardlykke, Meinhard
Gullklett, Per
Johansen, Áki
Jacobsen, Petur Meinhard
Kelduberg, Hans Andrias
Thomsen, Ingibjørg

Greenland
Poulsen, Katrin Vilhelm
Boje, Jesper
Hansen, Jákup Emil
Lund, Mads Rossing
EU
Paardekooper, Joost (Head of Delegation)
Jurado, Kristel - EC
Skrey, Hans – EC
Leocadio, Ana - EC
Rasmussen, Line Groth - EC
Kisieliauskas, Mindaugas - EC
Eugène, Elsa - General Secretariat of the Council of EU

Andersson, Staffan
Armstrong, Bertie
Banning, Rob
Ciagadlak-Socha, Joanna
Derkacs, Ricards
Ferrari, Lauren
Fonseca, José
Gatt, Ian
Gillies da Mota, Deborah
Grafino, Carla
Gretarsson, Hallardur (Mon-Wed)
Holdsworth, Kathryn
Hotsma, Piebe H
Johansson, Reine
Kalogirou, Stefan
Levanidov, Kirill (Tues-Fri)
Mancebo, Margarita
Mürtin, Kaire
Mattlet, Anne-France
Meremaa, Epp
Nielsen, Lisbet
O'Donoghue, Sean
O'Neill, Sheila
Óttarsson, Yngvi
Pildegovics, Peteris (Tues-Thurs)
Razmislaviciute-Palioniene, Agne
Rabczyńska-Kapcińska, Marta
Remisz, Emil (Mon-Wed)
Rendell, Jamie
Richter, Uwe
Sampson, Harry
Sepulveda Angulo, Pedro
Smits, Didzis (Wed-Fri)
Soome, Ain
Stewart, William
Sverdrup-Jensen, Esben
Szemioth, Boguslaw (Mon-Thurs)
EU continued
Täuber, Andreas
Taveira da Mota, José Pedro
van Balsfoort, Gerard
Vilhjálmsson, Hjálmar
Wiseman, Adam (Tues)
Wiseman, Alex
Zieliński, Jaroslaw

Iceland
Ásmundsson, Stefán (Head of Delegation)
Geirsson, Gylfi
Hilmarsson, Þorsteinn
Karlsdottir, Hrefna
Marteinsdottir, Heiðrún Lind
Sigurðsson, Atlí Már
Sigurðsson, Þorsteinn
Þorgeirsson, Sigurgeir

Norway
Landmark, Vidar-Jarle (Head of Delegation)
Bergstad, Odd Aksel
Fasmer, Ellen
Flaagen, Ida K. Omenaas
Johansen, Sverre
Lindberg, Steinar
Løbach, Terje
Maråk, Audun
Maråk, Jan-Ivar
Monsen, Thord
Oen, Roald
Vikanes, Ingrid
Williams, Johán H.

Russian Federation
Drevetnyak, Konstantin (Head of Delegation)
Andreeva, Daria
Egochina, Victoria
Mokerova, Irina
Rozhnov, Viktor
Shulaeva, Anna
Observers

Panama
Diaz, Epimenides

Cooperating Non-Contracting Parties

Bahamas
Rolle, Davy F.
Keenan, Stephen
Durbazevs, Arie

Canada
Milburn, Derrick

Liberia
Kenny, Gerard

St Kitts & Nevis
Smith, Nigel (Tues-Fri)
Powell, Terry (all week)

Inter-Governmental Organisations

FAO
Camilleri, Matthew
Emerson, William

ICES
Brusendorff, Anne Christine (Tue)
Clausen, Lotte Worsøe (Mon-Tue)
Kirkegaard, Eskild (Mon-Wed)
Miller, David (Mon-Fri)
Tasker, Mark (Tue)

OSPAR
Salvador, Susana (Mon)
Avellan, Lena (Tues)

Non-Governmental Organisations

Marine Stewardship Council
Gislason, Gisli

OCEANA
Lopez, Javier

PEW
Jackson, Julian
Farthing, Courtney

Seas at Risk
Stockhausen, Björn
Welcome to the 36th Annual Meeting of NEAFC.

A special welcome to the ones that are here for the first time.

Welcome indeed to all delegates and to all participants in the Annual Meeting.

As in previous years also 2017 has been a challenging year for NEAFC.

This year we welcome a new Secretary, in the person of Darius Campbell.

Before he took office, his predecessor moved the Secretariat from its original location in Berners Street to Baker Street, a complex operation that was completed successfully in the beginning of this year.

This move is also the reason that for the first time in the history of NEAFC the Annual Meeting takes place here in this Convention Center.

At last year’s Annual Meeting, the Commission has designated me to succeed Johán H. Williams, Norway, as President.

On a personal note I will share with you that I take great pride to have been given the honour to become the President of NEAFC. It is an important new challenge for me, and even if I took over already in January, I feel that today is the real start of my term.

I will endeavour to build on the achievements of the past and to set the direction to deal with the challenges for the future. And I trust that I can count on the delegations to ensure that NEAFC continues its work on issues that we have been progressing well in, and to set sail for new destinations; and to remain a reference for other RFMOs.

Our core task remains of course the management of fisheries resources and the control of fishing activities in the North East Atlantic, and that is well reflected in the draft Agenda.

I wish you all success in your work at this 36th Annual Meeting of NEAFC.

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DENMARK (in respect of the Faroe Islands and Greenland)

Opening Statement
Denmark in respect of Faroe Islands and Greenland (DFG)

Mr President, delegates, ladies and gentlemen

The Faroe Islands and Greenland are pleased to be present in London for the 36th Annual Meeting of NEAFC.

Sustainable management of fisheries in the North East Atlantic is of paramount importance for the Faroe Islands and Greenland. Therefore, we regard the work conducted by NEAFC and the cooperation between the contracting parties as essential in achieving this objective.

Much has happened since our last Annual Meeting. NEAFC has moved into new premises, and we have appointed a new Secretary. Let me take this opportunity to thank the Secretary and all the Members of Staff for their excellent preparation for this Annual Meeting.

We also have elected a new President and new Vice-President. Let me, Mr President, congratulate you on our appointment and wish you the best of luck in leading this important organisation in the years to come.

Although this year has seen the introduction of a new headquarter and some new faces at the helm, we are still faced with the same difficulties in the management of a number of important shared stocks in the North East Atlantic.

It is of great concern to us that there is a lack of agreement on management and sharing arrangements on a number of important stocks.

It is of particular concern to us that this includes stocks in critical condition. We hope that this fact will bring about a renewed urgency to the negotiations on these stocks.

It is fundamental to our efforts to jointly manage our shared stocks that all parties involved in the fisheries convene to exchange views and take part in the deliberations towards seeking to agree on measures necessary for the conservation of these stocks.

We hope that we will manage to find mutually accepted management solutions in close cooperation with all coastal states and fishing nations in the North-East Atlantic.

Mr President,

Even though that there has been little progress in the coastal state consultations over last year on a number of important stocks, developments have been more positive with regards to the work of NEAFC.
At this Annual Meeting, PECMAC has proposed a recommendation to adopt the UN/CEFACT international standard for communication between the NEAFC Secretariat and Fisheries Monitoring Centres.

It has been a long process and we are pleased that we are now at a point where a standard can be adopted and look forward to working constructively on the implementation of this standard.

PECMAC has also presented a number of proposals regarding amendments and additions to the NEAFC Scheme of Control and Enforcement that we fully support. I would like to take this opportunity to thank the members of PECMAC for their important work in this regard.

The Ad Hoc Working Group of PECMAS on Deep-sea species that was established in 2014 has finalized their work this autumn.

Chairing this group has proven not to be an easy task, and we thank the Chair for his patience and efforts in collecting and presenting the contributions from the NEAFC-parties.

It can be concluded that the deep-sea fisheries efforts in general in the NEAFC Regulatory Area are declining, and for most parties significantly declining.

However, the results do not provide us with many clear answers on how to move forward. Iceland and Norway have presented a proposal on deep-sea fisheries for the Annual Meeting, and we look forward to further consultations on this item.

We have noted with interest a proposal regarding amendments to recommendation 19:2014 on the protection of vulnerable marine ecosystems in the NEAFC Regulatory Area. This proposal raises some important questions that we as an organisation need to address in a proper manner.

We thank Norway and the Russian Federation for presenting the proposal and we look forward to further consultations during this Annual Meeting on how to move forward on this important proposal.

We are also pleased to note that the Working Group on Costal State Framework has concluded its work. We are ready to endorse the results presented by the Working Group.

It seems that less progress has been made in the Working Group on Allocation Criteria. Decisions need on the right way forward in this regard.

Mr President

We have a full agenda ahead of us this week. We look forward to a productive meeting and fruitful discussion on matters of mutual interest.

Thank you.

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EU

OPENING STATEMENT OF THE EUROPEAN UNION

Mr President, distinguished Representatives of the Parties, Observers, colleagues!

I am pleased to be back here in London representing the European Union, for the 36th Annual Meeting of the NEAFC. I hope we can continue our cooperation during this Annual Meeting in the same positive vein as I experienced at last year’s Annual Meeting, and also during the year in other NEAFC-related meetings.

I take the opportunity to highlight the main priorities for the European Union at this week’s Meeting.

On the management measures for the important stocks, we look at a series of challenges.

Let me first recall the agreement for the mackerel stock, for 2018. We hope to get endorsement by NEAFC of this important agreement. The stock is being managed now under a long-term management strategy which is completely in line with MSY, maximum sustainable yields.

However, we have not been able to conclude on the fishing opportunities for 2018 for other stocks. While the Coastal States agreed on the substance for blue whiting, no Agreed Record has been signed yet. For the NSS (AS) herring, the situation is worse: there is disagreement among the parties on the advice, which ICES issued on 30 October. We are in a situation where we cannot even discuss this serious situation here, in the margins of this week’s meeting. As a result, we may well face a situation where we cannot adopt any NEAFC Recommendation for these stocks. We are most certainly missing an opportunity, here this week. This is highly unsatisfactory, especially in absence of any signals from the corresponding parties on how to move on from here.

For the redfish stocks, this Annual Meeting is indeed an opportunity to continue talks and to pursue an agreement. We are ready to work with other Parties to agree on measures for 2018. While acknowledging the positions and views expressed during the October consultations on both the Irminger Sea and the ICES areas 1&2 stocks, I hope that all parties work constructively on agreeing the appropriate measures.

On the deep-sea species the EU has adopted measures for both 2017 and 2018 in November 2016. For deep-sea fisheries, we are pursuing the same overall approach as NEAFC in adopting the measures targeting individual deep-sea stocks, covering both EU and international waters. The measures were taken in line with MSY advice where available, and with the precautionary approach. We will make (again) a proposal this week to introduce a ban for orange roughy, like we will continue with the closure of the Haddock Box, and we count on other Parties’ support in this regard.

Finally, as regards the management measures, we need to work on some issues in relation to the vulnerable marine ecosystems. Besides some more technical discussions, we are faced with a proposal that would amend or reinterpret the competences to regulate on the VMS measures in the NEAFC RA. This needs very careful consideration, both from the legal perspective, and also in light of the potential effects on the protection of VMEs, both in the longer and the short term. We should not be hasty here.

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1 Council Regulation (EU) 2016/2285
For the control and compliance, the second large pillar of the NEAFC cooperation, we hope to endorse the productive work of the Permanent Committee on Monitoring and Compliance done in 2017. We particularly welcome the proposal on the introduction and implementation of the electronic reporting system in NEAFC. We support this proposal wholeheartedly, and hope for a swift introduction and deployment in the shortest possible time.

I also recall the work of the two ad-hoc working groups established two years ago, as a follow up to the Performance Review Panel published in 2014. While the groups have intensively worked during the period since their creation, the EU views the results from these groups with mixed appreciation.

Mr President, this is your first Annual Meeting, and also for our new Secretary. I wish you both success in your endeavors this week.

Mr President, distinguished Representatives, Observers, colleagues, the European Union is committed to working constructively with all parties to ensure a successful 2017 Annual Meeting.

Thank you.

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ICELAND

Opening statement by Iceland, at the 36th Annual Meeting of NEAFC

Mr. President, dear colleagues and observers

First of all, let me thank the president, other Contracting Parties and the Secretariat for good cooperation and valuable work since the last Annual Meeting.

Particularly, I want to welcome you Mr President as you Chair a NEAFC Annual Meeting for the first time, and also our new Secretary who is also in his first Annual Meeting in this role. We are happy to note that we have had good cooperation with both of you and have no doubt that this will continue.

However, rather than having an opening statement full of only pleasant words praising good cooperation, I must mention the great challenge that we have before us which we have been unable to resolve. For far too long we have not been able to agree on the management of the shared pelagic stocks in the Northeast Atlantic, - a situation that significantly undermines our collective reputation as leading, responsible fishing nations. This challenge was clearly highlighted in the Report of the Performance Review Panel three years ago and sadly remains the situation.

Following the Performance Review, we established two working groups to try to improve and strengthen the methodology in coastal state consultations, one on allocation criteria and the other to address the framework for negotiations and related issues. Both have made useful
contributions, which we will discuss in more detail later in this meeting, but they were not expected to find some magic solution that would resolve everything and indeed did not find any such magic solution.

At the end of the day, a conclusion on the management of the shared pelagic stocks will only come through negotiations and politics, which hopefully can be helped along at least somewhat by the work done by the working groups. But the process will need more willingness and more flexibility than we have seen so far. We are willing to take part in any discussions that are likely to lead us forward in this and would like to assure everyone that Iceland will certainly make every effort to find solutions.

Before I leave this subject, I must mention the pelagic redfish stocks in the Irminger Sea and adjacent waters, which we are very concerned about. The ICES advice is very clear. There should be no fishery for either of the two stocks. We were disappointed that we did not get sufficient support at the last Annual Meeting to adopt measures for a 0-fishery, and hope that we will have more support for this now.

On a happier note, NEAFC remains a leading RFMO when it comes to the protection of vulnerable marine ecosystems and management of deep sea fisheries. Following the adoption of the new NEAFC approach for deep sea species last year, Iceland is now together with Norway making a proposal for additional measures for deep sea fisheries, to close the gap in our regime and ensure that we have measures in place to address all four categories in our newly agreed approach.

The North-East Atlantic also remains a global leader in cross-sectoral cooperation and coordination among international organisations with complementary legal competences. We remain committed to continuing the cooperation under the Collective Arrangement with OSPAR, including to expand it with involvement by other relevant organisations.

Another positive development is the Electronic Reporting System, or ERS, which PECMAC and its ad hoc working group on the issue have been developing in recent years. This is an example of where it can be difficult and time-consuming to be the pioneer that has no blueprint from others to follow. Great progress has been made in this work, and while there are still some details left to iron out we are happy to note that there is now agreement on the most important elements and both the Contracting Parties and the Secretariat can already carry out ERS-related work on the basis of the work that has been done.

President, ladies and gentlemen,

This meeting marks something of a change for NEAFC. We have a new President, a new Secretary, new premises for NEAFC’s headquarters and a new meeting place for our Annual Meeting. Hopefully, we will be in a position in the near future to say that we also have new agreements on the management of the stocks that are currently the subjects of disagreements.

Finally, I would like to express my hope that we will have constructive discussions this week that will lead to this being a fruitful meeting.

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NORWAY

OPENING STATEMENT - Norway

Mr. President, distinguished delegates, observers, ladies and gentlemen,

Norway is as always pleased to be here in London attending an annual meeting of NEAFC, this year in new locations and with a new President and a new Secretary. Let me start by thanking the Secretary and his staff for their excellent work in preparing this meeting. We have an interesting week ahead of us, and Norway is committed to work constructively to find acceptable solutions on all issues.

As always there have been various developments within NEAFC since the last Annual Meeting. The work on ERS is steadily moving forward and this year necessary data was finally provided to the Ad Hoc working group on Deep-Sea Species, enabling the working group to perform its task of collecting and analysing landings and effort data.

I would like to commend the important work undertaken by all the subsidiary bodies of the Commission. We are looking forward to their reports and their recommendations that surely will improve further the performance of NEAFC.

Norway is particularly pleased that the Working Group on a Framework for Coastal State Negotiations managed to agree on a set of Guidelines for the conduct of Coastal State Consultations. Even though these Guidelines will not solve the main problems themselves, we believe they will contribute to enhancing the predictability of the consultations and generally contribute to better discipline, as well as making the consultations more focused on the real problems at hand.

As you know, the guidelines are the result of many meetings and careful drafting compromises. We therefore believe that the guidelines shall be adopted "as is".

Unfortunately, the Working Group on Allocation Criteria has so far not been equally successful and despite Norway's desire to continue the work, not all parties were in a position to hold the third meeting this year as scheduled in September.

It is still our view that in the North-East Atlantic, with only six States at the maximum around the various tables, it should be possible to agree on a set of common criteria to be used when allocating stocks, their definition and a way of weighting the different criteria against each other, and Norway remains ready to continue these discussions.

There was, however, an outcome from this work, in guidelines on how to carry out zonal attachment analysis. We hope that this work can be saved for the future, at least, and have put forward a proposal to this effect. We are ready to discuss how this could be done, if other parties have better ideas, but this should be done, one way or the other.

The situation on the major pelagic fish stock remains unchanged, with lack of overall agreements. When it comes to blue whiting and herring discussions are still ongoing, and
hopefully solutions can be found soon. Thus compatible NEAFC measures have to be agreed at a later stage.

With regards to deep-sea species, Norway was very pleased with the progress made last year, when we adopted the NEAFC Approach to Conservation and Management of Deep-Sea Species. It is now time we start using this Approach, and together with Iceland we have therefore tabled a proposal for a new recommendation on deep-sea species. This recommendation will replace the current general measure for deep-sea species, which as been recognized to be ineffective.

As you are aware, we have tabled a joint proposal with Russia to amend the NEAFC VME Regulation. The proposal derives from a legal issue, and relates to the coastal State rights on the continental shelf and the relationship between the continental shelf under national jurisdiction and the superjacent high seas water column. This is an issue that has gained attention also in other regions, and with this proposal we clarify the legal status on this in the North East Atlantic.

Another important topic that Norway will raise this week is that of flag State performance. Effective implementation of flag State responsibilities is the major key to combating IUU fishing and the FAO Flag State Guidelines provide a valuable tool for strengthening compliance in this regard.

We should lead by example and conduct self-assessments in line with the Flag State Guidelines. By coordinating this through PECMAC, we hope that NEAFC, as a leading RFMO, will inspire other RMOs around the world to follow suit and thereby strengthen flag State performance globally.

Finally, Norway looks forward to working with all Parties around the table in order to achieve the best possible result for NEAFC and to make this Annual Meeting a success.

Thank you, Mr President, and I hope we come out of this week as an even better organization.

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RUSSIAN FEDERATION

OPENING STATEMENT OF THE RUSSIAN FEDERATION

Good morning Mr. President,
Distinguished Delegates, Observers, Ladies and Gentlemen,
I am honored to represent the Russian Federation at the 36th Annual Meeting of NEAFC. On behalf of the Russian Delegation I would like to thank the NEAFC Secretariat for all their preparatory work they have done to set up this meeting.

I would like to take this opportunity to welcome Darius Campbell in the capacity of the new NEAFC Secretary and wish him every success in his duties.
The Russian Delegation notes with satisfaction that the blue whiting stock is in a good shape and the mackerel stock is close to that too. However, the situation with the herring is not quite clear. Russia attaches great importance to efforts undertaken by Contracting Parties to exploit fisheries resources in a sustainable manner based on the best available scientific advice.

NEAFC is the client commission of ICES and takes advice from ICES. ICES plays an important role in providing advice to successfully manage fish stocks in the NEAFC Convention Area. However, there has been a situation when advice for a certain stock was revised several times last years, particularly for herring, and this has been a concern for us. We would like to highlight that reliable advice is crucial to attaining sustainable fisheries for all the fish stocks managed by NEAFC.

We are pleased with the outcome of the work done by the Ad Hoc Working Group on Deep Sea Species. The Ad Hoc Working Group examined historic data on catches of deep-water species. We do hope that those data will be used in developing recommendations on regulation of fisheries for deep-water species.

Russia attaches great importance to the development of the Electronic Reporting System and we would like to stress the significance of the adopting the UN/CEFACT International Standard for communicating between the NEAFC Secretariat and Fisheries Monitoring Centers.

NEAFC effectively implements measures to prevent IUU fishing. In 2017, the Ad Hoc PEFCMAC Working Group on Practical Issues relating to NEAFC Port State Control with NEAFC Secretariat identified practical issues and developed some recommendations for improving the current system for Port State Control.

We have a full agenda ahead of us in the next five days. I wish you a successful and constructive meeting.

Thank you!
COOPERATING NON-CONTRACTING PARTIES – OPENING STATEMENTS

BAHAMAS

Opening Statement by The Commonwealth of the Bahamas

Mr Chairman, distinguished delegates, ladies and gentlemen.

On behalf of the Government of The Commonwealth of The Bahamas, I would like to express our sincere appreciation to the Secretariat for inviting us to attend as observers the 36th Annual Meeting of the North-East Atlantic Fisheries Commission.

The Bahamas remains an active player on the world maritime affairs scene with nearly 1600 ships sailing the seas under our flag. Our participation as Co-operating Non-Contracting Party in NEAFC has allowed for some 23 refrigerated cargo vessels to be registered on the Scheme for Control and Enforcement. Further, two (2) Bahamian ships were withdrawn from the scheme during the last 12 months.

To align with the NEAFC policies the regulatory requirements of this organisation have been duly incorporated into statutory provisions regulating the Bahamian fleet operations.

We are also honoured to specifically mention that as of October the 7th, 2016, The Bahamas became a part of the Port State Measures Agreement, operating under UN Food and Agriculture Organisation; demonstrating strong commitments to reinforce and widen the efforts in tackling illegal, unreported and unregulated fishing.

We would like to use this opportunity to reiterate once again that despite the Commonwealth of The Bahamas being an island nation with substantial fishing traditions in the surrounding seas and a small local fishing fleet, we do not envisage participation in fishing activities in the Convention Area. Furthermore, The Bahamas Maritime Authority does not accept fishing vessels, including fish factories and processing vessels for registration under the Bahamas Merchant Shipping Act, and we do not intend to do so in the future.

The Bahamas stands committed to global efforts in eradicating illegal, unregulated and unreported fishing. To this date no vessels flying the Bahamian flag had been known or suspected of involvement in Illegal Unreported and Unregulated practices. The Bahamas Maritime Authority resolves wholeheartedly to address, investigate and take appropriate actions where any allegations our ships’ involvement in IUU fishing is brought to our knowledge.

It should also be mentioned on the basis of The Bahamas’ positive experience of participation in the NEAFC scheme, that we have reached out further to establish similar agreement with the International Convention for Conservation of Atlantic Tuna; paving the way to allow some of the Bahamian ships to partake in Atlantic tuna transhipment operations.

Recently, The Bahamas has submitted the application for renewal of the status of NEAFC Co-operating Non-Contracting Party for the next year. We are hopeful our request will be reviewed
and duly approved by the NEAFC member states giving the refrigerated cargo ships flying Bahamian flag the opportunity to continue their operations in the regulatory area.

To this extent, the Bahamas Maritime Authority is fully committed to continue to administer compliance to the requirements of the Scheme of Control and Enforcement by all ships to which the Transhipment Authorisations have been issued.

Finally, Mr Chairman, distinguished delegates may we wish everyone a truly constructive and fruitful meeting this week. And, thank You for giving us the opportunity to make this short statement.

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CANADA

Opening Statement of Canada

Good morning Mr. President, distinguished delegates, observers, ladies and gentlemen.

I would like to thank the Commission for the invitation to attend this year’s meeting. Canada is pleased to observe the various discussions on important fisheries management issues in the North East Atlantic this week. We value this opportunity and our status as a Cooperating Non-Contracting Party to NEAFC.

The Commission plays a vital role in promoting the sustainable management of Atlantic fisheries, which is a priority for all of us in attendance. To achieve this objective, regional fisheries management organizations must remain committed to improving their effectiveness, encouraging decision-making rooted in sound science, and protecting vulnerable marine ecosystems. We must all cooperate and seek opportunities to advance key issues.

NEAFC was among the first international organizations to introduce measures aimed at protecting vulnerable marine ecosystems and is to be commended for its ongoing efforts on this front. Canada shares this commitment and late last month the Honourable Dominic LeBlanc, Minister of Fisheries, Oceans and the Canadian Coast Guard, announced that Canada had surpassed its ambitious target to protect 5% of our oceans and coastlines by 2017.

While this marks the achievement of a major milestone, much work remains to meet our 2020 targets and ensure that marine and coastal areas are protected for future generations. To achieve these ends, Canada will continue working with international partners, including NEAFC and its sister organization NAFO, and has adopted a balanced domestic approach that utilizes both marine protected areas and ‘Other Effective Area-Based Conservation Measures’ to protected our marine and coastal areas and achieve our Aichi Targets.

The days ahead afford the opportunity to build on NEAFC’s accomplishments to date and continue moving the organization forward. The dialogue between scientists and managers that these meetings foster is invaluable and will contribute to our common goal of long-term
conservation and optimum utilisation of the fishery resources in the NEAFC Regulatory Area.

In closing Mr. President, Canada thanks you for the invitation to attend this year’s meeting and wishes members a productive and successful week.

Thank you

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LIBERIA

Opening Statement of Liberia

Thank you Mr. President, Distinguished Delegates - good morning to all.

On behalf of the Republic of Liberia, I would like to congratulate the President and Secretary on their new appointments and thank the Commission for allowing us to participate in this 36th North East Atlantic Fishery Commission (NEAFC) Annual Meeting as observers.

Our goal in re-applying for Co-operating Non-Contracting Party (CNCP) status is to continue to allow our reefer vessels to transship fish in the NEAFC Regulatory area. To note, our international fleet does not have vessels engaged in fishing—only reefers engaged in transshipment. While Liberia has a large fleet of reefer vessels, it is noteworthy that almost all of these vessels are engaged in various fruit trades and only a very small number are involved in transshipment of frozen fishery products.

In battling illegal, unreported and unregulated (IUU) fishing, an unknown origin of reefer vessel cargo is a great risk, and as a flag State with reefers in the trade of transshipping fish, this is a concern of ours. We are strongly committed to the responsible management of fishing activities and will continue to be proactive in the responsible management of our international fleet of vessels that are involved in fisheries.

Liberian vessels are prohibited from engaging in transshipment activities in any convention area without first obtaining proper licensing from the Liberian Administration authorizing them to do so. Before licensing a vessel, we check that the vessel has no history of IUU activities. We also impose sanctions that are adequate in severity to be effective in ensuring compliance and discouraging violations.

We appreciate that despite the lack of a recommendation from the Permanent Committee on Monitoring and Compliance (PECMAC) in their September 2017 meeting, that the application from Liberia has been brought forward as a meeting document for this 36th Annual Meeting and that this issue might have to be resolved by holding a vote to grant Liberia Co-operating Non-Contracting Party status to NEAFC for the year 2018 and look forward with hopeful anticipation that our application will be approved by the members of NEAFC.
Mr. President, once again, I thank you for the invitation and for giving us the opportunity to make this brief statement.

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ST.KITTS & NEVIS

Opening Statement of St. Kitts & Nevis

Mr President, distinguished delegates, observers, ladies and gentlemen on behalf of my Government we would like to thank the Commission for allowing us to participate again in this meeting as observers. As you will be aware we have made an application for our membership as a Co-operating Non-Contracting Party to be renewed for 2018. We look forward with hopeful anticipation to that request being granted.

We are well aware of the concerns of some Parties regarding the so called “Yellow Card” status imposed by the EU. As an update to that; following extensive discussions with the Government and a decision by Cabinet we are currently in the process of removing from the ship registry all fishing vessels that actually catch fish from the sea. This process is expected to be completed within the next few months. Additionally, we will only allow refrigerated cargo vessels that wish to engage in transhipment of fish & fish products on the high seas to carry-out those operations within the highly regulated environment of a fisheries commission such as the NEAFC.

Enhanced vessel monitoring and reporting equipment is currently being commissioned across the whole current fleet to enhance this part of the operations. Our partners in this already supply and operate such equipment for EU flagged ships such as those from Cyprus and Spain. In short, the reefer ships carrying out transhipment will be reporting in their activities in the same way as EU flag vessels doing the same operations.

An ongoing review of technical capacity within the Departments and Marine Resources and Maritime Affairs continues to assess and enhance the capability of those departments in their roles as custodians of fisheries policy and activities and maritime affairs. The recent passage of Hurricanes Irma & Maria through the Caribbean, though thankfully not resulting in any fatalities in St. Kitts & Nevis, did result in extensive damage to landing facilities and local boats, which again has presented challenges, which are being addresses by these two Government departments.

St. Kitts & Nevis is a signatory to the 2009 Port State Measures Agreement (PSMA) and by this is a frontrunner in the Caribbean in installing port inspection measures of international best-practice standards, especially for locally based fishers.

We trust that from this, delegates will see that we continue to move forward, admittedly at a pace that is sometimes seen as too slow for some parties, but reflects existing limited resources that a small-island developing state has and the need for continued assistance in growing knowledge and capacity. Involvement with the NEAFC as a co-operating non-
contracting party is essential to such knowledge growth and we trust that our application will be successful.

On behalf of the Minister responsible for Marine Resources, the Hon. Eugene Hamilton and the Minister responsible for Transport, the Hon. Ian Liburd, I thank you again for allowing us to participate in this meeting and wish you every success with your deliberations.

Terry Powell
Assistant International Registrar of Shipping & Seamen

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OBSERVERS FROM INTERGOVERNMENTAL ORGANISATIONS
OPENING STATEMENTS

Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations (FAO)

Mr President, distinguished delegates.

As in past years, FAO is honoured to attend this annual meeting of the North East Atlantic Fisheries Commission, a Regional Fisheries Management Organisation (RFMO) which is a front-runner in implementing sustainable fisheries management and instilling good ocean governance.

Ocean governance has featured prominently on the international agenda in 2017. The United Nations Ocean Conference supporting the conservation and sustainable use of the oceans, seas and marine resources for sustainable development, provided a key opportunity for States, international organisations and other stakeholders to reaffirm their commitment and to discuss strategies towards achieving this goal. Furthermore, building upon the results of previous editions, the European Union organised the Our Ocean Conference which also drew worldwide interest and stimulated high level dialogue on sustainable fisheries and the protection of the marine environment in a changing climate. RFMOs are key players in achieving the targets set by such conferences and other international processes related to the sustainable use and conservation of the oceans, and the further strengthening of NEAFC following its second performance review places it in an excellent position to lead as a role model.

Illegal, unreported and unregulated (IUU) fishing remains one of the main challenges in safeguarding the sustainability of fisheries. Many States have geared up to detect IUU fishing, however actions to deter non-compliance and mechanisms to encourage compliance remain weak in many parts of the world. Improving flag State performance, implementing port State measures, together with enhancing the traceability of fishery products in the value chain, including through the use of catch documentation schemes in line with the FAO Voluntary Guidelines adopted earlier this year, are crucial elements in the fight against IUU fishing.

The entry into force of the FAO Agreement on Port State Measures in June 2016 was indeed an important achievement, however it was only a first step in terms of putting the Agreement into action. Recognising the need to discuss issues concerning the implementation of the Agreement, the Parties called upon FAO to convene the first meeting of the Parties which was kindly hosted by the Government of Norway in Oslo in May 2017. The meeting was attended by 36 Parties, 16 other States, 11 Intergovernmental Organizations, and four Non-Governmental Organizations. It provided an opportunity for Parties to revisit and define the roles and responsibilities of States, RFMOs and other international organizations in the implementation of the Agreement, as well as to outline a workplan in order to ensure that the needed mechanisms would be in place. One of the priorities identified was the establishment of a global data exchange mechanism which will be addressed by an open-ended technical working group next year; the development of such a system would need to take into account existing regional systems, and in this regard FAO trusts that NEAFC would be among the main contributors to the process.
FAO would like to take this opportunity to thank NEAFC for its unwavering support in delivering its global capacity development programme for the implementation of the Agreement on Port State Measures and related instruments. It would also like to express its appreciation for the generous financial contributions from the European Union, Norway and Sweden towards this programme.

Meanwhile, FAO has continued to move forward with other complementary initiatives including a study on transshipment, the development of guidelines to estimate the magnitude of IUU fishing, as well as the development of the global record of fishing vessels (global record). FAO acknowledges NEAFC’s significant and valuable contribution to all of these initiatives and looks forward to continued collaboration, particularly in the work related to the global record information system which may be linked to RFMO information systems in order to facilitate data upload by the flag States concerned.

In the past few years, the sessions of the FAO Committee on Fisheries (COFI) have consistently covered a growing range of topics of relevance to the development and sustainability of fisheries and aquaculture. The 33rd COFI session, scheduled to take place from 9 – 13 July 2018, is expected to continue to expand and delve deeper into a variety of issues on the status and management of world fisheries and aquaculture. Fisheries and ocean governance, including combatting IUU fishing and regional and global processes, along with broad topics such as sustainable development, environmental matters and food security in a changing climate, shall be addressed. FAO looks forward to welcoming NEAFC and its contracting Parties and cooperating non-contracting Parties to the next COFI session in Rome.

Mr President, before closing, the FAO delegation would like to congratulate you on your election and Dr Darius Campbell on his appointment to the position of Secretary to the Commission. We wish you all the success in your new roles as you continue to lead this organisation forward, and we look forward to following the deliberations and decisions taken during this meeting.

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ICES
Opening Statement was not submitted
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OSPAR

OSPAR Opening Statement

Mr President of the NEAFC Commission, distinguished delegations of the Contracting Parties, Observers, dear colleagues, I am very pleased to participate in the Opening day of the Annual Session of NEAFC on behalf of OSPAR Commission and to inform you that I have been awarded the honour of being recently appointed as its Executive Secretary.

OSPAR Commission has scheduled two important meetings to take place during this week but we will do our utmost to participate as fully as possible in your Annual Session. Deputy Secretary Lena Avellan will be joining you later in the week as you address subjects under Agenda items 19 and 20.

Within our fields of competence our organisations continue to be regarded as a model of regional dialogue as our cross-sectoral cooperation including both Secretariats and Contracting Parties continues to grow. I believe we are a good example to the outside world of the benefits of having a regional cooperation on matters relating to the oceans protection and sustainable use of the marine environment.

In that regard OSPAR is pleased to have jointly submitted with NEAFC a commitment under target 4.c of SDG14 through which both Secretariats of OSPAR and NEAFC will endeavour to promote the collective arrangement as a model to achieve a fruitful dialogue and a collaborative platform of work with the secretariats of other intergovernmental organisations in other regions and sectors.

A similar commitment was presented to the United Nations under SDG14 by OSPAR and the Caribbean Environment Programme (Cartagena Convention) with a view to begin a dialogue and to explore priority areas for future collaboration through concrete joint actions on issues like the conservation of biodiversity through Marine Protected Areas, nutrient reduction, marine litter and marine status reporting and shared assessment methods.

OSPAR was granted observership to the Arctic Council in May 2017 during the 10th Arctic Council Ministerial Meeting. Our aim is to complement the work of the Arctic Council and its Working Groups. OSPAR is co-lead on the desk-top study on marine litter in the Arctic within the working group on the Protection of the Arctic Marine Environment (PAME) and is actively engaging with the working group on Arctic Monitoring and Assessment Programme (AMAP) on ocean acidification.

In OSPAR’s effort to expand the work of the Collective Arrangement the Secretariat has instigated discussions with the London Convention and ICCAT.

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1 “Enhance the conservation and sustainable use of oceans and their resources by implementing international law as reflected in UNCLOS, which provides the legal framework for the conservation and sustainable use of oceans and their resources, as recalled in paragraph 158 of The Future We Want”
OSPAR will continue to promote the sharing of experiences and lessons learnt with other Regional Sea Conventions and Organisations, emphasizing the benefits of identifying areas of common interest and regional collaboration and aiming at expanding the remit of our Collective Arrangement.

Speaking of lessons learnt, I take the opportunity to share with you the significant achievement in OSPAR’s assessment process that took place this year: The Intermediate Assessment 2017, launched in June and since then available on the OSPAR site.

The aspect of accessibility of data gains relevance in a wider context like the United Nations Regular Process for the Global Reporting and Assessment of the State of the Marine Environment, including Socioeconomic Issues, following the release of the first global integrated marine assessment (WOA1) and leading up to the second cycle due for completion in 2020. When attending the regional workshop under the Regular Process, in September 2017, OSPAR presented its work as a contribution to the inventory of assessments made at a regional level.

At the international context I conclude by highlighting the participation of OSPAR at the 4th edition of the “Our Ocean” Conference in Malta, in October 2017, hosted by the European Union. The conference’s aim being to commit ocean leaders to change, it addressed subjects like marine protected areas, sustainable fisheries, marine pollution, climate change, the blue economy and maritime security. The OSPAR Secretariat presented a ‘white-table’ mainly focused on the key messages from the Intermediate Assessment and on the OSPAR’s regional support to national implementation of the United Nations Agenda 2030 and the SDGs in particular Goal 14 on Oceans.

The international agenda on ocean governance turns the subject of the sustainable use of the oceans into a collective challenge where experience and expertise from Regional Sea Conventions and Regional Fisheries Organisations will play a substantive role in the future.

With that in mind I conclude by wishing you all very fruitful discussions and a pleasant week in London.

Thank you.

Susana Salvador

Executive Secretary of OSPAR Commission

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Marine Stewardship Council (MSC)

Mr President, distinguished delegates and observers!

We want to welcome new President and Secretary in their position in their first annual NEAFC meeting in this new location.

In NEAFC there are fisheries which are certified against the MSC standard, and there are also fisheries that are still not yet engaged in our program. The fisheries of Iceland, Norway, EU and Faroe Island on the 3 pelagic fish stocks, mackerel, AS herring and blue whiting are all engaged in the MSC program.

In the MSC certification assessment process there are 28-31 performance indicators (Pi) which the accredited certification body scores on the scale 60-100.

• If any Pi scores below 60 then a fishery fails to pass the assessment.
• If all Pi scores are above 80, then a fishery pass.
• If any Pi scores between 60 and 80 level, and average scores are above 80, then fishery conditionally would pass. Then the fishery client then is committed to work to raise the scoring to pass the 80 level within set timeframe. If that is not achieved then the fishery certificate can become suspended

These pelagic certificates have mostly in common that two Pi scores below 80. Those are:
• PI 1.2.2 which describes “Harvest Control Rule and tools,“
• Pi 3.1.1 “Legal and customary framework”

To close these conditions the coastal states need bring the fishing mortality down by an overall effective coastal states management where it is included a transparent dispute resolution mechanism embedded in the management system.

This system in MSC, where fisheries get conditional certifications, has catalysed over 1000 management and/or environmental improvements in the global fisheries participating in the MSC program. MSC has summarised those improvements in Global Impact Reports and the newest published in 2017. We would be delighted to report improvements for the NEAFC pelagic fisheries in the future MSC Global impact reports after the respective fisheries have managed to raise the score of Pi 1.2.2 and 3.1.1 above 80 level.

Once again, I want to refer to the NEAFC annual meeting 2014 where there were presented “Report of the Performance Review Panel 2014”. The report embraces NEAFC performance but it was no surprise that it was also identified challenges. In the report, it says:
“…… while they usually (coastal states) agree on how much should be caught, the Coastal States and Contracting Parties sometime disagree on how to share that catch among themselves.”

And later in the report it says:
“The reasons for the lack of agreement on resource sharing are many and complex. Quota allocations are influenced by historical participation in fisheries, environmental effects on the distribution and abundance of stocks and other factors. However, these issues are neither unique to NEAFC nor unresolvable.”

Ladies and gentlemen, over the last 21 years there has only been 4 years 2006-2009 where there is coastal states agreement on all 3 pelagic NEAFC stocks by the major fishing nations!

How to share, shared and straddling fish stock is a global challenge which many fisheries around the world are facing. NEAFC created for 2 years ago working groups and objective of one of them was to make attempt to quantify allocation criteria. We believe while that is a big task then upon completion and adoption this can be a valuable tool to help coastal states to agree on how to share the TAC. Agenda Item 2 AM 2017-64

Gísli Gíslason Senior Program Manager. MSC, Iceland, Faroe and Greenland

In previous mentioned report from 2014 it is also said:
“The contracting parties participating in NEAFC are some of the most sophisticated in the world in terms of fishing capacity, control and enforcement, administration, and scientific expertise. Thus, it is inexcusable that these contracting parties cannot come up with workable solutions that result in catches consistent with the advice they seek from independent experts”

MSC embrace the initiative which the pelagic fishery clients took when they met last month in London. No single fishery can solve on their own the conditions set by the certifiers in the MSC fishery certificate. A coastal state agreement which bring down the fishing mortality is depending on all parties’ agreements. MSC embrace all necessary step taken to address those current and long-term issues. By solving those, then respected fisheries are closer to live up to the vision of both NEAFC and MSC.

We look forward to spending these days with you at the NEAFC annual meeting 2017
Gísli Gíslason Agenda Item 2 AM 2017-64

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PEW

No Opening Statement submitted

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Mr. President, distinguished Delegates and Observers, thank you for once again providing us the opportunity to observe and address this meeting. This statement is delivered on behalf of the Deep Sea Conservation Coalition and Seas At Risk.

**Fisheries for deep-sea species and the protection of VMES**

Since the last annual meeting of NEAFC, the UN General Assembly (UNGA) adopted resolution 71/123 with new calls for actions and commitments for the management of deep-sea fisheries on the basis of a review of the implementation of its previous resolutions over the past ten years. The resolution reaffirmed and reinforced the commitment of States and RFMOs to close areas where VMES are known or likely to occur unless bottom fisheries in such areas can be managed to prevent significant adverse impacts on VMES. The resolution stresses the importance of implementing the full set of criteria in the International Guidelines for the Management of Deep-Sea Fisheries in the High Seas for conducting impact assessments, including cumulative impact assessments; identifying areas where VMES are known or likely to occur; and assessing for significant adverse impacts (UNGA 71/123; paragraph 180 (a) & (b)).

To effectively protect VMES, the General Assembly encouraged States and RFMOs to make use of a variety of types of marine scientific research such as seabed mapping, mapping of vulnerable marine ecosystems based on information from the fishing fleet, on-site camera observations from remote vehicles, benthic ecosystem modelling, comparative benthic studies and predictive modelling to identify areas where vulnerable marine ecosystems are known or are likely to occur, to establish conservation and management measures to prevent significant adverse impacts on such ecosystems (UNGA 71/123; paragraphs 181 & 182).

The UNGA also committed States and RFMOs to ensure the long-term sustainability of deep-sea fish stocks, through conducting stock assessments, of non-target species and the rebuilding of depleted stocks, and to be particularly precautionary in regard to the catch or bycatch of vulnerable, threatened or endangered species (UNGA 71/123; paragraph 186).

In addition, the UNGA called on States and RFMOs to take into account the potential impacts of climate change and ocean acidification in taking measures to manage deep-sea fisheries and protect vulnerable marine ecosystems, and on States and relevant international organizations to ‘consider taking action’ to
address the potential impacts on VMEs from activities other than bottom fishing (UNGA 71/123; paragraphs 185 & 184).

Within this context we would like to raise the following issues:

1. **Sustainability of deep-sea fish stocks**
   This continues to be an issue for the majority of deep-sea species regulated by NEAFC. There are no stock assessments for most deep-sea species at NEAFC and the question of sustainability is further compounded by the recent listing of several deep-sea species for which quotas have been established by NEAFC on the IUCN European Red List of Marine Fishes. In the northeast Atlantic, roundnose grenadier has been classified as endangered (RNG) and orange roughy (OR) and blue ling (BLI) as vulnerable by the IUCN.¹ Moreover, ICES states that there are serious uncertainties in the stock assessment for roundnose grenadier on the Hatton Bank in these areas which “strongly impact[s] on the quality of the assessment” because in Division XIIb “the actual level of catch has been considered uncertain for several years because of problems with species being reported and misreported in different areas”.² The Ad Hoc Working Group of PECMAS on Deep Sea Species and PECMAS also acknowledges discrepancies in catch data and the doubts this casts on the management of deep-sea species as reflected in the Section 5 of the PECMAS report. We look forward to seeing the report of the Ad Hoc Working Group of PECMAS once completed. In the meantime we would urge NEAFC to adopt a zero TAC for orange roughy at the meeting this week and we question whether any catch of roundnose grenadier should be permitted by NEAFC given apparent mis-reporting of catches and the recent Red Listing of the species by IUCN.

2. **Bycatch of deep-sea species**
   As indicated, the UNGA placed renewed emphasis on this issue in its resolution 71/123. There appears to be relatively little information available on the bycatch in deepwater bottom fisheries in the NEAFC Regulatory Area. However, ICES has repeatedly expressed concern over the large number of species impacted in deep-sea trawl fisheries in the northeast Atlantic, stating as far back as 2008 that “such fisheries tend to deplete the whole fish community biomass”³. This concern was reinforced by several studies published in subsequent years which concluded that the populations of some 77 species of deep-sea fish, most with no commercial value, inhabiting the continental slope in the Northeast Atlantic off the coast of Ireland adjacent

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to the NEAFC Regulatory Area have declined by an average of almost 70% as a result of deep-sea bottom trawl fisheries in the area.\(^4\)

Deep-sea sharks have been recorded in substantial quantities as bycatch in the French deepwater trawl fishery in this area as well, including a catch in 2012 of over 120tonnes of deep-sea sharks now classified as endangered or critically endangered on the IUCN European Red List of Marine Fishes. ICES has consistently advised that the bycatch deep-sea sharks be minimized or avoided in the mixed species deepwater fisheries.\(^6\) However, there are no management measures in place to avoid or prevent the bycatch of deep-sea sharks in the deepwater trawl fishery in the NEAFC Regulatory Area. Measures to eliminate the bycatch of deep-sea species, in particular vulnerable, threatened or endangered species should urgently be established by NEAFC.

3. **Protection of VMEs**

We are pleased to see the Proposal from PECMAS (AM 2017-12) with the Recommendation on amending Recommendation 19:2014 on the protection of vulnerable marine ecosystems in the NEAFC Regulatory Area by extending the closed areas, set to expire this year, until 2022 and the extension of the Hatton–Rockall Basin Area closure as recommended by ICES.

However, ICES can and should provide better advice on where VMEs are likely to occur in the NEAFC Regulatory Area. One of the main tools for identifying areas where VMEs are likely to occur is the use of biogeographic information and predictive modelling or habitat suitability modelling. The usefulness of these tools was recognized by the UNGA in resolution 71/123 and much work has been done to develop models for the likely presence of VMEs in the northeast Atlantic. ICES has been debating the use of habitat suitability modelling for several years but has not yet adopted an agreed approach. This is something NEAFC should ask ICES to resolve on an expeditious basis.

4. **Enforcement of bottom fisheries measures/IUU fishing**

We remain concerned over the implementation and enforcement of the measures prohibiting bottom fisheries in closed areas and the measures for exploratory fisheries outside of the existing fishing areas. Once again, there are indications that this remains a problem and that these measures are not being effectively enforced as indicated in the ICES advice published 20 June 2017 (see Figure 2 (Hatton Bank) and Figure 4 (South of Iceland) in the ICES Advice: New information regarding vulnerable habitats in the NEAFC Regulatory Area, North Atlantic Ecoregion).

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\(^5\) Anne-Sophie Cornou, Alain Biseau, Analyse des captures du métier ‘Chalutiers à espèces profondes en Ouest Ecosse’. IFREMER, March 2014. Table on pages 7-9: catch in 2012: Squale-chagrin de l’Atlantique (Centrophorus squamosus), classified by IUCN as “endangered” - 65.05 tonnes; Squale savate (Deania calcea) classified by IUCN as “endangered” - 39.82 tonnes; Pailon commun (Centroscymnus coeleopelis) classified by IUCN as “endangered” – 19.74 tonnes.

5. **Extended continental shelf measures**

We are deeply concerned about the report in paragraph 4.4 of PECMAS that Norway intends to propose an “exclusion clause” to the NEAFC Recommendation on protecting VMEs in areas of extended continental shelves. We have previously raised similar concern in relation to the failure of NEAFC to act on ICES advice to close the Josephine Seamount to bottom fishing and over the management of the snow crab fishery in the NEAFC Regulatory Area in the Barents Sea. Further on whether the measures established in NEAFC Recommendation 19:2014 for new and exploratory fisheries for bottom fishing outside of existing fishing areas, or equivalent measures, have been implemented and enforced in the snow crab fishery. To exclude extended continental shelf areas within the NEAFC Regulatory Area from the bottom fishing measures established by NEAFC would risk removing the NEAFC VME protection measures, including closed area designations, from large portions of the NEAFC Regulatory Area where bottom fishing takes place. Should NEAFC Contracting Parties agree to entertain a proposal of this nature, it would likely lead to a fragmented and inconsistent regime for the management of bottom fisheries in the NEAFC Regulatory Area. In such a situation, we would urge relevant coastal states to apply the strongest possible conservation measures consistent with the UNGA resolutions and international law and establish credible enforcement mechanisms to ensure effective compliance by both domestic and foreign vessels bottom fishing on their continental shelves in high seas areas. In this regard we would note that the UN Fish Stocks Agreement requires the compatibility of conservation and management measures within and beyond areas of national jurisdiction for fisheries on straddling fish stocks, including measures pursuant to the obligations in Articles 5 & 6 to assess the impacts of fishing on species belonging to the same ecosystem (Art 5(d)); protect biodiversity in the marine environment (Art 5(g)); and to protect habitats of special concern (Art 6.3(d)).

**Transparency and PECMAC**

Finally, regarding the request by environmental NGOs to open also PECMAC to observers, we welcome the openness of delegations that has in some cases resulted in positive discussions. Following an initial exchange of views at last year’s annual meeting, we are hopeful that NEAFC Contracting Parties follow the positive examples of other RFMOs such as CCAMLR, ICCAT, NAFO and IATTC to which many are also members and allow, within clearly defined limits, observers also at NEAFC PECMAC meetings.

I would like to close this statement with a warm welcome on behalf of all environmental organisations to both the new NEAFC president and secretary. We are looking forward to many years of good cooperation and wish you all the best for fulfilling your tasks.

Thank you

**Annex to the NGO opening statement**

**Paragraphs 179-186 of from UNGA resolution 71/123**

179. Welcomes the important progress made by States, regional fisheries management organizations and arrangements and those States participating in negotiations to establish a regional fisheries management
organization or arrangement competent to regulate bottom fisheries to implement paragraphs 80 and 83 to 87 of resolution 61/105, paragraphs 113, 117 and 119 to 124 of resolution 64/72 and paragraphs 121, 126, 129, 130 and 132 to 134 of resolution 66/68 and address the impacts of bottom fishing on vulnerable marine ecosystems, but notes with concern the uneven implementation of those provisions and that, in particular, bottom fishing continues to occur in certain areas beyond national jurisdiction without an impact assessment having been completed in the 10 years since the adoption of resolution 61/105, in which the General Assembly called for such assessments to be undertaken by 31 December 2008;

180. Calls upon, in this regard, States, regional fisheries management organizations and arrangements with the competence to regulate deep-sea fisheries, and States participating in negotiations to establish such organizations or arrangements to take in particular the following urgent actions regarding bottom fishing in areas beyond national jurisdiction:

(a) To use, as applicable, the full set of criteria in the Guidelines to identify where vulnerable marine ecosystems occur or are likely to occur as well as for assessing significant adverse impacts;

(b) To ensure that impact assessments, including for cumulative impacts of activities covered by the assessment, are conducted consistently with the Guidelines, particularly paragraph 47 thereof, are reviewed periodically and are revised thereafter whenever a substantial change in the fishery has occurred or there is relevant new information, and that, where such impact assessments have not been undertaken, they should be carried out as a priority before authorizing bottom fishing activities;

(c) To ensure that conservation and management measures adopted by States and regional fisheries organizations and arrangements are based on and updated on the basis of the best available scientific information, noting in particular the need to improve effective implementation of thresholds and move-on rules;

181. Recognizes that different types of marine scientific research, such as, inter alia, seabed mapping, mapping of vulnerable marine ecosystems based on information from the fishing fleet, on-site camera observations from remote vehicles, benthic ecosystem modelling, comparative benthic studies and predictive modelling have resulted in identification of areas where vulnerable marine ecosystems are known or are likely to occur and in the adoption of conservation and management measures to prevent significant adverse impacts on such ecosystems, including the closure of areas to bottom fishing in accordance with paragraph 119 (b) of resolution 64/72;

182. Encourages, in this regard, States, regional fisheries management organizations and arrangements with the competence to manage bottom fisheries, and States participating in negotiations to establish such organizations or arrangements, to consider the results available from different types of marine scientific research, including, as appropriate, those listed in paragraph 181 above, concerning the identification of areas containing vulnerable marine ecosystems, and to adopt conservation and management measures to prevent significant adverse impacts from bottom fishing on such ecosystems,
consistent with the Guidelines, or to close such areas to bottom fishing until such conservation and management measures are adopted, as well as to continue to undertake further marine scientific research, for the above-mentioned purposes, in accordance with international law, as reflected in Part XIII of the Convention;

183. Also encourages, in this regard, States, regional fisheries management organizations and arrangements with the competence to manage deep-sea fisheries, and States participating in negotiations to establish such organizations or arrangements to carry out further marine scientific research to address the remaining knowledge gaps, in particular with regard to fish stock assessments, and to base and update conservation and management measures on the best available scientific information, in accordance with international law, as reflected in Part XIII of the Convention;

184. Notes with concern that vulnerable marine ecosystems may also be impacted by human activities other than bottom fishing, and encourages in this regard States and competent international organizations to consider taking action to address such impacts;

185. Calls upon States, individually and through regional fisheries management organizations and arrangements, to take into account the potential impacts of climate change and ocean acidification in taking measures to manage deep-sea fisheries and protect vulnerable marine ecosystems;

186. Also calls upon States, individually and through regional fisheries management organizations and arrangements with the competence to regulate deep-sea fisheries, to adopt conservation and management measures, including monitoring, control and surveillance measures, on the basis of the best available scientific information, including stock assessments, to ensure the long-term sustainability of deep-sea fish stocks and non-target species and the rebuilding of depleted stocks, consistent with the Guidelines and, where scientific information is uncertain, unreliable or inadequate, to ensure that conservation and management measures are established consistent with the precautionary approach, in particular with regard to vulnerable, threatened or endangered species;
OBSERVERS FROM STATES

PANAMA

Opening Statement by Panama

Thank you Mr. Chairperson, and good day to all.

The Republic of Panama thanks to the Commission for accepting our participation as observer at the 36th Annual Regular Meeting and thanks the Government of the United Kingdom for hosting such this important meeting. Our presence in this meeting is for the purpose of formally request the participation of Panama in this commission under the status of Cooperating non-contracting Party.

It should be noted that the Republic of Panama being the first largest maritime administration in the world, has an important fleet of support fishing vessels, such as refrigerated cargo vessels and operate anywhere, offering transport service of products from fishing.

The Vessel Monitoring System (VMS) installed on board, is mandatory for all fishing vessels and support fishing vessel with international fishing license with a 24/7 service in our FMC.

In compliance with the decisions adopted by Resolution A/RES/53/33 of March 15, 1999 of the General Assembly of the United Nations, regarding large-scale fishing with gillnets and driftnets; the Republic of Panama, issues Executive Decree No. 90 of July 17, 2002 "By which the use of gillnets and / or drift is forbidden to all industrial fishing vessels of domestic and international service with the Panamanian flag, because represents a significant threat to the marine environment, the sustainability of fisheries and marine biodiversity. Panama since 2005, in accordance with these international instruments, adopts programs for the control of illegal fishing. In the same year, the National Maritime Strategy was incorporated into the need to create a National Plan to prevent, deter and eliminate Illegal, Unreported and Unregulated fishing.

By Law No. 44 of November 23, 2006, that creates the Aquatic Resources Authority of Panama (ARAP) introduces a definition support fishing vessel including fish carrier vessels.

The ARAP has the General Directorate of Research and Development, in charge of verifying catches and maintains information on landing, export, import of fishery products, as well as biometric information of the species exploited, which are important in support of the country's fishing development.

Panama through the ARAP, carries out Monitoring, Control and Surveillance actions, with a Fishing Monitoring Center with technological applications for the surveillance of fishing vessels and support fishing vessels, also a scientific observers program. This provision is of mandatory compliance with respect to national vessels in closed periods or when required, in order to comply with existing regulations and research for the conservation and management of fisheries resources.

Through Resolution No. 1791 of December 20, 2001, the obligation according to this Resolution, Panamanian flag vessels can not carry out fishing activities if we are not members or collaborators of the competent regional organization.
Through Resolution ADM / ARAP No. 113 of November 2, 2011, it is mandatory to register all Vessels more than twenty (20) Meters of Length in compliance with the measures of the Regional Fishing Management Organisation.

By Executive Decree No. 162 of June 6, 2013, regulations are established for the issuance of fishing licenses. New requirements are established by raising the levels of controls and precise information on their shipowners, agents and / or operators.

By Executive Decree No. 161 of June 6, 2013, new regulations on inspection, monitoring and control are established, as well as the introduction of some measures for the implementation as a port state to foreign flag vessels, such as the notification previous, declaration of catches among others.

By means of Executive Decree No. 160 of June 6, 2013, regulations are established in matters of sanctioning and enforcement administrative processes where new sanctions are created up to and including the cancellation of a vessel's registration if necessary.

Through Law No. 43 of September 14, 2016, Panama adopts the Agreement on Port State Measures to Prevent, Deter and Eliminate Illegal, unreported and Unregulated Fishing.

Finally it is important to mention that Panama is Contracting party of the IATTC and ICCAT and Cooperating non Member of the WCPFC and SPRFMO.

We can clearly mention that the Republic of Panama maintains a firm commitment to comply with the management measures established by the North-East Atlantic Fisheries Commission.

Thank you so much and hoping that the honorable members of the commission accept our request.