1. Opening of the meeting

The Chair, Snorri Palmason, Norway, opened the meeting and welcomed the delegates. All Contracting Parties were represented at the meeting.

2. Adoption of the agenda and appointment of rapporteur

The agenda was adopted in the form that was circulated before the meeting.

The Secretary was appointed rapporteur.

3. Election of Chair

Evgeny Shamray, the Russian Federation, was elected as Chair. However, it was agreed that the outgoing Chair, Snorri Palmason, Norway, would chair the meeting during discussions under agenda item 5, as this represented the conclusion of discussions that had taken place at the last meeting of PECMAS.

Thorsteinn Sigurdsson, Iceland, remains Vice-Chair.

In this report, references to “the Chair” refer to Snorri Palmason, Norway, under agenda items 1-3 and 5, and to Evgeny Shamray, Russian Federation, under all other agenda items.

Delegates thanked the outgoing Chair, Snorri Runar Palmason, Norway, for his work as Chair from PECMAS’ establishment.

4. Cooperation with ICES

   1. Review of advice from ICES

ICES presented the scientific advice that NEAFC had requested. He pointed out that there was a delay in the publication of some of the advice, so parts of the presentation should therefore be considered as preliminary advice that could possibly be somewhat amended before it was finalised. However, he stated that he did not anticipate significant amendments.
ICES stated that the advice for mackerel was for a TAC of 889,886 tonnes in 2014. This represents a significant increase from last year. There had been significant difficulties in applying the normal assessment method, *inter alia* in light of the fact that the historical catch data was less reliable than had previously been thought.

Denmark (in respect of the Faroe Islands and Greenland) made a presentation on mackerel in Greenlandic waters.

ICES stated that the advice for blue whiting was for a TAC of 948,950 tonnes in 2014. He noted that there had been good recruitment in the last few years, and the stock was in a healthy state. It was noted that the advice was based on the management plan adopted by the coastal States, in line with the request from NEAFC, and some delegations considered that there might be a reason for NEAFC to discuss whether it was appropriate to ask for advice on a basis which not all Contracting Parties took part in formulating.

ICES stated that the advice for Norwegian spring spawning (Atlanto Scandian) herring was for a TAC of 418,487 tonnes in 2014. He noted that the stock had been in good shape 5 years ago but had been going down since then due to poor recruitment.

ICES stated that the advice for deep pelagic redfish in the Irminger Sea and adjacent waters was for a TAC of 20,000 tonnes in 2014, and that a management plan should be formulated for the stock. He noted that there had been similar advice for the last 7 years. He stated that the stock status compared to MSY and limit points was unknown, but thought to be stable. He noted that there had been a significant discrepancy between the advice and actual catches, although the trend had been towards the catches approaching the advised level. ICES pointed out that it would help improve the precision of the advice if all Contracting Parties reported their catches by depth.

ICES stated that the advice for shallow pelagic redfish in the Irminger Sea and adjacent waters was for no directed fisheries and bycatches as low as possible in 2014, as in previous years. He noted that the stock status compared to MSY and limit points was unknown, but thought to be stable at a low level. He also noted that there had also been catches from this stock in the NAFO area.

ICES stated that the advice for redfish in areas I and II was for a TAC of 24,000 tonnes in 2014, and that measures to protect juveniles should be maintained. He noted that this constituted a reduction in the TAC compared to the advice last year. It was noted that last year, following a benchmark exercise, the advice was based on MSY, and that the advice now took more into account the poor recruitment in previous years. ICES stated that the stock status compared to MSY and limit points was unknown, but thought to be stable.

ICES pointed out that there was not a new advice regarding deep sea species, and that the advice provided last year was still valid. This advice is provided every 2-3 years, as these species are usually long lived, and there is less need for advice on an annual basis.

ICES stated that catches of Rockall haddock should be no more than 1,620 tonnes in 2014, and noted that if discard rates are not reduced this would mean landings of no more than 980 tonnes. Additional measures to reduce catches of small haddock should also be introduced.

There was a discussion on what type of measures would be possible regarding the reduction of catches of small haddock. It was noted that setting a minimum landing size would be incompatible
with the NEAFC discard ban, and that a clear management aim would have to be formulated before ICES could be requested to provide advice on how the aim could be achieved.

There was also a discussion on the calculations used by ICES to estimate the relationship between landings and actual catches. The Russian Federation stated that they considered the calculations in the basis for the advice to be wrong if the TAC, which is now controlled only by the landings, will be set at the level predicted by ICES total catch, which includes both discards and landings.

ICES noted that there had been two separate special requests regarding Rockall haddock. Regarding the proposed harvest control rule ICES advised that, using the existing reference points, it was not in accordance with the precautionary approach under the conditions of low recruitment that have prevailed since 2004.

Regarding the protection of juveniles, ICES advised that the overall impact of the current closure area on the stock was difficult to assess. ICES advised that a number of technical and operational measures could be examined to improve the fishing pattern, including an increase in mesh size, adoption of selective devices (such as square mesh panels), and avoidance of areas or seasons with high concentrations of juveniles. The future discard ban for EU vessels was expected to encourage the avoidance of small fish, hence improving the fisheries selection pattern.

ICES pointed out that new closures to bottom fishing were being proposed. This was on SW Rockall, Hatton-Rockall Basin, Hatton Bank and the Josephine Seamount.

ICES presented the response to the joint request of NEAFC and OSPAR regarding ecologically or biologically significant marine areas (EBSAs). He noted that while some areas identified at the 2011 NEAFC/OSPAR/CBD workshop had been considered as meeting the criteria for EBSAs, with altered borders, ICES has concluded that there was insufficient scientific justification for classifying other areas as EBSAs.

2. Formulation of requests for advice from ICES

The Chair noted that no proposals for non-recurring requests had been tabled before the meeting. However, it was noted that such proposals might be put forward following the forthcoming coastal State consultations on various species.

**It was agreed** to make a proposal to the Annual Meeting regarding requests for advice from ICES which would be identical to the one made last year, with updated dates, except that the part with non-recurring advice would be left empty. This would make it possible to add requests for non-recurring advice to a revised version at the Annual Meeting.

3. Other

The Chair reminded the delegates of the discussion at the last PECMAS meeting regarding NEAFC contact points in NEAFC. **It was agreed** that the PECMAS Chair would be the contact point for ICES if they had any questions regarding NEAFC requests for advice.

The Secretary encouraged all Contracting Parties to be active participants in the next meeting of ICES with recipients of ICES advice, as these tended to be very useful meetings.

5. NEAFC’s bottom fishing regulation
1. Overview of previous work on this issue

The Chair went over the work that had already been done on this issue. He noted that significant progress had been made.

2. Formulation of proposals to the Annual Meeting

The Chair presented the draft Recommendation, as it had been at the end of the previous meeting. The discussion under this agenda item was largely a continuation of the discussions that had taken place at the previous meeting, and constituted a further development of the draft that was formulated at that meeting.

The result of the discussions was a draft Recommendation that still included square brackets in three places. In this context the EU stressed the need to provide qualitative improvement in effectiveness. **It was agreed** to forward the draft to the Annual Meeting as a proposal by PECMAS, despite the square brackets resulting in the Annual Meeting having to make some amendments to the document before it can be adopted.

According to the format of the new draft Recommendation, areas closed to bottom fishing are listed in the Recommendation and the coordinates are included in an annex to it. **It was agreed** to add to the draft Recommendation proposed to the Annual Meeting the areas that ICES was advising as new closures. There would therefore not be a separate proposal for area closures.

In this context, **it was agreed** to propose to the Annual Meeting, on the basis of ICES advice, that the following areas be closed to bottom fisheries:

- SW Rockall, two areas with coordinates as set out in tables 1.5.5.1.2 and 1.5.5.1.3 in the ICES advice.
- Hatton Rockall Basin, two areas with coordinates as set out in tables 1.5.5.1.4 and 1.5.5.1.5 in the ICES advice.
- Hatton Bank, two areas with coordinates as set out in table 1.5.5.1.6 and 1.5.5.1.7 in the ICES advice.
- Josephine Seamount, one area with coordinates as set out in table 1.5.5.1.8 in the ICES advice.

Although all the areas would be added to the draft Recommendation presented to the Annual Meeting, two of them would be put in square brackets in the proposal. This is on the one hand due to the Russian Federation reserving its position on one of the areas in SW Rockall (1.5.5.1.3) and the EU reserving its position on the Josephine Seamount.

6. Management of deep sea species

   1. Consideration of the appropriate approach to take in the management of deep sea species

The Chair reminded the delegates of the conclusion of the last PECMAS meeting, to base the discussions on this issue on the report of the meeting between NEAFC and ICES on deep sea species in February-March this year. He went over the substance of the report, which had been presented also at the previous PECMAS meeting.
The Chair presented document PECMAS 2013/02/12, which contained the Chair’s draft Guidelines for the General Approach to the Management of Deep Sea Species, on the basis of the report of the NEAFC/ICES meeting.

There was a discussion on the basis of the document, where it emerged that there was no consensus on proposing to the Annual Meeting that it adopt the guidelines. Four of the Contracting Parties supported the draft, but the EU was not in a position to agree to them being proposed to the Annual Meeting.

While other Contracting Parties considered that the guidelines set a clear framework for improving NEAFC’s work on deep sea species, with both general and specific measures fitting within it, the EU did not support the draft. The EU stated that NEAFC should be more ambitious and aim at dealing with the issue of deep sea species on a fisheries basis, using advice that would be based on NEAFC providing ICES with not only VMS data but also various other data on catches and fishing gear that would be tied in with the VMS data.

In the absence of consensus, it was noted that PECMAS would not be in a position to make a proposal to the Annual Meeting on the general approach to take in the management of deep sea species.

### 2. Formulation of management measures

The Chair noted that under this agenda item, there were meeting documents with three draft proposals for management measures: general measures for deep sea species, specific measures for black scabbardfish and specific measures for greater forkbeard.

Following discussions which were largely based on the ICES advice and the report of the NEAFC/ICES meeting on deep sea species, it was agreed that in addition to general management measures, there should be specific management measures for the following:

- deep sea sharks;
- black scabbardfish;
- greater forkbeard;
- roundnose grenadier; and
- orange roughy.

It was noted that measures were already in place for deep sea sharks, which would not expire at the end of this year. It was therefore not considered necessary to formulate any further proposals regarding these species at this point.

Some amendments were made to the draft proposals regarding black scabbardfish and greater forkbeard, regarding a reporting regime due to the catch limits not being allocated. Nevertheless, there was no consensus on forwarding proposals on these species to the Annual Meeting, as at least one Contracting Party would need further internal consultations before being able to express a position on the draft proposals. It was noted that the revised drafts would remain as PECMAS working documents that could be used as a basis for proposals at the Annual Meeting if the Contracting Parties so wished.

In light of the discussions on black scabbardfish and greater forkbeard, it was decided not to attempt to formulate proposals for management measures for roundnose grenadier.
It was noted that disagreements remained among the Contracting Parties regarding how to deal with orange roughy, and that PECMAS would not be able to reach a consensus on that issue at this time. The EU stated that the orange roughy issue undermined NEAFC’s position as a leading RFMO, and that this underlined the need to revise the system in general.

The conclusion was therefore that although PECMAS recognised that several specific management measures should be adopted for deep sea species, no proposals to the Annual Meeting were made.

Regarding general measures for deep sea species, it was agreed that the current approach was far from satisfactory, but still better than nothing. Measures along the same lines as the current general management measures should therefore be in place until improved measures have been formulated.

It was agreed to forward to the Annual Meeting as a proposal from PECMAS the proposal contained in document PECMAS 2013/02/13, with the date of expiry being 31 December 2014.

It was agreed that there is a need for NEAFC to consider for revision the regulations of fisheries for deep-sea species, specifically the regulation limiting the effort to 65% of the level in previous years. It was agreed that to facilitate such a revision, NEAFC should by the end of September 2014 compile recent data on effort, catch and spatial distribution of fisheries for deep-sea species in the Regulatory Area. It is recognised that data up until 2005 was compiled in NEAFC by an ad hoc Working Group on Deep-Sea Species. The time-series of these statistics needs to be updated and completed in order to achieve an improved regulation. It is proposed that the compilation is conducted by NEAFC for internal use, but in addition that the data are made available to ICES to facilitate stock assessments and further analyses of the fisheries.

7. Cooperation with OSPAR

1. Consideration of issues relating to cooperation between NEAFC and OSPAR

The discussions under this agenda sub-item were in two parts, first a more general discussion before the joint session with OSPAR under agenda sub-item 7.2 and then a discussion with the aim of reaching conclusions, following the joint session.

The Chair noted that there were in particular two issues relating to the cooperation between NEAFC and OSPAR that needed to be dealt with: EBSAs and the collective arrangement.

Regarding EBSAs it was emphasised that there is a need to ensure that in all presentations of this issue it is avoided to confuse the term EBSAs with the terms VMEs, MPAs and closed areas. EBSAs may or may not include VMEs, and in cases where there are VMEs in an EBSA it may be on only parts of the EBSA. The management action required for an EBSA was therefore not necessarily area closures.

It was agreed, consistent with ICES advice, to propose to the Annual Meeting that NEAFC, jointly with OSPAR, submit the three following three areas to the Convention on Biological Diversity (CBD) as candidate EBSAs:

- Mid-Atlantic Ridge North of the Azores and South of Iceland
- Charlie-Gibbs Fracture Zone (and the Sub-Polar Front)
- The Hatton and Rockall Banks and the Hatton-Rockall Basin

In this context, it was noted that Iceland reserved its position on the submission of the areas until the Annual Meeting.
It was agreed to not act at this time on the fourth area identified by ICES as meeting the criteria for EBSAs, in the arctic ice. This was due to the fact that, while a part of the NEAFC Regulatory Area is in the high Arctic, the area defined by ICES was mostly outside the Regulatory Area and to a large extent within the national jurisdiction of a Contracting Party.

Regarding other areas than these four, it was agreed to not act on any of them at this time. It was noted that OSPAR intends to make a draft regarding possible additional joint NEAFC/OSPAR requests for advice on EBSAs, and that Contracting Parties may wish to consider any such draft from OSPAR if it is received in time for the Annual Meeting.

It was agreed to ask the Secretary to contact the CBD Secretariat to enquire about an EBSA workshop that was being planned for the Arctic in Helsinki in March 2014. He should inform PECMAS members of any response he received from CBD in this context.

Regarding the collective arrangement, the Chair pointed out that OSPAR had responded to the comments made by NEAFC. The OSPAR response, document PECMAS 2013/02/03, was in large part acceptance of the comments made by NEAFC. The Secretary presented the elements in the OSPAR response where there was a different conclusion than agreement with NEAFC.

Following discussions, it was agreed to propose to the Annual Meeting to accept the collective arrangement as a formal basis for cooperation with OSPAR and other competent authorities, provided that OSPAR would agree to one amendment to the latest draft collective arrangement that had been agreed by OSPAR:

- in paragraph 1, where OSPAR had proposed adding the words “management of” or “conservation, protection and sustainable use of”, that neither of these two options be selected and no words be inserted in this place in the draft.

Additionally, it was noted that one Contracting Party had reserved its position regarding the OSPAR proposal of replacing the phrase “competent authorities” with the phrase “competent international organisation”. Flexibility by OSPAR on that point might therefore contribute to a fruitful conclusion.

In addition to these substantive issues, some editorial comments were also made, and it was agreed to present these to OSPAR on the assumption that they would not be considered controversial.

2. Session with OSPAR

The discussions under this agenda sub-item focused mainly on the two issues of EBSAs and the collective arrangement. The Chair informed OSPAR of the discussions under agenda sub-item 7.2, which had not been finalised.

OSPAR presented the work that had been done within OSPAR regarding both issues.

Regarding the collective arrangement, OSPAR explained point-by-point the response to the comments that NEAFC had made to the draft collective arrangement, and answered questions in this context.

Among the points raised in the discussions was the wish of both NEAFC and OSPAR that other relevant parties would join NEAFC and OSPAR in cooperation and coordination under the final version of the collective arrangement. However, it was noted that beginning the function of the collective arrangement on a bilateral basis could demonstrate its usefulness to others.
Regarding EBSAs, OSPAR noted that its preference was for presenting to CBD, together with NEAFC, the areas that ICES had determined met the criteria for EBSAs. The possible exception from this was the area in the Arctic, which was largely within national jurisdiction. OSPAR was looking into the possibility of the relevant national governments presenting areas along with the international organisations. The aim was to present these areas to CBD within the current two-year cycle.

For other areas, OSPAR was looking at setting up a process which might result in the relevant areas being presented in the next two-year cycle. OSPAR had presented a draft document with ideas on how to proceed in that context. Following some discussions, OSPAR acknowledged that the draft needed further work, inter alia to clarify the foreseen timeline, and stated that a revised version would be presented to NEAFC in time for the Annual Meeting.

It was noted that compared to most other areas of the world, the North East Atlantic was in a good situation. CBD workshops around the world generally had no peer review and no process comparable to the ICES process. It was also noted that nominating areas as EBSAs would not result in them having any particular legal status or requiring any particular management response.

The Chair stated that OSPAR would be informed of any conclusions of PECMAS regarding the issues discussed with OSPAR. He furthermore pointed out that PECMAS did not make any final decisions, but rather made proposals to the Annual Meeting.

8. Management of sharks

The Chair presented document PECMAS 2013/02/09, a joint note by the Secretaries of NEAFC and ICCAT regarding the management of sharks. It was noted that the note presented a good overview.

It was agreed to continue working together with ICCAT regarding sharks, possibly aiming at establishing formal cooperation at some point in the future. However, it was not considered appropriate to take a big step in that context at this time, but to rather take account of the internal discussion in ICCAT on updating the Convention. Any future cooperation would be built on the conclusion of the internal ICCAT process and proceeding before a conclusion was reached within ICCAT would probably be premature.

The Secretary pointed out that in preparing the joint note with ICCAT, he had noted that the shark finning ban that had been agreed on in NEAFC in 2006 had never been put in the form of a formal Recommendation and had therefore never been legally binding. If Contracting Parties wished to have the shark finning ban legally binding in NEAFC they would therefore have to present a proposal to the Annual Meeting. As the decision in 2006 had never been put in the form of a Recommendation, there was no full text to copy by those wishing to draft a proposal.

Following some discussion, the EU volunteered to present a proposal to the Annual Meeting on shark finning. It will not be identical to what was discussed in 2006, but along the lines of what the EU had suggested in NAFO. It was agreed that the general approach in the EU proposal in NAFO was agreeable and all Contracting Parties look forward to looking positively at the EU proposal to the Annual Meeting.
9. Information regarding relevant international initiatives

The Secretary made a general presentation on the work relevant to PECMAS that is taking place within the UN and FAO, and presented the continued high interest in Arctic issues and NEAFC’s role in that context.

10. Any other business

Iceland presented for information Annual Meeting document AM-2013-03, a proposal to provide VMS and catch data to ICES for scientific purposes. She stated that she hoped for good support for this at the Annual Meeting. The EU noted that this was in line with its own emphasis regarding developing an approach to the management of deep sea species, as discussed under agenda item 6.

The EU noted that many documents had been circulated during the meeting. He stated that in the future it would be preferable if as many of the documents as possible would be circulated in good time before the meeting. This may contribute to avoiding situations where Contracting Parties are expected to have positions of proposals with no notice.

11. Future Meetings

It was agreed that there would not be a need for another meeting before the Annual Meeting.

12. Report of the meeting

The draft report was circulated on 9 October 2013. The final report was adopted through correspondence on 16 October.

13. Closing of the meeting

The Chair thanked all the participants for a fruitful meeting and wished everyone a safe journey home. He also expressed thanks to the previous Chair, who had presided over parts of this meeting, for all his work for PECMAS. He then closed the meeting.