PERMANENT COMMITTEE ON MANAGEMENT AND SCIENCE (PECMAS) OF THE NORTH-EAST ATLANTIC FISHERIES COMMISSION
4-5 October 2016 at NEAFC Headquarters, London

Report

1. Opening of the meeting
The Chair, Evgeny Shamray, the Russian Federation, 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 circulated before the meeting.

The Secretary was appointed as rapporteur.

3. Cooperation with ICES

   1. General cooperation with ICES
The Secretary reported from the bilateral meeting with ICES that was held on 12 January 2016, following the conclusions of the NEAFC Extraordinary Meeting in 2015. It was noted that the intention was to have these meetings regularly in the future, perhaps every two years, and that the next meeting would likely be scheduled back-to-back with the meeting of ICES with recipients of ICES advice in January 2017.

   2. Review of advice from ICES
Representatives of ICES, David Miller and Mark Tasker, presented the ICES advice regarding various fish stocks and regarding the protection of vulnerable marine ecosystems. There was an in-depth discussion regarding individual elements in the advice.

It was noted that the ICES advice had not been finalised for all species, including spurdog. ICES will include these species in their presentation at the NEAFC Annual Meeting.

In the discussions on the advice regarding the deep pelagic beaked redfish in the Irminger Sea, one Contracting Party questioned the reliability of the assessment and its usefulness as a basis for conservation and management measures. The importance of submitting all relevant data to ICES was stressed by PECMAS.

It was noted that the advice regarding the protection of vulnerable marine ecosystems (VMEs) did not include any new elements. ICES pointed out that new information had further strengthened previous advice for area closures, but not created a basis for new advice for additional closures.
The representatives of ICES noted that NEAFC might want to consider the existing “haddock box” closure on the Rockall Bank in the context of possible VME closures. It was agreed that, pursuant to the recurring request for advice from ICES, NEAFC would expect ICES to provide advice regarding the protection of VMEs, even in cases where other measures are in place that have a comparable practical effect. ICES advice for the area covered by the “haddock box” should therefore include advice for VME closures in the future, as appropriate.

Regarding deep sea species, ICES presented its advice in the classification of species and stocks into the four categories that were adopted at the NEAFC Annual Meeting in 2014. It was noted that there was confusion regarding some of the advised changes to the interim classification which ICES had been requested to review. This included advising that stocks be placed in category one in cases where there wasn’t a stock-specific catch level advice from ICES, despite having such advice in place being an integral part of placement in this category. It was also noted that the advice included a comment on the list of chondrichthians stating that ICES did not consider it to be a complete list. Furthermore, it was considered unclear if the continuation of the spawning closure for blue ling was included in the advice. It was agreed that further clarification from ICES was needed regarding these outstanding issues.

The representatives of ICES agreed to ensure that this was given further consideration within ICES and that further clarifications, and/or corrections, would be provided in time for the NEAFC Annual Meeting.

All Contracting Parties were encouraged to submit to ICES all the available data that would be useful for their scientific work. This was emphasised particularly in relation to Redfish in the Irminger Sea.

3. Formulation of requests for advice from ICES
No proposals for non-recurring requests for advice from ICES, nor amendments to the recurring request, were presented.

4. Other
The Chair presented document PECMAS 2016-01-04, regarding moving the release date for advice on vulnerable marine ecosystems to the end of September from 2017.

It was noted that PECMAS normally meets during the first week of October, in order to have its work finalised before coastal State consultations start early in that same month. Having the advice for vulnerable marine ecosystems only ready at the end of September would not make it possible for PECMAS members to properly digest the advice prior to the meeting. This would be particularly problematic as PECMAS is expected to formulate proposals to the NEAFC Commission on vulnerable marine ecosystems, unlike the pelagic stocks for which the advice is currently released at the end of September.

It was agreed to respond to ICES that it would create problems for PECMAS if the advice on vulnerable marine ecosystems is not available at least 10 days before the committee’s autumn meeting which normally takes place during the first week of October.

The Chair presented document PECMAS 2016-01-04, which was a letter from the Chair of the NEAFC Ad Hoc Working Group on ERS (AHWGERS).
It was agreed that it should be reiterated to the AHWHERS that PECMAS considers all the elements that they had previously sent to the group to be important and that it would be useful for scientific work if the conclusion of the groups work would ensure that they are recorded as a part of the future ERS system. It was agreed that the PECMAS Chair and Vice Chair would communicate with the Chair of the AHWGERS to explain this in further detail, and to offer to have further input in this context during the upcoming work on formulating the details of the ERS system.

4. Protection of vulnerable marine ecosystems

1. Review of the coordinates for existing bottom fishing areas
No proposal was presented under this agenda item.

2. Formulation of proposals to the Annual Meeting
No proposal was presented under this agenda item.

3. Other
No point was raised under this agenda item.

5. Management of deep sea species

1. Ad hoc working group on deep sea species
The Chair of the group explained that they had not yet been able to commence its work as one Contracting Party, which constitutes a large proportion of the fisheries for deep sea species in the Regulatory Area, had not submitted the required data.

The Contracting Party in question was encouraged to submit the data at their earliest convenience.

2. Formulation of proposals to the Annual Meeting
It was noted, as is reflected under agenda item 3.2, that further clarification was expected from ICES in time for the NEAFC Annual Meeting.

It was agreed to refrain at this time from formulating proposals to the Annual Meeting, and rather hold an informal meeting of PECMAS members in the margins of that meeting to formulate proposals as appropriate.

3. Other
The EU made a presentation of new developments in the management of deep sea species within the EU.

6. Cooperation with OSPAR
Emily Corcoran of the OSPAR Secretariat made a presentation on the latest developments within OSPAR, including preparations for the 2017 meeting of the Biodiversity Committee, an intermediate assessment that is due in 2017 and the election of a new Chair of OSPAR.

1. Implementation of the collective arrangement
The Secretary made a presentation on the meeting that was held under the collective arrangement 20-22 April 2016.
It was noted that the meetings under the collective arrangements were intended to be among the Contracting Parties of NEAFC and OSPAR, and not only among the Secretariat. There had been notable attendance by Contracting Parties at the 2016 meeting, and all Contracting Parties were encouraged to attend the next meeting in 2017.

It was noted that these meetings constituted a useful forum to exchange information to ensure that the two organisations were aware of each other’s activities. This would contribute to their respective measures complementing each other rather than undermining each other.

It was noted that work would continue towards bringing other competent international organisations into the cooperation and coordination under the collective arrangement. The IMO and ISA would continue to be the main targets for such efforts by the Contracting Parties of NEAFC and OSPAR.

It was noted that UNEP had published an information paper on the development of the cooperation and coordination between NEAFC and OSPAR, which had already been made available on the NEAFC and OSPAR websites.

2. **Marine litter**
   It was noted that NEAFC had contributed to OSPAR’s work on marine litter, and that this work by OSPAR was continuing.

3. **Consideration of other issues relating to cooperation between NEAFC and OSPAR**
   No point was raised under this agenda item.

4. **Session with OSPAR**
   No point was raised under this agenda item.

7. **Information regarding relevant international initiatives**
   The Secretary made a presentation on developments within the United Nations (UN), the Food and Agriculture Organisation of the UN (FAO) and the Convention on Biological Diversity (CBD).

8. **Chairing of PECMAS, including possible election of PECMAS Chair**
   The Chair stated that earlier in the year he had raised with the NEAFC President the issue of the length of terms that Chairs of NEAFC Committees should serve. The President had noted that while the NEAFC Rules of Procedure provide for fixed terms for the NEAFC Presidency, there was a long tradition of Chairs of subsidiary bodies of NEAFC not having fixed terms and serving until they ask to be relieved or until the NEAFC Heads of Delegation decide to change which Contracting Party provides the Chair for which subsidiary bodies.

   The Chair noted that while his term was therefore not formally for a fixed period, he considered it useful to periodically re-evaluate the Chairing. This would enable the members of the committee to have new Chairs regularly and would ensure that taking on the Chairmanship would not need to be a commitment beyond a few years.

   **It was agreed** to reconfirm the current PECMAS Chair, Evgeny Shamray, the Russian Federation, in his position and to revisit the issue of the Chairing of PECMAS in three years’ time. The issue of chairing will therefore be on the agenda of the autumn meeting of PECMAS in 2019.

9. **Any other business**
   No point was raised under this agenda item.
10. Report of the meeting
The draft report was circulated on 7 October 2016. The final report was adopted through correspondence on 14 October 2016.

11. Closing of the meeting
The Chair thanked all the participants for a fruitful meeting and wished everyone a safe journey home. He then closed the meeting.