1. Opening of the meeting
The Secretary opened the meeting and welcomed the delegates.

All Contracting Parties other than the Russian Federation were represented.

The Secretary pointed out that the previous Chair, Andrew Thomson, EU, had retired from his position in the European Commission and was not continuing his role as Chair. The Secretary noted that before this meeting, Piebe Hotsma, EU, had been nominated to become the new Chair. The Secretary asked if there were any other nominations for a new Chair. There were no other nominations, and Piebe Hotsma, EU, was elected as the Chair of the working group.

2. Adoption of the agenda and appointment of rapporteur
The agenda was adopted in the form that had been circulated before the meeting.

The Secretary was appointed as rapporteur.

3. State of play
The Chair went over the work of the working group during 2016 and explained the progress that had already been made in formulating draft documents to be presented to the NEAFC Annual Meeting. He noted that draft Guidelines for Coastal State Consultations only had a handful of outstanding issues and that an advanced draft of a Model Framework Arrangement also already existed.

4. Continuation of consideration of the points in the Working Group's Terms of Reference, based on the draft documents submitted to the 2016 Annual Meeting
The delegates reviewed their Terms of Reference and the relevant draft documents.
It was agreed that the main task for this meeting would be to complete the formulation of the draft Guidelines for Coastal State Consultations and the draft Model Framework Arrangement, which would then be submitted to the 2017 Annual Meeting as the outcome of the working group.

5. Formulation of possible proposals to the 2017 Annual Meeting

It was agreed to submit the draft Guidelines for Coastal State Consultations in the North East Atlantic and the draft Model Framework Arrangement to the 2017 Annual Meeting, in the form presented in Annex 1 and Annex 2 to this report respectively, and propose that they be adopted.

The EU stated that they wished the report of the meeting to record that they were disappointed with the results of the work of the working group, as they had wanted the documents to go further, mainly in establishing more robust provisions regarding decision making and the settlement of disagreements. However, they recognised that there was no consensus on agreeing on the type of provisions that they favoured and they therefore joined the agreement on submitting the documents to the Annual Meeting in their current form.

It was noted that even after they will be formally adopted by the NEAFC Commission, the Guidelines will have a non-binding nature and the Model Framework Arrangement would represent one example of how such an arrangement could be formulated.

It was noted that the draft Guidelines in Annex 1 were now finalised for the purposes of the working group, but that the issue of the scope of the draft Guidelines might be revisited by some Contracting Parties at the Annual Meeting with possible proposals for amendments being submitted to the Annual Meeting in that context.

It was also noted that some Contracting Parties would have to consider some elements of the draft Model Framework Arrangement following this meeting, and that some amendments to the current draft in Annex 2 might be submitted to the Annual Meeting in that context.

It was agreed that any Contracting Party intending to propose amendments to the draft documents in Annex 1 and/or Annex 2 should firstly ensure that they are as minimal as possible and secondly submit them in writing to the other Contracting Parties at their earliest convenience, so that it would be possible to have informal consultations on them in good time before the Annual Meeting.

6. Arrangements for additional meetings of the Working Group, if required

It was agreed that there was not a need to have additional meetings of the working group.

7. Any other business

No issues were raised under this agenda item.

8. Report of the meeting

The draft report was circulated on 23 March 2017 and the final report of the meeting was adopted on 7 April 2017.

9. Closing of the meeting

The Chair thanked all the participants for a fruitful meeting and wished everyone a safe journey home.