Working Group on VMEs
22-23 October 2018

Report

1. Opening of the meeting by the Chair

The Chair, Vidar Landmark, Norway, opened the meeting and welcomed delegates.

All Contracting Parties except the Russian Federation were present at the meeting.

The list of participants, document WG-VME 2018-04-02 is Annex 1 to this report.

2. Adoption of the agenda and appointment of rapporteur

The agenda was agreed as circulated in document WG-VME 2018-04-01.

The Secretary was appointed as rapporteur.

In his introductory comments the Chair recapitulated the discussions at the Annual Meeting 2017 that had led to the set-up of the Working Group and the progress at the last 3 meetings. The previous meetings had evolved from a Chair’s working paper, via a paper on topics for discussion to an informal working document on Recommendation 19:2014, developed at the last meeting. The working document had been circulated to Contracting Parties to allow them to consult internally in preparation for the fourth meeting of WG VME.

3. Feedback from Contracting Parties on a working document developed at WG on VMEs 3 and circulated with the Report of that meeting.

Working Group VME discussed the working document that had been circulated with the report of the last meeting. The working paper included informal proposals for amending and restructuring Recommendation 19:2014 to help resolve the balance in views on setting out the legal competence of NEAFC and the rights of coastal states.
The working group amended the informal joint working document through several rounds of drafting. This helped to develop draft text options which were welcomed as a step forward toward a better focus on the core issues under discussion. Key articles in the Recommendation were identified for further work, while the remainder of the articles would require some technical amendments after the core issues were resolved.

4. Final conclusions from the WG on VMEs and coastal States

The Working Group agreed that no formal conclusion nor formal national positions had been reached on the informal joint working document. It was nevertheless acknowledged that good progress had been made in moving towards understanding what the core issues were from the differing perspectives of the Contracting Parties. Further examination of the informal working paper was therefore merited in future meetings of the Working Group.

5. Draft proposal to Annual meeting

It was agreed that no proposal was to be made at the 2018 Annual Meeting. The Chair would inform the Annual Meeting on progress at the Working Group and recommend whether it should continue its work in 2019 or not.

6. Any other business

6.1 Including marking of documents for publication

No formal documents were tabled at the meeting.

7. Report of the meeting

The draft report was circulated on 25 October 2018. The final report was adopted through correspondence on 2 December 2018.

8. Closing of the meeting

The Chair noted that, if future Working Group meetings were to be agreed at the Annual Meeting, the two meetings should be held ideally before April 2019. Early indications were that dates may need to be found in the weeks 4-8 February and 11-15 March 2019.

The Chair thanked delegations for some real progress made on the task set out for the Working Group. He wished delegations a safe journey home.