

WGC(14)9

Draft Report of the Thirtieth Annual Meeting of the West Greenland Commission

Le Nouveau Monde Hotel, Saint-Malo, France

3 - 6 June, 2014

1. Opening of the Meeting

- 1.1 The Chairman, Mr Ted Potter (European Union), opened the meeting and welcomed participants to the Thirty-First Annual Meeting of the Commission. The Chair noted that opening statements should be submitted in writing given the limited amount of time available to the Commission this year. The NGOs presented a statement (Annex 1).
- 1.2 A list of participants at the Thirty-First Annual Meeting of the Council and Commissions is included on page **xx** of this document.

2. Adoption of the Agenda

- 2.1 The Commission adopted its Agenda, WGC(14)XX (Annex 2).

3. Nomination of a Rapporteur

- 3.1 Ms Kimberly Blankenbeker (USA) was appointed as Rapporteur.

4. Election of Officers

- 4.1 The current Chairman, Mr Ted Potter (European Union), was first elected to this position at the Thirtieth Annual Meeting of NASCO to complete the term of then Chairman George LaPointe. Similarly, Mr Carl McLean (Canada) was first elected as Vice-Chairman at the Thirtieth Annual Meeting of NASCO to complete the term of then Vice Chairman Ted Potter. Both the Chairman and Vice Chairman were, therefore, eligible for re-election. The Commission re-elected Mr Potter and Mr McLean to their respective positions.

5. Review of the 2013 Fishery and ACOM Report from ICES on Salmon Stocks in the Commission Area

- 5.1 The representative of ICES, Mr Ian Russell, presented a report on the scientific advice on salmon stocks in the West Greenland Commission area, CNL(14)8. His presentation to the Commission is available as document WGC(14)xx. The ICES Advisory Committee (ACOM) report, which contains the scientific advice relevant to all Commissions, is included on page **xx** of this document. The Chairman noted that the representative of Denmark (in respect of the Faroe Islands and Greenland) had

presented a report on the 2013 fishery at the intersessional meeting (WGC(14)4, Annex 10).

- 5.2 The representative of the United States recalled that the United States had developed a new management rebuilding objective for its salmon populations, which was presented to the Commission in 2013 for the sake of transparency. He welcomed the 2014 review by ICES of the implications of the new management objectives and noted that the impact of the change on the ICES scientific advice would be negligible. The Commission acknowledged that the new objective would be used by ICES in the provision of scientific advice in 2015 and beyond unless and until further revisions to the management objective were made.

6. Report of the Inter-Sessional Meeting of the Commission

- 6.1 The Chairman introduced the report of the April 2014 intersessional meeting of the WGC (WGC(14)4). He presented a brief summary of the information and issues considered at that meeting, noting that discussions were quite detailed and productive. He drew attention to the Chair's working proposal tabled at that meeting regarding the management of the fishery at West Greenland in 2014, appended as Annex 5 to WGC(14)4. He stressed that the proposal was provided to stimulate ideas and discussion of the issue prior to the 2014 meeting of the WGC.
- 6.2 There was general agreement that the intersessional meeting had provided an important opportunity to share information and exchange views prior to the 2014 NASCO annual meeting. In addition, the Chair's proposal for a possible addendum to the current West Greenland regulatory measure was considered to provide a valuable framework for further discussions.

7. Regulatory Measures

- 7.1 A multi-annual measure for the West Greenland fishery was adopted at the Twenty-Ninth Annual Meeting of the Commission, WGC(12)12, to apply to the fishery in 2012, 2013 and 2014. Under the measure, the catch at West Greenland would be restricted to the amount used for internal consumption in Greenland, which in the past has been estimated to be 20t annually. The Commission also agreed in 2012 that the same procedure used during the previous regulatory measure for applying the Framework of Indicators (FWI) would apply during the period of the new regulatory measure. The Report on the Use of the Framework of Indicators in 2013 (WGC(14)3) was presented by Mr Rory Saunders (USA), Coordinator of the FWI Working Group. He reported that application of the FWI indicated that there had been no significant change in the stock indicators and, therefore, that a reassessment of the ICES management advice for the 2014 fishery at West Greenland was not required.
- 7.2 The Chairman noted that the multi-annual regulatory measure adopted in 2012 continued to apply in 2014. He also recalled that the Chair's proposal from the 2014 WGC intersessional meeting for a possible addendum to this regulatory measure was on the table for discussion. He reminded the Parties that the proposal had three operative paragraphs. He suggested discussing each in turn.
- 7.3 The Chair recalled that the first paragraph of the proposed addendum concerned the

potential for assisting Greenland on the development of approaches to improve the monitoring of landings to ensure full reporting. The representative of Denmark (in respect of the Faroe Islands and Greenland) recalled that the Greenland government had adopted an Executive Order in 2013 aimed at improving catch accounting. He noted that given the proximity of the 2014 fishing season, developing and implementing new monitoring and management approaches was not feasible. He noted that discussions should focus on finding solutions for 2015.

- 7.4 The representative of the United States noted that effective monitoring is the first step in asserting management control. He stressed that the sampling program had demonstrated that there is underreporting in the fishery and that he hoped the new Executive Order would result in improvement.
- 7.5 There was general agreement that cooperative work to develop ideas for improving the monitoring and control regime for the West Greenland fishery for 2015 would be useful and should be undertaken in a timely way to ensure that any agreed approaches could be implemented in time for the 2015 season. To advance this work, the United States tabled a proposal to establish an *ad hoc* Working Group on Monitoring and Control, to be made up of individuals with relevant expertise, that would meet as early as possible to consider relevant information, generate ideas, and make recommendations. In response to a question, it was confirmed that Greenland would have time to make adjustments to its management structure in time for the 2015 fishing season even if the working group did not complete its work until the Spring 2015. The proposal was refined to clarify the terms of reference of the Working Group and the timetable for completing the work. The revised proposal, WGC(14)8 (Annex XX), was adopted by the Commission. The *ad hoc* working group will meet in Greenland and complete its work by the end of January 2015. The representative of Canada offered Canada's services to chair the working group given Canada's experience with managing subsistence fisheries. This offer was accepted by the Commission. The EU noted that they would be pleased to offer two experts to participate on the Working Group.
- 7.6 The representative of Denmark (in respect of the Faroe Islands and Greenland) noted that his government would translate Greenland's new Executive Order into English so that it could be part of the information available to the Working Group. He noted that some of the concern of the Parties might stem from a lack of knowledge of the monitoring and management regulations Greenland has in place. He indicated that, in the past, Greenland had implemented a management system that allowed in-season action to be taken for the fishery based on pre-fishery abundance information.
- 7.7 The representative of the NGOs asked if NGO participation on the Working Group was possible, noting that they would like to contribute a scientist to help support the work. The Parties were open to this proposal provided that the participating NGO would agree to non-disclosure of certain information given the confidential nature of some data to be made available to the Working Group.
- 7.8 The Chair noted that the second paragraph of the proposed addendum concerned limiting the total catch at West Greenland in 2014 to the average for 2004-13 (28t). The representative of Denmark (in respect of the Faroe Islands and Greenland) stated that such a limitation was not acceptable. He noted that the internal consumption

fishery at West Greenland would continue as it had in previous years, including that there would be no export of salmon. The representative of Canada expressed concern about the potential catch level for 2014 and asked for some indication of the controls that would be on the fishery for the coming season. Canada stated that, at a minimum, it would like to see controls such that the 2014 catch level would not exceed that of 2013. The representative of the United States also expressed concern about the recent increasing catch trend in the fishery. He further noted that the catch levels of two of the three components of the fishery were unrestricted and that there is a potential for more increases in catch if fish are available. He stated that the WGC needed to further consider what might be possible with regard to improving management of the 2014 fishery.

- 7.9 The representative of Denmark (in respect of the Faroe Islands and Greenland) stated that he could not say at this time whether the 2014 factory landings quota would be set higher or lower than previous years. He noted that the Greenland government was still considering the recent performance of the fishery and other factors, which would inform their decision-making on this matter. In response to a question, he clarified that any quota that was set would only restrict the factory landings component of the fishery.
- 7.10 The representative of the United States acknowledged that catch reporting for factory landed fish was better than for other components of the West Greenland fishery, but he stressed that such landings had not been contemplated in the current regulatory measure. He stated that the current measure was based on the understanding that the internal use fishery was delimited by a three-month season and that harvests would be used for personal consumption or sold as fresh product at local markets, restaurants and various institutions. He stated that the factory quota extends the means to expand the fishery, which has now occurred. He expressed his deep concern and disappointment at the current management decisions by Greenland. Given that the scientific advice for 2015 is likely to be the same as for the last 12 years, he indicated that the United States would need assurances that more effective management can and will be put in place by Greenland in 2015. He further indicated that some positive action by Greenland in 2014 would demonstrate good faith and would be important going into the 2015 discussions on the management of the West Greenland fishery.
- 7.11 The representative of Canada asked if the fact that factories appear to have reached their processing and freezing capacity for salmon would influence Greenland's decision on the size of the factory landings quota for 2014. Greenland noted that the factory landings quota had not been met for the last two years and that Greenland will consider this fact as well as the concerns of the Parties when it sets its factory landings quota in June or July.
- 7.12 The representative of the EU expressed disappointment with the current situation, noting that the EU had high hopes for progress on this issue after the WGC intersessional meeting. She stated the concern of the EU that Parties would be leaving the meeting with no indication of how Greenland would manage its fishery in 2014, which was a different situation than in 2013. She acknowledged that the issue was a difficult one but that she felt some practical steps forward were possible. She stated that there was an inconsistency in how the mixed stock fishery off West Greenland was being addressed by NASCO and how NASCO was handling the

situation of the Faroe Islands. She noted that consideration should be given in 2015 to addressing this inconsistency in light of the clarity of the scientific advice.

- 7.13 The representative of Denmark (in respect of the Faroe Islands and Greenland) reiterated that Greenland would implement the current agreement and that they intended to establish a factory landings quota for some small settlements. Considering the concerns expressed by the Parties and taking into account that the factory landings quota has not been fully utilized in either 2012 or 2013, he stated he would recommend to his Minister a minor reduction in the factory landings quota for 2014. He also indicated that he would inform the Commission of the final factory landings quota decision taken by Greenland.
- 7.14 The Chair opened the floor for comments on paragraph 3 of the proposed addendum, which concerned the development of a new regulatory measure to begin in 2015. The representative of the United States indicated that consideration must be given to a number of things if a harvest is to be allowed at West Greenland despite scientific advice to the contrary. He highlighted that NASCO document CNL(09)43, which provides guidance on fisheries management, calls for the ability of Parties to fully manage a fishery, including to effectively monitor it, to close it when limits are reached, and to enforce the rules. He stressed that such management control gives Parties confidence that rules can and will be followed. With regard to the West Greenland fishery, he noted that there is significant uncertainty and risk under the current management structure with regard to the level of catches in the fishery and that this impacts the application of control measures, including stopping a fishery when a catch limit is reached. The result is that there is pressure to reduce catch limits in order to decrease risk. He underscored that effective catch accountability as well as fishery control and enforcement are essential components of fisheries management and that these basics will underpin the U.S. view when considering the management of the West Greenland fishery.
- 7.15 It was suggested that an intersessional meeting of the WGC would be needed to advance discussions on the future management of the West Greenland fishery. The Parties agreed that an intersessional meeting would be useful to establish, at a minimum, a framework or parameters for the development of a new agreement, which could be adopted at the 2015 NASCO annual meeting. The timing of such an intersessional meeting was discussed and the Parties agreed that, under the circumstances, it was feasible to hold the meeting before the scientific advice for 2015 became available. In light of that, the WGC agreed to convene an intersessional meeting in Nuuk, Greenland, in early March 2015 to avoid conflicts with other meetings.

8. Sampling in the West Greenland Fishery

- 8.1 The West Greenland fishery sampling program provides valuable biological data to the stock assessments conducted by ICES that inform science-based management decisions for this fishery. The Parties to the West Greenland Commission have worked cooperatively over the past three decades to collect these biological data. Mr Tim Sheehan (USA) presented the West Greenland Fishery Sampling Agreement for 2014, WGC(14)7 (Annex XX), noting that the sampling team would include an additional participant from the EU (Ireland). In addition, the Greenland government,

in cooperation with the Greenland Institute of Natural Resources and the Sampling Program Coordinator, will work with all factories receiving harvested salmon to collect biological characteristics data and samples from a proportion of the landed fish via factory staff. The Commission adopted the agreement.

9. Announcement of the Tag Return Incentive Scheme Prize

- 9.1 The Chairman announced that the draw for the West Greenland Commission prize in the NASCO Tag Return Incentive Scheme was made by the Auditor on 6 May 2014. The winning tag had been applied to a smolt on the River Ure in Yorkshire, England, in 1975. The smolts from this tagging programme were trapped at a fixed smolt trap on a weir and transported down to the estuary for release. The tag was recovered at West Greenland, probably in 1976 or 1977 but was returned in 2013. The winner of the Commission's prize of \$1500 was Ms Susanne Thorin, Aasiaat, Greenland.

10. Recommendations to the Council on the Request to ICES for Scientific Advice

- 10.1 The Commission agreed to defer a decision on the request for scientific advice from ICES prepared by the Standing Scientific Committee (SSC) in relation to the West Greenland Commission area to the final Council session. The request to ICES, as agreed by the Council, is contained in document CNL(14)XX (Annex XX).

11. Other Business

- 11.1 There was no other business.

12. Date and Place of Next Meeting

- 12.1 The Commission agreed to hold an intersessional meeting in March 2015 in Nuuk, Greenland, after which it will meet at the same time and place as the Thirty-Second Annual Meeting of the Council in 2015.

13. Report of the Meeting

- 13.1 [The Commission agreed a report of the meeting.]

Note: The annexes mentioned above begin on page **XX**, following the French translation of the report of the meeting. A list of West Greenland Commission papers is included in Annex XX.