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Report of the NAFO Working Group on Improving Efficiency of NAFO Working Group Process (E-WG) Meeting

04 December 2025
Virtual

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**Report of the NAFO Working Group on Improving Efficiency of NAFO Working Group Process
(E-WG) Meeting**

04 December 2025
Virtual

1. Opening by the Chair, Brynhildur Benediktsdóttir (NAFO Secretariat)

The Chair, Brynhildur Benediktsdóttir (NAFO Secretariat) opened the meeting on Thursday, 04 December 2025 and welcomed the Chairs and co-Chairs of the NAFO subsidiary bodies, standing committees and working groups (Annex 1).

2. Appointment of Rapporteur

The NAFO Secretariat was appointed rapporteur.

3. Adoption of Agenda

The agenda was adopted as circulated (Annex 2).

4. Finalize schedule for upcoming meetings scheduled for 2026

The schedule for upcoming meetings scheduled for 2026 was reviewed in COM-SC WP 25-01 (Rev. 3) and the discussions of the working group are reflected in COM-SC WP 25-01 (Rev. 4) (Annex 3).

5. Consider the three two-week periods during the NAFO year for scheduling of possible intersessional meetings in 2027

To assist with meeting planning, the working group selects three two-week periods annually during which meetings of NAFO subsidiary bodies and working groups may be held. The working group discussed whether identifying these periods continues to be beneficial, and it was agreed that this practice is useful, particularly for the planning purposes of Contracting Parties and Chairs.

It was further noted that these two-week periods do not require subsidiary bodies to meet during those dates, nor do they preclude scheduling meetings outside them. The three two-week periods during the NAFO year, proposed for scheduling possible intersessional meetings in 2027, were presented in COM-SC Working Paper 25-02.

The Working Group on Improving Efficiency of NAFO Working Group Process recommends that:

- For the 2027 NAFO year, the following two-week periods, be considered for NAFO intersessional meetings:
 - 15 – 26 February 2027;
 - 12 – 23 April 2027; and
 - 12 – 23 July 2027

The above-mentioned periods will be presented to Commission and Scientific Council for consideration and adoption at the 2026 Annual Meeting of NAFO.

6. Other Matters

The following other matters were discussed under this agenda item:

a. Vacancies

As noted at the recent Annual Meeting of NAFO in September, the working group reiterated that several Chair, co-Chair, and Designated Expert positions remain vacant which will need to be filled to complete the work of NAFO in 2026. It was agreed that a notification be circulated to all Contracting Parties encouraging them to identify individuals within their delegations to fill the following roles:

Chair Positions:	Designated Expert Positions:
CESAG – co-Chair from the Commission	Ecosystem Designated Expert 3LNO
PA-WG – Chair from the Scientific Council	Northern Shortfin Squid in SA 3 & 4
STACFEN – Chair from the Scientific Council	Thorny skate in Div. 3LNO
WG-ESA – co-Chair from the Scientific Council	White hake in Div. 3NO
WG-RBMS – co-Chair from the Scientific Council	

b. Working Group Meeting Planning and Budget Considerations

The working group noted that, as the meeting schedule remains full each year, effective travel planning and budgeting are essential to ensure full participation by all Contracting Parties.

To support this, several suggestions were made for consideration when scheduling working group meetings:

- Whenever possible, invitations to host by a Contracting Party should be issued well in advance. This would facilitate travel planning and budgeting by Contracting Parties as well as the Secretariat, when the meetings are not held in Halifax.
- Whenever possible, meetings could be divided into smaller segments. For example, shorter virtual meetings could take place in advance of in-person meetings to address key issues allowing for the longer in-person meetings to be completed in less time.
- Scheduling meetings back-to-back with other NAFO meetings could further help reduce travel costs for both Contracting Parties and the Secretariat.

c. Role of Accredited Observers at NAFO Meetings

It was noted that there may be a need to review the current Rules of Procedure in relation to accredited observer participation in NAFO Meetings, and for Chairs to clarify expectations at the beginning of each meeting to ensure clarity for all meeting participants. The Executive Secretary noted that they would raise this concern with the Chairs of the Commission, Scientific Council and STACFAD.

7. Date and Time of Next Meeting

The next meeting to be scheduled virtually during the last week of November or the first week of December 2026.

The exact date and time(s) to be determined following the Annual Meeting of NAFO in September 2026.

8. Adjournment

The meeting was adjourned at 10:00 hours (UTC -4 hours, Time in Halifax).

Annex 1. List of Participants

CHAIR OF COMMISSION	Paardekooper, Joost (European Union)
VICE-CHAIR OF SC	Simpson, Mark (Canada)
CHAIR OF STACFAD	Fagan, Robert (Canada)
CHAIR OF STACTIC	Moran, Patrick (United States of America)
CO-CHAIR OF CESAG	Simpson, Mark (Canada)
CO-CHAIRS OF WG-EAFFM	Mencher, Elizabethann (USA) Sacau Cuadrado, Mar (European Union)
CO-CHAIR OF WG-RBMS	Walsh, Ray (Canada)
NAFO SECRETARIAT	Benediktsdóttir, Brynhildur Aker, Jana Goodick, Stan Guile, Sarah LeFort, Lisa Perreault, Andrea

Annex 2. Agenda

1. Opening by the Chair, Brynhildur Benediktsdóttir (NAFO Secretariat)
2. Appointment of Rapporteur
3. Adoption of Agenda
4. Finalize schedule for upcoming meetings scheduled for 2026 (COM-SC WP 25-01 Rev.)
5. Consider the three two-week periods during the NAFO year for scheduling of possible intersessional meetings in 2027 (COM-SC WP 25-02)
6. Other Matters
 - a. Vacancies
 - b. Working Group Meeting Planning and Budget Considerations
 - c. Role of Accredited Observers at Meetings
7. Date and Time of Next Meeting
8. Adjournment

Annex 3. 2026 NAFO Meeting – Tentative Schedule
(COM-SC Working Paper 25-01 Rev. 4)

The following NAFO Meetings are scheduled, or are to be scheduled, for 2026:

Date	Meeting	Venue
20 January	Performance Review Working Group to develop Terms of Reference (ToRs) for the 2026 Performance Review of NAFO <i>* Subsequent meetings will aim to be scheduled during the April and/or August period for scheduling of Working Group meetings.</i>	<u>Virtual</u>
16–27 Feb.	<i>* First period for the scheduling of Working Group meetings</i>	
13–24 Apr.	<i>* Second period for the scheduling of Working Group meetings</i>	
<u>April (TBC)</u>	NAFO Joint Commission–Scientific Council Working Group on Risk-based Management Strategies (WG-RBMS) Meeting <i>* If possible, the half-day meeting to be scheduled during the April period for scheduling of Working Group meetings.</i>	<u>Virtual</u>
Prior to 30 Apr.	NAFO Joint Commission–Scientific Council Catch Estimation Strategy Advisory Group (CESAG) Meeting	via correspondence unless new issues emerge
Prior to the STACTIC Intersessional (TBD)	NAFO STACTIC Working Group on the Introduction of FLUX UN/CEFACT Standard for fisheries data exchanges in NAFO (WG-FLUX) Meeting <i>In consultation with the STACTIC Chair, a doodle poll to be circulated to identify a suitable date</i>	<u>TBD</u>
<u>Early</u> May (TBD)	NAFO Standing Committee on International Control (STACTIC) Intersessional Meeting <i>In consultation with the STACTIC Chair, suitable meeting dates to be identified</i>	<u>Halifax, Nova Scotia, Canada (TBC)</u>
<u>To be proposed: 05 May</u>	NAFO SC STACREC Data Review Meeting	Virtual
<u>To be proposed: 06 May</u>	NAFO Scientific Council Precautionary Approach Working Group (PA-WG) Meeting	Virtual
29 May –11 Jun.	NAFO Scientific Council and its Standing Committees Meeting	Halifax, Nova Scotia, Canada
10–21 Aug.	<i>* Third period for the scheduling of Working Group meetings</i>	
<u>To be proposed: Week of 03 August</u>	NAFO Joint Commission–Scientific Council Working Group on Ecosystem Approach Framework to Fisheries Management (WG-EAFFM) Meeting <i>Format: In-person meeting Duration: 2 to 2.5 days</i>	<u>Halifax, Nova Scotia, Canada (TBC)</u>

Date	Meeting	Venue
<u>To be proposed: Week of 03 August</u>	NAFO Joint Commission–Scientific Council Working Group on Risk-based Management Strategies (WG-RBMS) Meeting <u>Format: In-person meeting</u> <u>Duration: 2 to 2.5 days</u>	<u>Halifax, Nova Scotia, Canada (TBC)</u>
15–17 Sep.	Scientific Council and STACFIS Shrimp Assessment Meeting	<u>Halifax, Nova Scotia, Canada (TBC)</u>
21–25 Sep.	NAFO 48 th Annual Meeting	Lithuania
Oct./ Nov. TBD	NAFO STACTIC Editorial Drafting Group of the NAFO CEM (EDG) Meeting	<u>Virtual</u>
10–19 Nov.	NAFO Working Group on Ecosystem Science and Assessment (WG-ESA) Meeting	TBD
<u>Last week of Nov. or first week of Dec.</u>	NAFO Working Group on Improving Efficiency of NAFO Working Group Process (E-WG) Meeting	Virtual

* *As always, these two-week periods would not require meetings of NAFO subsidiary bodies to meet during those dates nor would they preclude the scheduling of meetings of NAFO subsidiary bodies outside those dates.*

** *Please note, the meeting dates have not all been confirmed and may be subject to change.*