



29<sup>TH</sup> ANNUAL MEETING – SEPTEMBER 2007

(Proposal by Canada)

**Cod Recovery Strategy for Divisions 3NO**

**(ADOPTED)**

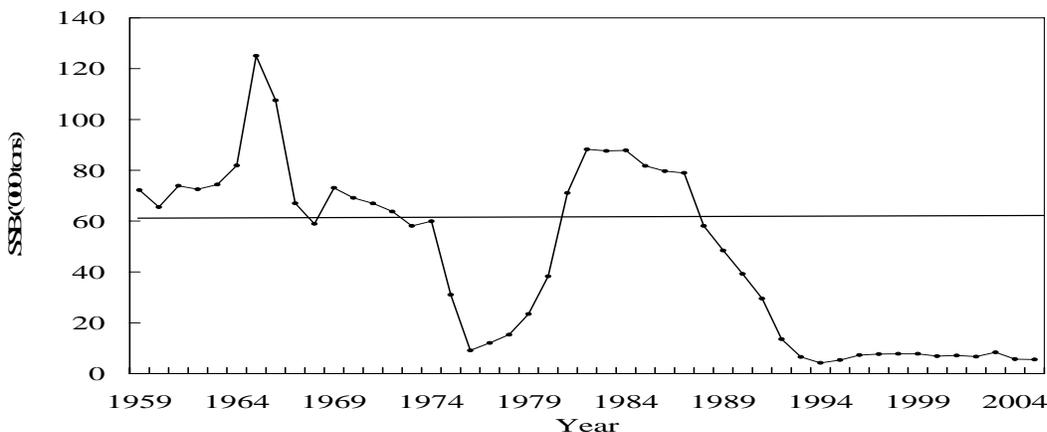
**Explanatory Memorandum**

Cod in Division 3NO was placed under moratorium in 1994 and since that time there has been no recovery of this stock. During this period, catch of 3NO cod increased in many of these years and there has been an increase in fishing mortality, particularly of young fish.

The 2007 Scientific Council assessment indicates the stock remains close to its historical low with SSB well below  $B_{lim}$  and there is weak representation from all year classes. In addition, the total biomass and SSB remain at extremely low levels.

Scientific Council has expressed concern that fishing mortality is now at levels comparable to those during past periods when substantial fisheries existed, even though the stock is currently under moratorium.

The Scientific Council estimate of spawning stock biomass was less than 10% of the biomass limit ( $B_{LIM}$ ) specified in the NAFO Precautionary Approach Framework. In 2002, Scientific Council projected that the spawner biomass would double over the next five years with no fishing of the stock.



Despite best efforts to rebuild this stock, including reduced catch in recent years (2400t average annual catch during the 2000 to 2003 period to 700t average annual catch during the 2004 to 2006 period), additional measures are required.

In 2007, Scientific Council noted that there are several stocks, currently under moratorium, for which bycatch is preventing or severely limiting biomass growth. These stocks (including 3NO cod) are at low levels, despite a lengthy ban on directed fishing.

Scientific Council recommended that rebuilding/recovery plans be considered, which should incorporate specific measures to reduce bycatch and that steps be taken to ensure any bycatch taken during directed fisheries are true and unavoidable bycatch.

The 2002 Johannesburg Declaration called for action to restore fish stocks to maximum sustainable yield and a renewed commitment to the Provisions of the United Nations Convention on the Law of the Sea relating to the Conservation and Management of Straddling Fish Stocks and Highly Migratory Fish Stocks and to the FAO Code of Conduct on Responsible Fishing. This includes measures to minimize catch of non target species and for RFMOs to adopt appropriate measures to develop and use selective gear and techniques to the extent practicable. In consideration of the above, Canada makes the following proposal:

### **New Article 7a or 8 (with Articles re-numbered) - 3NO Cod Conservation Plan and Rebuilding Strategy**

1. Contracting Parties shall implement a Conservation Plan and Rebuilding Strategy for cod in Divisions 3NO guided by the following considerations:
  - avoidance of serious harm to reproductive potential of stock such as that arising from a continuously low or unproductive Spawning Stock Biomass;
  - sustained growth in total biomass/Spawning Stock Biomass over extended period;
  - improvement in recruitment from the current low levels in this stock; and
  - health of individuals in population as measured in fish condition/growth.
2. This strategy is aimed at attaining a sustained level of Spawning Stock Biomass or recovery milestone above 60,000t ( $B_{LIM}$ ), consistent with the NAFO PA Framework.
3. For 2008 and subsequent years, Contracting Parties shall seek to achieve a targeted reduction of 40% from the average annual catch during 2004-2006 period or, through best efforts, specifically to keep incidental by-catch at the lowest possible level.
4. In the event the targeted reduction is not achieved, the Fisheries Commission will consider additional measures for subsequent years and Contracting Parties will consider additional measures.
5. Considering the importance of capelin as a food source, consistent with the ecosystem approach, the moratorium on 3NO capelin will continue until at least Dec 31, 2012.
6. Scientific Council shall monitor and review the progress of this Conservation Plan and Rebuilding Strategy and submit every third year, starting in 2010 an assessment of this progress to Fisheries Commission. Specifically, Scientific Council, starting in 2010, will report on annual biomass growth projected for the stock.
7. In the interim period, the Fisheries Commission will request Scientific Council to consider a range of possible management measures that may ensure the by-catch of 3NO cod is kept at its lowest possible level.
8. Scientific Council will review in detail the biological reference points in the Precautionary Approach Framework when the Spawning Stock Biomass has reached 30,000t.
9. No directed fishery will occur if the Spawning Stock Biomass remains below the recovery milestone ( $B_{LIM}$ ) of 60,000t. Before Spawning Stock Biomass increases above this level, Fisheries Commission should develop a strategy, following the Precautionary Approach, to ensure Spawning Stock Biomass remains above it.
10. Scientific Council may also outline any additional research or analyses required to assist Fisheries Commission in assessing recovery potential.