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(ADOPTED)

31st ANNUAL MEETING – SEPTEMBER 2009

Interim Measures to Protect Significant Sponge Concentrations

Background

In 2006, the United National General Assembly (UNGA) in its Sustainable Fisheries Resolution 61/105 called for States and Regional Fisheries Management Organizations (RFMOs) to adopt conservation and management measures in order to prevent significant adverse impacts on vulnerable marine ecosystems. UNGA will review the actions of States and RFMO in this respect in the fall of 2009.

Mindful of the work of the FAO in facilitating the development of the International Guidelines for the Management of Deep-sea Fisheries operating in the high seas that serve inter alia to guide the identification of VMEs;

Noting the commitment of NAFO Contracting Parties to implement an ecosystem approach and implement measures following the precautionary approach to address the impacts of fishing on VMEs;

Recognizing the significant steps already taken by NAFO to protect Vulnerable Marine Ecosystems (VMEs) in the NAFO Regulatory Area (NRA) including inter alia:

- the closure of four seamount areas to commercial fishing (2006)
- the establishment of a 30 Coral Protection Zone (2007)
- the closure of the Fogo Seamounts (2008)
- the adoption of a comprehensive framework for the implementation of UNGA Resolution 61/105 including provisions for the identification of existing bottom fishing areas (footprint), assessment of bottom fishing, Exploratory Fishery Protocol for new fishing areas and the interim Encounter provisions for VMEs in both fished and unfished areas of the NRA (2008);

Further recognizing the numerous international scientific research efforts that are designed to enhance knowledge in the area of VMEs, in particular with respect to addressing knowledge gaps on benthic habitat, communities and species in the NAFO Regulatory Area, especially the Spanish lead international survey in 2009-2010;

Conscious of the 2008 Annual Meeting in Vigo, where the Fisheries Commission requested advice from the Scientific Council regarding significant concentrations of sponges (FC Doc. 08/19).

Recognizing the SC response which identified significant sponge concentrations in the NAFO Regulatory Area in its June 2009 report.

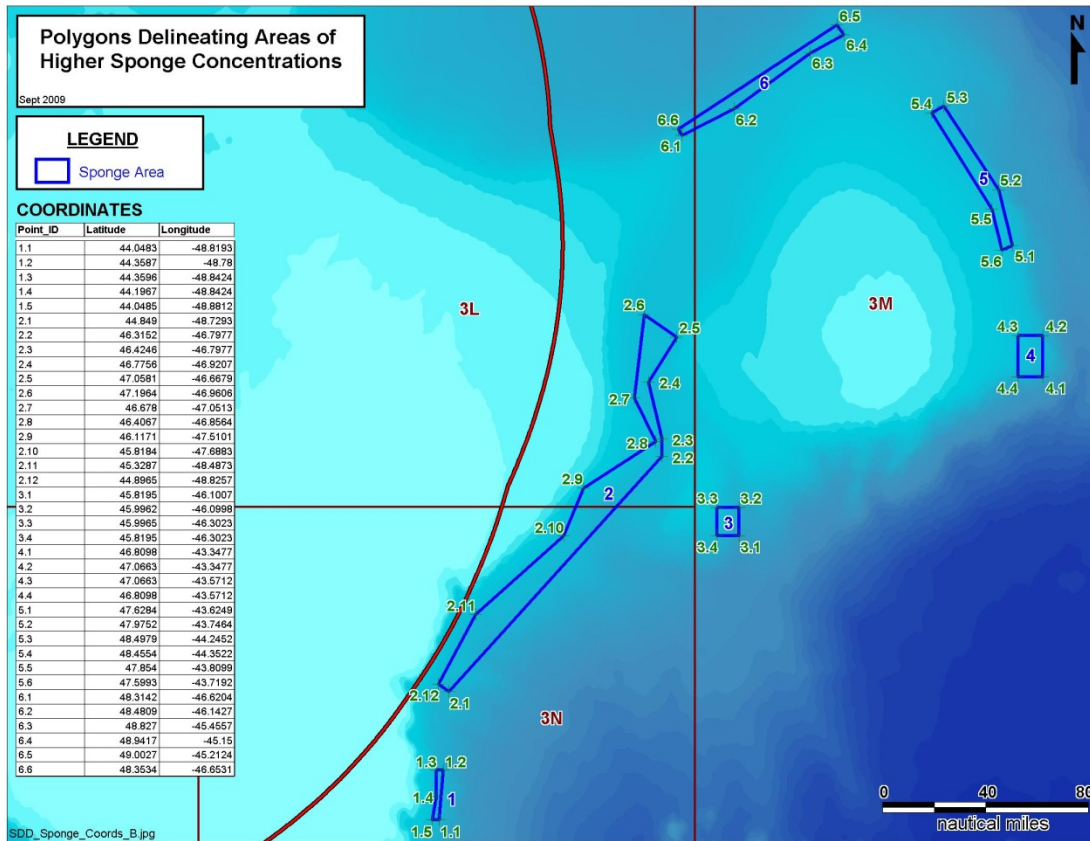
It is proposed that, as part of a continuing commitment to implement the UNGA Resolution, the Working Group of Fisheries Managers and Scientists recommends to the Fisheries Commission for adoption in September 2009:

1. Establishment of sponge protection zones in Divisions 3L, 3M and 3N:

Establish Article 16 bis of NCEM “Sponge Protection Zones”

1. As of January 1, 2010 the following areas shall be closed on an interim basis to all bottom fishing activities until **December 31, 2011**. The closed areas are defined by connecting the following coordinates (in numerical order and back to coordinate 1).

2. The measures referred to **in Article 16 bis (1)** shall be reviewed before 2012 by the Fisheries Commission taking account the advice from the Scientific Council and the Working Group of Fisheries Managers and Scientists, and a decision shall be taken on future management measures.



2. The WGFMS further recommends that the Fisheries Commission considers combining the recommendations of the Report of the WGFMS of March 2009 on corals [Annex 6 of NAFO/FC Doc. 09/2] and sponges as defined in paragraph 1 above, “Establishment of sponge protection zones in Divisions 3L, 3M and 3N”.

