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**Proposal for the Establishment of Measures to Protect Sea Pens and Sponges
in the NAFO Regulatory Area**

Mindful of the recommendations of the Scientific Council from their June 2012 meeting regarding vulnerable marine ecosystems, in particular the location and encounter threshold levels for sea pens, in the NAFO regulatory area;

Noting the recommendations of the Working Group of Fisheries Managers and Scientists on Vulnerable Marine Ecosystems regarding encounter threshold levels and possible closed areas for sea pens;

Recognizing the significant effort by Contracting Parties to develop and consider potential closed areas to protect sea pens, but mindful of the need for more time to review the information provided by the Scientific Council on sea pens; and

Considering the recent decision to allow VMS data to be available to NAFO constituent bodies and the potential benefit in managing measures to protect vulnerable marine ecosystems;

It is proposed that the Fisheries Commission establish an encounter threshold of 7kg for sea pens inside the fishing footprint of the NAFO Regulatory Area.

It is also proposed that the Working Group of Fisheries Managers and Scientists on Ecosystems convene as soon as possible after the June 2013 Scientific Council meeting to further consider possible amendments to the closed areas and evaluate the conservation effect of applying thresholds and move on rules.

It is also proposed that Article 20.3 of the NAFO Conservation and Enforcement Measures be updated as follows:

3. For both existing and new fishing areas, an encounter with primary VME indicator species is defined as a catch per set (e.g. trawl tow, longline set, or gillnet set) of more than 7kg of sea pens, 60 kg of other live coral and 300 kg of sponges. These thresholds are set on a provisional basis and may be adjusted as experience is gained in the application of this measure.