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**To Establish a Working Group of Interested Contracting Parties to Review the
NAFO Observer Scheme and make recommendations to STACTIC for Improvements**

Preamble

This proposal calls for the establishment of a Working Group of STACTIC members to undertake a review of the Observer Scheme in the NAFO Regulatory Area and make recommendations to STACTIC for improvements to the program.

Background

The NAFO observer program was originally part of the program for Observers and Satellite Tracking which was launched in 1996 and has subsequently been modified to occupy a distinct chapter in the NAFO measures that describes the program and incorporate some harmonized reporting templates to seek some consistency in its application.

Proposals for modifications to the program are frequently tabled at STACTIC to help to standardize data collection and provide clarity on the role of observers. However, after almost 20 years of operation, the program is still unable to produce credible data for use by NAFO scientists and managers to make decisions on stock status, conservation measures and harvest levels. Notwithstanding this, the program still represents the best opportunity to acquire independent data on fishing activities in the Regulatory Area.

Proposal

It is therefore proposed that a Working Group of interested Contracting Parties be established to review the Observer Scheme and report to SATCTIC on its findings, providing recommendations for potential improvements to the program.

Terms of reference for the review should include all aspects of the scheme as described in Chapter V of the NCEMs, propose language to clarify the objectives of the program, identify the strengths and weaknesses of the existing program, and propose suggestions /options to enhance the observer scheme to maximize the benefit it provides to NAFO.