

36TH ANNUAL MEETING - SEPTEMBER 2014**Bycatch and Discard Reporting in NAFO Fishing Operations****Background/Explanatory Memorandum:**

The United States commends the outcomes of the first meeting of the Ad hoc Working Group to Reflect on Rules Governing Bycatch, Discards and Selectivity and believes that the Working Group should continue to meet. Additionally, the United States supports building upon the WG's original objectives to enable the development of recommendations on appropriate policy and regulatory changes for consideration by both the Fisheries Commission (FC) and the Scientific Council (SC).

Within that expanded mandate, the United States notes the need to examine the efficacy of current bycatch and discard reporting requirements. NAFO members have recognized the importance of ensuring robust data collection on all catches and discards throughout NAFO managed fisheries. The Conservation and Enforcement Measures (CEM) have several relevant reporting requirements generating bycatch data that are made available to the Secretariat and the Scientific Council, including:

- Article 28.6(c): Daily catch reports documenting the amount of each species kept and discarded;
- Article 28.8: Monthly catch reports submitted by each Contracting Party (CP) to the Secretariat; and
- Article 30.2(c): Observer reports recording each species kept and discarded on a haul-by-haul basis.

In addition, in 2006, NAFO adopted the Resolution to Reduce Sea Turtle Mortality in NAFO Fishing Operations (FC Doc. 06/7). The Sea Turtle Resolution and the CEMs require that the Secretariat compile and submit this information to the FC and the SC for their consideration. The United States has been disappointed in the implementation of this Resolution, and sees the Ad-Hoc Working Group (WG) as an opportunity to renew and expand NAFO's responsibility to manage bycatch and discards, consistent with the relevant provisions of the 1995 Agreement for the Implementation of the Provisions of the United Nations Convention on the Law of the Sea of 10 December 1982 relating to the Conservation and Management of Straddling Fish Stocks and Highly Migratory Fish Stocks.

The Ad-hoc WG notes the lack of information available on discards. Furthermore, the WG recommends the FC improve bycatch and discard data availability and quality. To that end, the United States contends that the WG should evaluate the collection of bycatch and discards data, the sharing and use of that data by relevant NAFO bodies, and the improvement of these activities.

Proposal:**Proposal to Improve Bycatch and Discard Data Reporting***Preamble:*

Recognizing NAFO's commitment to implementing an ecosystem based approach to fisheries management;

Recalling the commitments in Articles 6 and 28 of the NAFO CEM to effectively manage, reduce and report on bycatch and discards in NAFO fisheries;

Further recalling 2006 adoption by NAFO of the Resolution to Reduce Sea Turtle Mortality in NAFO Fishing Operations (FC Doc. 06/7), which urged NAFO CPs to report sea turtle fishery interaction data to the NAFO Secretariat, including data collected by national observer programs and sea turtle-specific training provided to these observers;

Taking into account the need to improve collection of data and other relevant information relating to bycatch and discards;

It is resolved that:

1. NAFO recognizes and endorses the FAO's International Guidelines on Bycatch Management and Reduction of Discards.
2. The FC agree to renew the mandate of the Ad Hoc WG to Reflect on the Rules Governing Bycatches, Discards and Selectivity in the NAFO Regulatory Area, and authorize it to meet between the 36th and 37th Annual Meetings of NAFO.
3. The FC agree to direct the WG to develop and recommend a comprehensive strategy relative to bycatch and discards in the NAFO Regulatory Area that is consistent with the Ecosystem Approach to Fisheries management and takes into account all bycatch and discard species.
4. To support this strategy, the FC agree to also direct the WG to review current bycatch and discard data recording and reporting, including observer data, taking into account other ongoing NAFO initiatives, with the objective to develop an action plan to improve the effectiveness of the collection and use of this data for FC's consideration prior to the Annual Meeting in 2015.
5. NAFO CPs continue to implement the FAO Guidelines to Reduce Sea Turtle Mortality in Fishing Operations, and enhance the implementation of their existing turtle mitigation measures (including relevant observer training) using best available scientific information.