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CONSERVATION OF SILVER AND RED HAKES IN SUBAREA 5

Memorandum by the United States

At the 1969 Annual Meeting, the Commission approved a 3-year management program for silver and red hake closing a portion of the southern part of Subarea 5 to fishing for hake during the first three months of the year. Concern over the need to prevent depletion of these stocks arose after the rapid development of distant-water fisheries on these stocks in the mid-1960's which was followed by sharp declines in catches and catch rates in the hake fisheries. These declines in productivity created severe problems for the US small-boat fleet that had maintained a relatively stable fishery on these resources for many years, and which had few alternative resources to which to turn.

In these circumstances, the United States believes it important to insure that rational management plans are continued for hake in Subarea 5. The specified measures selected can be determined in the light of the latest information that will be available at the 22nd Annual Meeting from the Assessment Subcommittee and the Scientific Advisers to Panel 5. However, experience indicates that certain regulatory alternatives available to the Commission would be of particular value in managing hake. These include proposals to:

- (1) establish catch quotas with national allocations;
- (2) close specified areas to hake fishing during certain periods;
- (3) prohibit or limit all fishing for hake using certain gear and appliances.

The special vulnerability of hake stocks to overexploitation when they are in pre-spawning concentrations early in the year has been clearly demonstrated. Furthermore, disruption of these pre-spawning concentrations in offshore waters before they move closer to shore creates special hardship for US fishermen who have developed specialized small boats to harvest hake in moderate quantities in inshore waters. Therefore, the United States believes a practical management program for hake responsive to both conservation needs as well as to the needs of the various users should include provisions setting catch quota limits with national allocations, as well as a seasonal closure of specified waters that would insure the adult stock an opportunity to aggregate prior to moving inshore for spawning. In addition, minimum mesh size requirements in the hake fisheries would contribute to the attainment of maximum yield per recruit.

It is the US view that the regulation now in effect closing part of Subarea 5 to hake fishing early in the year should be continued, possibly with some adjustments regarding the time and area of applicability, in order to insure that pre-spawning concentrations of hake will not be entirely broken up before moving from offshore to coastal waters.

Since the hake stocks are exploited under such varying conditions and at such differing times by the countries participating in the fishery, it is essential that quota controls include allocations of national shares. The United States also believes it essential that such allocations take due account of the special needs of the US fleet of small boats specifically adapted to harvest hake in inshore waters, since this fleet has traditionally been particularly dependent on the yield from the hake fishery. We would envision these regulations being cast in much the same form as the herring regulatory proposals adopted by the Commission at the Special Meeting on Herring.

