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the Northwest Atlantic Fisheries

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Canadian views on the regulation of the silver hake fishery in ICNAF Divisions 4VWX
(Agenda Item 8, Ninth Special Commission Meeting)

At the 1976 Annual Meeting Canada proposed that the directed fishery for silver hake in 4VWX should use only midwater trawls with a 60-mm minimum mesh size. Although the 60-mm minimum mesh was adopted at that meeting, there was no agreement regarding the use of midwater trawls and regarding the level of the TAC. Decisions on TAC and national allocations were postponed to the Ninth Special Meeting (Agenda Item 8) and it was agreed that, at that meeting, the possibility of providing an adequate means of preventing damage to other resources by by-catches in the silver hake fishery through closed areas and/or seasons for directed bottom trawling, would be explored.

Canada is still deeply concerned over the effects of the high exploitation rate on the silver hake stocks themselves and over the destructive effects of the silver hake fishery on other resources of the Scotian Shelf. Regarding the latter, the Assessments Subcommittee of STACRES at the 1976 Annual Meeting pointed out that a relatively small by-catch of small cod in the silver hake fishery could have been a major factor in the disastrous decline of the cod stocks on the Shelf. There is, in the Canadian view, insufficient scientific evidence to allay these very serious concerns.

Under Agenda Item 8 Canada will continue to press for action to require that only midwater trawls be used in the silver hake fishery, except for limited and strictly supervised use of bottom trawls designed to improve the basis for management. This might take the form of permitting a small number of vessels to use bottom trawls and the provision of technical observers on all such vessels and on a comparable number of vessels using midwater trawls. Data would be obtained on which to base quantitative estimates of by-catches by species and of size and age composition of all species in the catch (including silver hake). Such a program would be planned, and its results analyzed, through collaboration between scientists of the countries concerned.

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