

**Press Release**

## **NAFO takes action to protect the deep seas**

### **Special meeting of the NAFO Fisheries Commission 30 April to 7 May 2008**

The Fisheries Commission of the Northwest Atlantic Fisheries Organization (NAFO) met from 30 April to 7 May 2008 in Montreal, Quebec, Canada. Some 60 delegates from 11 NAFO Contracting Parties discussed the NAFO management measures for shrimp and NAFO's future strategy for the protection of vulnerable marine ecosystems. The meeting was also attended by observers representing the Sierra Club of Canada, WWF Canada and the Ecology Action Centre.

NAFO Contracting Parties attending the meeting were: Canada, Cuba, Denmark [in respect of the Faroe Islands and Greenland], European Union, France [in respect of St. Pierre et Miquelon], Iceland, Japan, Norway, Russia, Ukraine, USA.

### **NAFO maintains current shrimp management regimes**

The NAFO Scientific Council reported that both shrimp stocks managed by NAFO are presently in very good shape. The Fisheries Commission decided to maintain the current management regime for these stocks and not to increase the fishing effort or the Total Allowable Catch.

### **NAFO develops a strategy to protect Vulnerable Marine Ecosystems (VMEs)**

NAFO has already taken precautionary measures over the past three years to protect VMEs and has closed four seamounts and a large coral area along the southern Grand Banks to bottom fisheries. At this special meeting NAFO responded to the UN Resolution 61/105 calling on regional fisheries management organizations to address the protection of marine ecosystems.

NAFO agreed to promptly identify VMEs in the Northwest Atlantic, assess existing bottom fishing areas (footprint) and their impact on sensitive habitats, and to adopt conservation and management measures to prevent significant adverse impacts on such habitats.

Starting 2009, all new bottom fisheries are considered exploratory and have to follow a detailed protocol for data collection including measures to prevent damage to deep sea habitats. This will allow NAFO to establish ecosystem-friendly management regimes (including additional closures if necessary) for new fisheries.

A new "Ad Hoc Working Group of Fishery Managers and Scientists on VMEs" will advise the Fisheries Commission on adequate measures for the protection of VMEs. This group will meet in September 2008 in Montreal after the Scientific Council has had an opportunity to evaluate relevant existing information at a dedicated scientific working group in May and at its regular meeting in June 2008.

NAFO Executive Secretary  
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