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SCIENTIFIC COUNCIL MEETING – JUNE 1999

**Report of the NAFO Observer at the Eleventh ICES Dialogue Meeting,
26-27 January, 1999 (Nantes, France)**

by

Scientific Council Chairman

The objective of this meeting was to enhance the mutual understanding of managers and scientists in relation to scientific advice to managers and fisheries management decisions.

The meeting was organized by IFREMER Nantes and was conducted at the Centre Regionale des Pays de la Loire at Nantes which provided excellent facilities for this meeting. Each two fisheries managers and one fisheries scientist representing an ICES Member Country were invited. In addition representatives of the ICES related Commissions (NEAFC, NASCO, IBSFC, EU) as well as observers of other organisations (FAO, NAFO, ICCAT) took part in the meeting.

The meeting was structured in 3 parts:

- 1) each two invited lectures to three working groups, namely Precautionary Approach, The Form and Nature of the Advice and Confidence Building
- 2) plenary session with discussion of the findings of the working groups
- 3) conclusional session with notes from the partner organisations and answers by ICES

There are several issues which are also relevant to NAFO which has already in May 1998 organized a meeting (NAFO WG on PA) between managers and scientists in the process of the implementation of the Precautionary Approach to Fisheries Management in NAFO.

The main conclusions of the **ICES Dialogue WG on Precautionary Approach** are summarized in the following:

PA will be included in all ICES advice in the future

Reference levels and risk levels have to be decided by the managers based on scientific evidence, and all stakeholders have to be involved in this process and in establishing harvest control rules (HCR)

Annual TAC have to be set in the context of medium and long-term projections on different assumptions, given with confidence limits

Movement towards medium-term projections might alleviate the pressure on the scientists and shift the focus away from the present annual TAC calculations

The present advice from ICES only gives information on a restricted part of the environment. In the future, the PA will make heavier demands on information on other parts of the ecosystem

Within this WG the question was raised who should take care of bringing the fisherman into the process and also about ICES role on disseminating knowledge and information about stocks and fisheries and the advisory process to the general public.

It is important to note that in this context the main conclusions of the ICES Dialogue WG on Precautionary Approach are similar to the results from the NAFO WG on PA.

Noteworthy, ICES took the chance to incorporate also the topics of 'The Form of the Advice' and 'Confidence Building' into the Dialogue Meeting. These are topics which have not yet been tackled in NAFO and which are of a high level of importance so that NAFO should consider a relevant meeting between scientists and managers.

The **ICES Dialogue WG on the Form of the Advice** considered the future advice should consist of three blocks:

Assessment

- stock characteristics including
 - historical development of R,SSB and SB
 - present size (SB, SSB)
 - Present structure of the stock (age structure)
 - Reference points for stock (Blim,Bpa)
- Characteristics of the fishery including
 - historical landings and fishing mortalities
 - reference points for fishery
- Transparency including
 - description of any changes to models used to provide catch advice
 - impacts of any changes to the model on the advice

Analysis of consequences

- Spreadsheet covering medium term forecast of the expected development of the stock and spawning stock for given levels of catch/fishing mortality
- Clear statement of assumptions
- Probability that limit reference points will be compromised

Advice on harvest levels

- Statements of management objectives and strategies are not required for the provision of advice but medium term stock projections is a necessary tool to managers in developing these objectives and strategies.

This will be also an interesting topic of discussion in the NAFO Scientific Council

The **ICES Dialogue WG on Confidence Building** came to following conclusions:

Scientists should clearly line out the principal sources of uncertainty in assessments (including misreporting in official statistics) so that the scope of deminishing uncertainty can be considered strategically.

Reports on assessment results should be based on consensus and should not be undermined subsequently. However, customers should receive advice which incorporates qualifications reflecting the whole range of scientific expertise.

Consider independent review from outside the organisation

Consider safeguards to ensure the independance of the advice from non scientific inflences

These topics are also of great importance to the work of NAFO Scientific Council and should be considered in a joint discussion with the Fisheries Commission.

Generally, the Eleventh ICES Dialogue Meeting was successful in achieving it's objective. Several issues were raised during the meeting which also should be considered in the cooperation of NAFO Fisheries Commission and Scientific Council.