



ANNUAL MEETING - JUNE 1954

INTERNATIONAL FISHERIES CONVENTION: 1946

PERMANENT COMMISSION

Report on the Third Meeting of the Permanent Commission in Copenhagen
May, 1954

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The Third Meeting of the Permanent Commission took place in the first week of May 1954 in Copenhagen at the invitation of the Danish Government. Delegations attended from all the Member Governments, namely, Belgium, Denmark, France, Iceland, Ireland, the Netherlands, Norway, Poland, Portugal, Spain, Sweden and the United Kingdom.

Observers were present from the Government of the Federal German Republic, and the Commission were informed that notice of their Government's accession to the Convention might be expected very shortly. Also in attendance were observers from the International Council for the Exploration of the Sea, the Food and Agriculture Organisation of the United Nations and the International Commission for the Northwest Atlantic Fisheries.

The main items on the Commission's agenda were questions arising out of industrial fisheries, the application of conservation measures south of the present Convention boundary, the arrangements for the enforcement of the Convention provisions affecting the mesh of nets and size-limits of fish, and the problem of the appropriate mesh size for light trawls.

At the previous meeting of the Commission in November, 1953, the question of the industrial fishery for herring involving the capture of under-sized whiting had been considered at the instance of the Danish Government, who had been asked if they would study the question further and make proposals to the Commission at their present meeting for the regulation of this kind of fishery. At the same time, the Commission had decided to ask the International Council for the Exploration of the Sea for their scientific advice as to the conditions under which industrial fisheries involving the capture of under-sized fish which the Convention was designed to protect should be carried out.

At the present meeting the Commission were informed that the investigations which the International Council for the Exploration of the Sea thought necessary would take some further time and the Danish Delegation proposed that the Convention size-limit for whiting should not be given effect until these investigations had been concluded.

The Commission recognised the difficulties facing the Danish Government in enforcing the provisions of the Convention as regards the minimum size of whiting in relation to their newly-developed industrial fishery for herring, which is of great importance to the economy of Danish fishermen.

The Commission felt it necessary to stress, however, that the purpose of the Convention was to protect immature fish in order to maintain the fisheries at the highest level and that it was the responsibility of every member nation to seek to prevent a diminution in the conservation effect of the Convention.

Accordingly the Commission were of the opinion that any concession which would weaken the protective effect of the Convention in order to meet special problems should be limited as far as possible.

After considering various proposals, including that from the Danish Delegation, the Commission came to the conclusion that the most appropriate course was to recommend the Governments of the member countries to accept an alteration of Article 6 of the Convention dealing with fisheries for herring and other species which are not protected under the Convention.

This alteration is to the effect that herring fishermen and other fishermen not fishing for protected species may land up to 10 per cent under-sized fish in landings not for human consumption in the form of fish. This proposal was accepted by all Delegations except the Swedish Delegation, who reserved their vote for the moment and stated they would inform the President of the Commission at a later date whether or not they could accept.

The Commission learnt with pleasure of the discussions that had recently been taking place between the French, Portuguese and Spanish Governments regarding measures for regulating the sizes of mesh of nets that may be used in, and the minimum sizes of fish that may be landed from, the waters between latitudes 48° North and 36° North covering the Atlantic coasts of the three countries from Brittany to the Straits of Gibraltar. They noted with satisfaction that proposals covering this area were now under consideration by the three Governments but felt that, for the time being at least, these proposals could not be suitably merged into the 1946 Convention and should be the subject of a separate Convention for the area in question. It was felt, however, that the practicability of assimilating the two Conventions might be reconsidered at a later date.

On the question of the enforcement of the provisions of the 1946 Convention, there was agreement that each member country should periodically inform the Commission of the general arrangements that it was making in regard to its own fishermen.

An interim report was received from the International Council for the Exploration of the Sea on the subject of the investigations so far carried out into the relative "selectivity" of light trawls and heavy trawls; that is to say, into differences between the effect of light and heavy trawls as regards the minimum sizes of the fish they take. The conclusion from this report, which was accepted by the Commission, was that the evidence available is not yet sufficient to warrant any action by the Commission but that a case had been made out for the continued investigation of the fishing effect of different types of trawl.

The Commission decided to meet annually in future and the Fourth Meeting will be held in London starting on 3rd May, 1955.

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