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(A.a.4)ICNAF Comm.Doc. 72/22ANNUAL MEETING - JUNE 1972CONSERVATION OF COD IN THE CONVENTION AREA

Memorandum by the United States

For several years ICNAF scientists have been expressing increasing concern about the condition of cod resources in the Northwest Atlantic. The Assessment Subcommittee at its 1971 Annual Meeting and at its Mid-Term Meeting, 24-28 January 1972, concluded from currently available data that almost all stocks of cod in the Convention Area are being fished at or beyond the point of maximum sustainable yield. Of particular concern to the United States is the Subarea 5 cod stock, where fishing effort has increased substantially since 1964 with little or no evidence of increased abundance or recruitment, and where the Assessment Subcommittee has called attention to recent catches at or above fully exploited yield levels. The scientists have emphasized that the existing mesh regulations are not sufficient in themselves to prevent depletion of these resources and that increases in fishing effort on these stocks will cause a deterioration in the fisheries and the stocks.

Past experience has quite clearly demonstrated the rapidity with which over-exploitation can lead to resource depletion. We consider it particularly important to institute regulatory measures in time to prevent resource depletion, rather than attempt lengthy restorative programs at a later date. Accordingly, the United States believes that the current state of these stocks and the present levels of fishing intensity noted by STACRES require that the Commission give the most serious consideration to additional regulatory measures for cod - particularly direct catch limitations - throughout the Convention Area. In view of the broad extent of these stocks, we ask consideration of these questions in a joint meeting of Panels as well as by the Panels concerned. The Standing Committee on Research and Statistics is scheduled to review all available data on cod prior to the 1972 Annual Meeting. This will provide guidance as to the level of catch quotas or extent of other supplementary regulatory measures such as closed seasons and/or areas that can effectively be applied to cod stocks so as to avoid depletion of the resource. Previous conclusions of the Assessment Subcommittee lead us to the view, however, that catch quota limits in Subarea 5 should not exceed the catch levels in 1970-71 of about 35,000 metric tons.

It is the US view that allocation of national quota shares must be considered, as a practical matter, when overall quotas are considered for international fisheries with broad participation. Previous discussions in STACREM provide an initial basis for considering such allocations. Again, we would emphasize that quota allocations in the cod fisheries can be arranged more easily at the present time, than at a later date when large reductions in catches are likely to be necessary to restore depleted resources. 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, with precise allocations of national quota shares being determined at the 1972 Annual Meeting.

