

MINUTES

GENERAL ASSEMBLY OF THE NORTH WESTERN WATERS REGIONAL ADVISORY COUNCIL (NWWRAC)

**Erin Room, Dublin Castle
Wednesday 19 November 2008**

Chairman: André Le Berre
Rapporteur: Alexandre Rodríguez

1. Welcome

- Chairman's greeting

Mr André Le Berre, Honorary Chairman of the NWWRAC and Acting Chairman of the General Assembly, welcomed participants to the meeting and extended his thanks in particular to BIM, the representatives of the European Commission, the national government bodies and the representatives of new member organisations of the NWWRAC: NESFO, O'Malley Fisheries¹ and France Pêche Durable et Responsable.

Apologies were noted for the absence of Bertie Armstrong², Barrie Deas³, Jacques Pichon, André Gueguen, Joe Maddock⁴ and Sean O'Donnogue, which was due to a number of meetings being held at the same time, namely the Council of Ministers for Fisheries in Brussels and the ICCAT meeting in Marrakech.

Apologies were also noted on behalf of the Secretariat for the last-minute absence of Patricia Comiskey due to hospitalisation.

Mr. Le Berre requested a minute's silence for the fishermen and others who have died at sea this year. He then delivered an opening speech (see Annex III), in which he took stock of the role played by NWWRAC in its first three years of existence as well as future challenges associated with environment-integrated fisheries management, which must also take into account the importance and strategic value of fishing.

The current acting Chairman also revealed his readiness to continue in the position and renew his term in office for an additional three years if the members of the General Assembly so wished. This decision was made at the end of the meeting under the last item on the agenda.

¹ O'Malley Fisheries (absent from the meeting), NESFO (representative: Robert Stevenson) and "France Pêche Durable et Responsable" (representative: Jacques Bigot)

² Substituted at the meeting by Ian Gatt, representing SFF

³ Substituted at the meeting by Davy Hill, representing NFFO

⁴ Substituted at the meeting by Ted Breslin, representing IFO

The Chairman gave the floor to Michael Keatinge, Director of the Fisheries Division of BIM. Mr. Keatinge praised the work carried out by the NWWRAC and coordinated through its Secretariat for the past three years, and applauded its success in meeting the target set in the last revision of the CFP to improve relations and participation among stakeholders involved in marine resources. Mr. Keatinge assessed the work carried out by the members of the Secretariat and encouraged those present to continue with the good work.

- Adoption of the Agenda and the Minutes of the previous General Assembly meeting

The agenda was adopted without changes⁵ and the Minutes of the previous General Assembly meeting were considered formally approved without observations or amendments.

2. Report on the work of the Executive Chairman

Sam Lambourn, Executive Chairman of the NWWRAC, congratulated all members of the RAC in general and the Executive Committee in particular for the work they have carried out this year (financial year three). He presented the annual report for this past year, detailing the meetings held or attended by the NWWRAC and the number of opinions adopted and published (14). He also explained the schedule of meetings and the proposed work programme (priorities to be dealt with and estimated terms for consultation procedures) for financial year four in line with that presented by the European Commission.

The full version of this presentation and all of the information on meetings, publications and consultation procedures is available on the NWWRAC website.

The members of the General Assembly then took the floor, identifying and addressing the following key issues:

- Avoidance of the doubling of efforts and thinking about future priorities and strategic issues for the NWWRAC (long-term management plans for different species, marine spatial planning and Natura 2000 areas, policies for control and compliance with CFP regulations and revision of the latter, reform of the Common Market Organisations, etc).
- Greater interaction and reciprocal collaboration between representatives of the scientific community (national institutes and ICES) and members of the NWWRAC for the collection, analysis, exchange, integration, and dissemination of relevant data for evaluating stocks and fishing resources in North Western Waters.
- Improved communication in the correspondence between the NWWRAC and the European Commission regarding the advice given in the form of opinions: some members have complained about the responses given by the relevant Commission services, arguing that there has often been a failure to deal with the issues or observations put forward in the documents submitted by our organisation. A more systematic approach on the Commission responses to NWWRAC advice would be sought.

⁵ NOTE: The Commission's presentation included a presentation on the EC decision-making process by Isabelle Viallon, which was not indicated in the agenda.

- Establishing of channels of participation to improve the cooperation of our RAC when it comes to contributing relevant information for the analysis of the socio-economic aspects and the impact of measures adopted for the management of fishery resources in communities and areas that are highly dependent on fishing activities.

3. Report of the Secretariat on the work completed and budget issues

- Introduction

Alexandre Rodríguez, member of the Secretariat of the NWWRAC, passed on apologies for Patricia Comiskey last-minute absence from the meeting due to illness. He thanked members for their shows of support and for their assessment of the Secretariat office's work and management of matters since it was set up on the basis of the principles of equality of treatment and transparency.

Furthermore, he announced the following challenges or actions that would be improved on in the near future: increased availability of translations and more interactive communication (development of an online forum for debating draft proposals among members), streamlining of administrative processes (reimbursement processing, etc.), and a closer relationship with the media in order to comply with the dictates of the protocol and the communication strategy adopted in 2007.

He reiterated the Secretariat's desire of working with the Executive Chairman and all members to build a culture of confidence and consensus and to be proactive in presenting ideas and proposals on its own initiative.

- Report on the close of accounts of financial year two (October 2006-September 2007)

After a brief presentation of the position of the annual accounts in financial year two, an end deficit of €4,550.66 was acknowledged, corresponding to excess spending of over 10% in two of the budget headings ("personnel" and "operating expenses"), which the Commission has declared as not eligible for aid because it was not reported by registered mail within the required term (one month before closure of the accounts).

Since the NWWRAC as an organisation cannot run a budget deficit, the Secretariat proposes that members cover or finance the cost of this deficit through an increase in the membership fees for financial year two equal to the result of dividing the total equally among current members of the NWWRAC (57), which amounts to €80 per member. The members present decided to approve the proposal and accept this extraordinary fee increase for the 2nd year.

- Income and budgetary expenditure for financial year three (October 2007-September 2008)

An itemised list of the income obtained and spending made for NWWRAC activities during financial year three was presented. Although these accounts are provisional and are awaiting a report from the auditors, members were informed of a surplus income amounting to €13.

Moreover, the total amount of expenditure eligible for Commission aid was less than the amount initially expected because of the reduced availability of cash due to a membership fee deficit (difference of -19,000 between expected income and that actually received). As a result the EC co financing percentage of Year 3 of 72.20 % will be calculated on this smaller amount of eligible expenditure and it hence will be lower than originally forecasted. Additionally the EC informed the NWWRAC that it will apply from budgetary year 3 onwards the rule on deficit of receipts. This rule encompasses that if members decrease their allocation, the Commission is entitled to deduct from its final contribution an amount equal to the amount that the other sources have not paid. As a result of the rule of deficit of receipts the Commission could claw back 19.000 € from the NWWRAC. When the Commission's fixed reimbursement percentage of the total eligible expenditure and the rule on deficit of receipts is applied, it is presumed that the organisation will run into a deficit whose exact amount is yet to be determined.

As the rule on deficit of receipts and its consequences are not clear in the Grant Agreement or Framework text, the Secretariat and its colleagues from other RAC secretariats will be disputing these and other points regarding the interpretation of regulations with the representatives of the European Commission in order to reach a consensus for a common reading of budget depreciation.. Members will be informed of the outcome of these discussions in early 2009.

- Draft budget and schedule for financial year 4 (October 2008-September 2009)

The Secretariat announced a new philosophy for drafting budgets based on advance documentary guarantee of the income from members and Member States⁶ to prevent the instability of financial years 2 and 3 from repeating itself. In view of this, the estimated expenditure for the coming year amounts to €404,767, a reduction of 1% on the previous year's figure (€406,248). Furthermore, it was announced that the process of collecting annual subscription fees from members would be streamlined and it was recalled that the payment of reimbursements would be conditioned by the prior payment of the fee for that year.

It was proposed to members that they advance the payment of fees for this financial year by issuing invoices to organisations in the coming weeks (end of November-December) and that they issue invoices for the subsequent financial year in the month before it begins (September 2009). The members of the General Assembly unanimously accepted both proposals.

- Changes in reimbursement rules:

The new reimbursement directives or requirements were explained briefly and attached hereto is the proposed unique form replacing the previous ones, which was adopted without objection by the members present. The new form and the instructions for completing it, together with the requirements for reimbursement entitlement, are available from the Administration section of the NWWRAC website.

⁶ Both monetary and in kind contributions (e.g. free use of meeting rooms, technical equipment, staff costs)

- Update on member changes

This information was presented in the form of a comparative table of the number of members (classified as "Fishing Sector" and "Other Interest Groups") making up the various bodies of the NWWRAC: General Assembly, Executive Committee, and Working Groups in 2005 – year in which the NWWRAC was created – and 2008. The percentage variation reveals an average reduction of around 30% due to a number of factors bearing no direct relationship to one another. The adoption of a series of measures was agreed for attracting new members through greater media presence, progress in publishing the schedules for work and activities and improved efficiency and quality of the opinions issued.

A complete list of NWWRAC members, updated in November 2008, was supplied, together with the organisation's name, nationality and the body to which it belongs. In addition, a separate list indicating the members of the Executive Committee and the Working Groups was also included. These are available for public consultation on the NWWRAC website.

- Communication policy

The Secretariat described the progress in communication made by the NWWRAC in aspects such as the number of visits to its new website, access to information and downloading of online documents, etc. The introduction of a members-only virtual forum was announced for the website that will allow the interactive real-time debate of draft proposals in consultation at the beginning of 2009. On the issue of the media relations policy, those attending were informed that the Secretariat of the NWWRAC has begun to update its lists of key contacts. This quarter, it will start to revive its presence in the written media specialised in fishing by drafting and issuing regular press releases, offering interviews and making declarations on official positions reached by consensus with the RAC, etc. Members were reminded that a Protocol and Strategic Communication Plan are in force and that these should be respected. In addition, members were asked to help with the creation of a Committee or Communications Office to safeguard the public image of the NWWRAC.

The full version of the Secretariat's report is available from the Meetings section of the website.

During their turn to speak, members voiced their concerns over the limited and declining attendance and participation of representatives from the regional and national governments of the Member States (with the exception of Spain) at NWWRAC meetings and the difficulty of filling vacancies for other interest groups (environmental NGOs, consumer representatives, etc.), which gave existing members an excessive level of pressure and responsibility.

Greater flexibility was requested from the European Commission budgetary services in their interpretation and application of the rules on granting aid so as not to unnecessarily disrupt the daily business of the Secretariat.

4. Presentations from the European Commission

4.1. Presentation on the reform of the Common Fisheries Policy – Poul Dengbol

Poul Dengbol, representative of the European Commission, addressed the meeting by stating that because this was an initial "brainstorming" session prior to the formal consultation phase and that there would be no official responses or opinions from the Commission for the time being.

Mr. Dengbol hoped that the meeting would serve as forum for dialogue in order to identify the key issues that could help pinpoint the aims that should be the most central and measures that would be more suited to the implementation of a future CFP in 2012. He also announced that the Commission's Green Book would be published in April and that a consultation procedure would be set up to obtain the opinions of the RAC and interested parties in general throughout 2009.

With regard to the underlying principles of the future CFP, he stressed that a results-based approach could prevail over the current trend of centralized management and detailed technical "micro-regulation", which has been proven to be discouraging and inefficient in terms of the compliance of fishermen because of its complexity. Furthermore, the scope of powers could be more clearly defined in the decision-making process for the adoption of policies and implementation of regulations so that only strategic issues and standards are decided in Council or in co-decision while technical implementation decisions would be delegated to lower levels. This would promote a more long term focus in the policy. However, the representative of the Commission made it clear that these were only preliminary considerations and that it would be necessary to strike a balance between the two aspects (regulating minimums and technical micro-regulation).

On the issue of regionalisation, the RACs can play a crucial role as advisers to Member States implementing the policy regionally.

In a bid to encourage the maintenance of a responsible and sustainable fishing industry, the Commission agreed that it should have a series of rights but that it must also have unavoidable duties or responsibilities. One issue that needs to be discussed on this subject is whether the European Commission should reverse the burden of proof toward the fishing industry. Other points discussed were the need to combine social needs and make them compatible with the search for economic efficiency and reflection on the obligation of upholding the principle of relative stability in the 21st century.

The full version of this presentation can be found in the Meetings section of the website.

- General debate on the revision of the CFP

* In the members' turn to speak, the following conclusions were drawn:

- There was a difference of opinion among members of the fishing industry over the relevance of maintaining or eliminating the relative stability criterion seeking greater economic efficiency based on the free transfer of fishing quotas or rights to the fishing industry.

- Positive incentives are needed for the industry as the way to secure correct management of fishing resources. Reversing the burden of proof toward fishermen without first creating incentives for compliance was seen as negative. Therefore, it is essential to structure this policy around the provision of real incentives.

- It was noted that the TAC and Quotas system has been proven to be ineffective and has not solved problems with the conservation of resources. It was asked whether the restructuring of the CFP could eliminate this inefficient system of the distribution of fishing rights. The new CFP could then be based on a system of fishing effort that combines technical conservation measures with market measures (marketing, control of imports, etc).

- It was considered necessary to find new recipes or instruments, such as fisheries management adapted to the fishing effort of each area (based on fleet volume, type of gear, horsepower, etc). Furthermore, it is necessary to take into account the social effects that such measures could have on the local maritime economies.

- We should not forget that the future CFP will use a management approach based on ecosystems and that we must assess all of the aspects integrating this concept (fishing species, birds, coastal areas, human activities, etc). Actions for responsible fishing and the socio-economic diversification of fishing activities should be made a priority in the lines of action of the CFP.

- It was pointed out that the reduction in fishing possibilities for species subject to the TAC and Quotas system that have reached levels of overexploitation could cause problems by moving the fishing effort to other areas and species not subject to this system (such as sea bass, sea bream or the scallop), thus damaging coastal or small-scale fishing areas to the advantage of more powerful industrial fleets.

- ICES and the European Commission should assess and expressly acknowledge examples of good management for some stocks, whether or not these are subject to TAC.

- It is held that the current vision of the fishing effort system is too simplistic, given that its calculation is based only on the horsepower of the engine and length of the vessel; in the case of boats with fishing gear such as deepwater gillnets, other variables such as the length and number of nets are more important than horsepower.

*** The representative of the Commission, Poul Dengbol, responded to the issues raised by the members:**

- Overexploited stocks: the figure of 80% of Community stocks at levels of overexploitation only includes Community – and Norwegian – stocks for which the Commission has stock assessments.

- Scope of application of the CFP: it was explained that it should be considered whether a CFP could have different regimes for industrial and coastal fishing communities and activities to enable us to deal separately with economic efficiency and social issues.

- Relative stability and transferable fishing rights: he stated that the discussion on the revision of the criterion for relative stability is necessary if we wish to have a mature and in-depth debate covering all aspects for improving efficiency in the next CFP. Regarding the possibility of granting transferable fishing rights in the European market, he confirmed that only the Netherlands out of all Member States has declared itself in favour of this measure so far.

- Industry incentives: the question of which should come first, incentives or a show of results from the industry, is a case of the classic conundrum of the "chicken and the hen." This is a key issue that needs to be discussed in detail during the consultation procedure and concrete proposals on how to link the two concepts are required. In all events, the unique context and features of mixed fisheries should be analysed as part of the future debate.

- Micro-management and level of detail in regulations: the consultation procedure does not seek to create general uniform measures but rather ones that are sensitive and adapted to local conditions → the representative of the Commission recognised that many current problems are due to "micro-management" and excessive detail in the regulations. It is not therefore essential to have a single system for all fisheries or even a single system specifically for fisheries that are economically more efficient. One possibility would be to devise different regionalised management systems in a bid to obtain strong, healthy populations.

- Stocks not subject to TACs or Quotas: it may be advisable to offer greater flexibility to species and stocks without Community regulation and adopt a results-based approach, granting a degree of discretion to members of the fishing industry to find their own solutions (in the case of the scallop, for example, allowing them to use different minimum ring sizes).

- Socio-economic diversification: group reflection is required from all parties involved in the consultation process; in this regard, we need to ask ourselves how much structural funds could help us reach this objective. However, we need to think about whether the issue is really exclusively limited to the scope of the CFP or whether it should form part of a more general topic linked to other policies (economic, etc). The search for solutions and alternatives will require active contributions from the RACs.

4.2. Presentation of the Community decision-making process – Isabelle Viallon

Isabelle Viallon, representative of the Commission, addressed the meeting in response to a request from the Executive Chairman Sam Lambourn at the last Executive Committee meeting, held in Paris on 8 October. She gave a detailed explanation of the two procedures (general and the procedure for establishing TACs and Quotas) relevant for the adoption of fishing management measures and specified the role of the RACs in the different phases of the procedure. To finish off, she recalled that the RACs can use their own initiative and adopt a proactive role, proposing the drafting of new regulations to the Commission or modifying part of the contents of existing ones.

The full version of the presentation is available for consultation on the NWWRAC website.

5. Discussion of the structure of the Working Groups

Alexandre Rodríguez of the Secretariat of the NWWRAC reported to those present on the task commissioned to the Secretariat by the Executive Committee in Paris to draw up a document containing different options for the organisation and structure of the Working Groups. The document was made available to all members for reading and reflection before this meeting. Alexandre explained the content of the document, which basically proposes two options or scenarios: a) maintaining the current geographical distribution of the four existing Working Groups + an additional Working Group on Horizontal Issues, or b) reorganising the Working Groups into subjects or strategic issues for long-term work (evaluation of populations and data collection, conservation measures, recovery and management plans, control and application of the regulations, IUU fishing, and market aspects).

An intense debate followed, which concluded with the members of the General Assembly at the meeting agreeing to maintain the status quo and current regional structure of the Working Groups without changes in order to respect the unique features of fisheries and local communities, leaving the door open to the possibility of studying the implementation of a Horizontal WG for future meetings. Furthermore, members were self-critical in recognising the need to improve the operation of the Working Groups, which are currently not as efficient as the Technical Focus Groups.

In response to questions raised during the debate, the Secretariat clarified that it would not be necessary to modify the Articles for any of the two options, as they are in accordance with Articles 14 and 15 of the Rules of Procedure of the NWWRAC. Moreover, the creation of a Horizontal Working Group would not impede nor would it be incompatible with the establishment of Focus Groups of a marked technical character on strategic matters.

6. Revision of positions

1) Head offices and personnel of the Secretariat of the NWWRAC: the members of the Executive Committee that met in Paris on 8 October reached a general agreement to issue a recommendation to the General Assembly to keep the head offices and personnel of the Secretariat of the NWWRAC at the head offices of Board Iascaigh Mhara (BIM), in Dublin, Ireland.

With regards the RACs, Conor Nolan, Executive of BIM's Fisheries Division confirmed the willingness and capacity of Board Iascaigh Mhara (BIM) to continue providing the means to house the head offices of the NWWRAC for an additional three-year period. The members of the General Assembly praised the work of the Secretariat and unanimously ratified maintaining the head offices on BIM premises.

2) Nominations and election of the members of the Executive Committee

Kristel Adriaenssens, member of the NWWRAC Secretariat, went over the procedure for proposing candidatures to the Executive Committee before handing over to Jacques Bigot, representative of the "France Pêche Durable et Responsable" organisation at the meeting, to explain why his organisation had requested initial membership of the General Assembly and wished to secure a seat on the Executive Committee in the "Other Fishing Sector Groups" category.

Jacques Bigot briefly explained the short- and medium-term aims of this organisation to members, which has been accepted and added to the public register of general interest associations in France and wishes to become a foundation that focuses on aspects of responsible fishing and sustainability in fisheries. On behalf of his organisation, he expressly renounced the possibility of opting to fill one of the seats of the Executive Committee at this meeting but hoped to be able to do so in the future, possibly as an environmental NGO.

This brought the total number of candidates up to 21, covering all available seats in the "Extractive Fishing Industry" and "Other Fishing Sector Groups" categories and leaving three vacant seats in the "Other Interest Groups" category. A vote was held for the existing candidatures, by which the members of the General Assembly unanimously agreed to re-elect the 21 current members of the Executive Committee for an additional 3-year period (see Annex 2).

3) Report on the competition procedure used for the selection of the Executive President of the NWWRAC: members were informed that, at the end of the term for receiving candidatures in the competition process open to all the members of the General Assembly and Executive Committee, the candidature of ONE MEMBER was received for the post.

In accordance with the resolution adopted by the Executive Committee in Paris, an ad hoc Evaluation Committee was set up consisting of three members of the Executive Committee (one member of an environmental NGO and two Chairmen of Working Groups and members of the fishing sector), assisted by three members of the Secretariat of the NWWRAC as observers.

The Evaluation Committee was charged with evaluating the proposed candidature and determining whether it met the requirements and fulfilled the minimum criteria or "scoring thresholds" for accepting the candidature and proposing appointment by all members of the Executive Committee at the plenary session.

In accordance with the internal rules of procedure of the NWWRAC and the agreed competition procedure, the name of the candidate and the results of the report, together with the proposal for his/her appointment, where applicable, will be given at the Executive Committee meeting that will take place following this meeting.

4) Nominations and Election of the Honorary Vice Chairman of the General Assembly: it was explained that the Articles of the NWWRAC do not allow for this position. Therefore, it would be necessary to make a formal amendment of our procedural rules in case there were any candidates. It was decided to postpone the discussion on this point until the next Annual General Meeting, which will be held in 2009.

5) Nominations and Election of the Honorary Chairman of the General Assembly:

Once met the end of the term for receiving candidatures, André Le Berre was the only candidate and was re-elected unanimously by all members of the General Assembly for an additional three-year period.

7. Other matters of interest

Hugo González suggested discussing the topic of the duration of the term for the representative of the RACs on the Administrative Board of the Community Fisheries Control Agency. The Secretariat pointed out that this would be discussed later as a topic on the agenda of the Executive Committee meeting.

No new issues or matters of interest were proposed.

8. Closure

On behalf of those present, the Chairman and Secretariat expressed their thanks to the Irish Government department for providing the rooms at Dublin Castle, the sound team and interpreters for their valuable work, and the experts of the Commission.

The meeting ended at 3:32 p.m.



Annex I. List of members and participating observers

André Le Berre

Chairman

Padraig Gordon
Poul Dengbol
Isabelle Viallon

BIM
European Commission
European Commission

Fishing sector

Víctor Badiola
Jacques Bigot
Ted Bresnan
Richard Brouzes
Tom Bryan-Brown
Aidan Collins
Juan Carlos Corrás
Luc Corbisier
Anton Dekker
Mark Dougal
Margaret Downey-Harrington
Ian Gatt
Hugo González García
Béatrice Harmel
Davy Hill
Sam Lambourn
Daniel Lefèvre
Thierry Leprêtre
Jesús Lourido García
Kevin McDonnell
Eduardo Míguez
Laurent Nicolle
José Luis Otero González
Jim Portus
Mercedes Rodríguez
Delphine Roncin
Peigi Ryder
Robert Stevenson
Stéphanie Tachoures
Dominique Thomas
John Ward



Other Interest Groups

Iwan Ball
Kara Brydson
John Crudden
John Daly
Patsy Peril
Brendan Price
John Woodlock

Secretariat

Kristel Adriaenssens
Michael Keatinge
Conor Nolan
Alexandre Rodríguez

Translators (ILS)

Sarah Jane Aberasturi
Azucena Bermúdez
Marie Delumeau
Armella McAllister

Observers

Xavier Marill
Borja Velasco Tuduri

Fishing department of the French government
Ministry of the Environment, Rural and Marine Areas – Spain

Annex II. List of members of the Executive Committee

LIST OF MEMBERS OF THE EXECUTIVE COMMITTEE				
Organisation member	Representative holding position	Category	Member State	Seat No.
Comité National des Pêches Maritimes et des Elevages Marins	André Guegen	Extractive Sector	France	1
Association Nationale des Organisations de Producteurs	Jacques Pichon	Extractive Sector	France	2
Killybegs Fishermen Organisation	Sean O'Donoghue	Extractive Sector	Ireland	3
Irish South and West Fishermen's Organisation	Gerard O'Flynn	Extractive Sector	Ireland	4
Federación Española de Organizaciones Pesqueras	Hugo González García	Extractive Sector	Spain	5
Organización de Productores de Pesca	Victor Badiola	Extractive Sector	Spain	6
National Federation of Fishermen's Organisations	Barrie Deas	Extractive Sector	United Kingdom	7
Scottish Fishermen's Federation	Bertie Armstrong	Extractive Sector	United Kingdom	8
Rederscentrale & EAPO	Emiel Brouckaert	Extractive Sector	Belgium	9
Flemish Fishery Committee / Foundation for Sustainable Fishing (SDVO)	Luc Corbisier	Extractive Sector	Belgium	10
Nederlandse Vissersbond	Anton Dekker	Extractive Sector	Netherlands	11
Nederlandse Vissersbond	Geert Munn	Extractive Sector	Netherlands	12
European Ports and Auctions	Eduardo Míguez	Other Fishing Sector Groups	EU	13

LIST OF MEMBERS OF THE EXECUTIVE COMMITTEE

Organisation member	Representative holding position	Category	Member State	Seat No.
E.U. Federation of National Organisations of Importers and Exporters of Fish (AIPCE)***	Steve Park	Other Fishing Sector Groups	EU	14
Mna na Mara	Margaret Downey Harrington	Other Fishing Sector Groups	Ireland	15
European Transporters Federation/CFCT	Jacques Bigot	Other Fishing Sector Groups	EU	16
Royal Society for the Protection of Birds, representing Birdlife International	Kara Brydson	Other Interest Groups	United Kingdom	17
European Bureau for Conservation and Development	Despina Symons / Konstantinos Kalamantis	Other Interest Groups	EU	18
European Anglers Association	John Crudden	Other Interest Groups	EU	19
WWF**	Claire Pescod/Helen McLachlann	Other Interest Groups	EU	20
Irish Seal Sanctuary	Brendan Price	Other Interest Groups	Ireland	21
Vacancy *	Vacant	Other Interest Groups	---	22
Vacancy *	Vacant	Other Interest Groups	---	23
Vacancy *	Vacant	Other Interest Groups	---	24

NOTES

* The organisations Irish Whale and Dolphin Group, Aqua TT and Marine Conservation Society Representing Seas at Risk have revoked their membership since their nomination in 2005.

** WWF has informed the Secretariat that Helen Mac Lachlan has been temporarily replaced by Iwan Ball.

*** AICPE has informed the Secretariat that Stephen Park has been replaced by Cliff Morrison.

Annex III. Opening Speech from the President of the General Assembly, Mr. André Le Berre

**Introductory Speech to the General Assembly of the North Western Waters Regional
Advisory Council
November 19th, 2008 - Dublin**

Mr. Chairperson of the Executive committee, Mr. Director, Authorities and invitees
Members of the Regional Advisory Council, Dear colleagues,

The Regional Advisory Council of the North Western Waters, of which I have had the honour to chair the General Assembly, celebrated its first three years.

These three years made it possible to show the essential character of the Advisory Council and its working groups. It became a fundamental interface between the fisheries network, the member states and the Commission authorities. Stakeholders in European fisheries have never become closer with each other than during these three years.

There has been immense progress but there remains a way to go because the task is immense.

It will be in this future period that we return to the fundamental values of the real economy, we must emphasize the European fisheries as an important producer of foodstuffs. We must also underline the weaknesses in the system, which given the changes in global economy, is often badly managed and unjust.

I do not have any doubt about the capacity of the fishing sector to integrate the environmental problems, to control the fishing effort better and to improve future destiny. But the European authorities must take account of these efforts, which was still unimaginable a few years ago, and work alongside the sector and not, as is my opinion, benefit from the economic situation in order to reduce the fleet. This policy will lead us to nothing and will make us regret bitterly one day the irreversible disappearance of the tools of fishing and know how of sea fishermen.

With them also the economy and the identity of the coastal society and the islands of Europe will disappear.

The role of the RAC is also to let the European authorities understand that, between the two extreme scenarios of protecting the resources excessively or letting the stocks become exhausted, there are feasible solutions for the resources which also allow fishing companies to exist.

The importance of these challenges convinced me to put myself forward again as President of the General Assembly North Western Waters Regional Council. If you would honour me by renewing this mandate, I wish to be the president of a General Assembly which aspires to re-set the fundamental balances of the fisheries sector in Europe.

I thank you for your attention and I wish you all an excellent day.

André Le BERRE - President of the General Assembly of the North Western Waters RAC