

Minutes of the Inaugural General Assembly of the North Western Waters Regional Advisory Council

Dublin Castle

30th of September 2005

1. Welcome

Michael Keatinge of the Secretariat opened the meeting by welcoming all members of the North Western Waters Regional Advisory Council to the meeting. Mr Keatinge also welcomed the Minister for the Marine Pat the Cope Gallagher, Minister Ben Bradshaw, Emilio Mastracchio and Miriam Garcia Ferrer of the Commission, David Griffith general Secretary of ICES, John Casey of STECF and Niels Wichman of ACFA and thanked them for attending the meeting.

2. Adoption of the Agenda

Mr Keatinge proposed that due to time constraints in the Ministers schedule, that Minister Bradshaw speak before Minister Gallagher and the election of the president of the General Assembly be postponed until after the coffee break. This was agreed and the agenda was amended. Mr Keatinge then welcomed Minister Ben Bradshaw to say a few words

3. Address by Minister Ben Bradshaw

Minister Bradshaw thanked Mr Keatinge, Minister Pat the Cope Gallagher and the Assembly and congratulated them all for the establishment of the North Western Waters Regional Advisory Council. The Minister reiterated many of his sentiments from his speech made the night before at Minister Gallagher's Dinner. The Minister noted that although the establishments of the RAC was at times a difficult and frustrating experience, he hopes that it will prove to be a very worthwhile process once the work gets underway. He also stated that the state of the marine environment was an issue of concern for all stakeholders and wished the RAC every luck in dealing with such heavy responsibilities.

4. Address by Minister Pat 'the Cope' Gallagher

The Minister thanked Minister Bradshaw and congratulated the North Western Waters Regional Advisory Council on their establishment. The Minister welcomed the NWWRAC members to Dublin and stated that he was very proud that the Regulation which established the RACs was produced during the Irish Presidency last year and that this RAC could celebrate its inauguration so quickly thereafter. He reassured the members of the RAC that this would not be just a talking shop, that stakeholders had invaluable expertise and that their recommendations would not fall on deaf ears. The Minister concluded his speech by thanking his staff and the staff of BIM who helped bring this day to fruition. A copy of his speech is available in Annex 2 of these minutes.

5. Address by Emilio Mastracchio, Director of Resources and Relations with Stakeholders, DG for Fisheries and Maritime Affairs.

Mr Mastracchio congratulated the members of the NWWRAC on its inauguration. He informed the General Assembly that this was the third RAC to be established and that the Commission is looking forward to working with the NWWRAC on all issues pertaining to fisheries matters in the North West. He informed the Assembly that the first co-ordination meeting of the RACs will take place on the 11th of October. A copy of his speech is available in Annex 3 of these minutes

6. Address By David Griffith General Secretary of ICES

David Griffiths thanked the Assembly for inviting him to speak and congratulated them on their establishment. He gave a presentation of the Role of ICES and the future plans of ICES. A copy of his presentation with speaking notes is available in Annex 4 of this document.

7. Nomination and Election of the President of the General Assembly

Before the nominated candidates for President of the General Assembly were announced, the secretariat asked that the Assembly consider a request for proxy voting which they received from a number of members. After a short debate it was decided that proxy voting would be permitted once requests from the members were issued in writing to the secretariat, were signed and were received by the secretariat at least one week before the relevant meeting. A maximum of three proxy votes per member was set. **It was agreed** that the current Rules of Procedure would be amended to reflect this.

Two candidates from the General Assembly were nominated for the role of Honorary President: Joe Maddock (Ireland) and Andre Le Berre (France). As the Honorary President is to be elected by consensus and both candidates were very much interested in standing for the position **it was agreed** that a secret ballot would be taken. Only the secretariat and the two candidates would know the result of the vote and based on this would come to an agreement. As not all members of the General Assembly know the background of the candidates, both were asked to address the General Assembly and give reasons as to why they wished to be Honorary President. After the short presentations, the vote was held. The secretariat called for a short recess to discuss the results with the two nominees.

The meeting resumed with a request from Joe Maddock to address the Assembly. Mr Maddock thanked the Assembly and those who nominated and seconded him for the position of Honorary President but wished to withdraw his nomination and to propose Andre Le Berre as Honorary President of the General Assembly. The nomination of Andre Le Berre as Honorary President of the General Assembly was accepted by consensus.

Andre Le Berre accepted the position, thanked Mr Maddock and the Assembly. The Honorary President then nominated Mr Maddock for the position of Vice President. This was seconded and accepted by consensus of the Assembly. Mr Le Berre thanked the secretariat for their support and stated that he was looking forward to his future work with them.

8. Nomination and Election of the Executive Committee

The Secretariat presented the list of nominees for the Executive Committee. This list was compiled from nominations that were submitted to the secretariat prior to the meeting. Each of the nominees were asked by the secretariat if they accepted the nomination. The secretariat then requested any further nominations from the floor.

The Belgian Industry put forward SDVO, the Foundation for Sustainable Fishery Development. The Dutch Industry put forward FVV, Federatie van Visserijverenigingen. In the remaining seat for the Fisheries Sector ETF was put forward and for the remaining two seats of the Other Interest Groups Aquatt and the Irish Whale and Dolphin Group came forward.

A query was raised from the floor as to the suitability of having two Irish based NGOs (The Irish Seal Sanctuary and the Irish Whale and Dolphin Group) with individual seats on the Executive Committee. The comment was based on the fact that not all 'other interest groups' as set out in Council Decision 585/2004 were being represented on the Executive Committee (ie consumers were not represented) and to fill two seats for three years with two national organizations with similar interests may be short sighted as not all stakeholders would be represented. After a lengthy discussion it was agreed that these two members could occupy the seats for a year and if in that time other interest group representatives came forward for nomination to the Executive Committee, the issue would be reviewed at the next General Assembly.

It was noted by the Secretariat that the Irish Industry had four nominations for the two seats allocated to the sector. The Irish Industry were informed that unless they could decide amongst themselves who

should be a member of the Executive Committee a vote would need to be taken by the General Assembly. A lengthy discussion ensued as some in the General Assembly were not comfortable with voting for the Irish Seats and felt it should be dealt with internally by the Irish representatives. However the Irish representatives informed the Assembly that they would rather that a democratic vote be taken and that those who did not wish to vote would not have to. **It was agreed** that a ballot would be taken; however only the secretariat and the four candidates would know the result of the vote and based on this would come to an agreement over lunch.

9. Announcement of the Executive Committee Members

The President welcomed the Assembly back from lunch and invited Frank Doyle of the Irish Fishermens Organisation and Michael Walsh of the Irish South and East Fishermens Organisation to take the floor. Mr Doyle and Mr Walsh informed the Assembly that they were withdrawing their nominations and called upon Sean O'Donoghue of the Killybegs Fishermen's Organisation and Jason Whooley of the Irish South and West Fishermen's Organisation to take up the two seats for the Irish catching sector.

The twenty-four members of the Executive Committee as nominated was accepted by consensus of the General Assembly. The members of the Executive Committee are listed in Annex 5.

10. Formal Adoption of the Rules of Procedure

The President asked the Secretariat to brief the Assembly on the Rules of Procedure. The Secretariat informed the Assembly that the Rules of Procedure had been submitted to the Commission in June. The Commission asked for a few small changes to the text, notably the insertion of 'Honorary' before President in Article 40 and a slight change to footnote 1 and 2 where the text '*stakeholders with a regulatory interest*' was replaced with '*stakeholders with a fishing interest*'. The other change suggested by the Commission was to replace the terms Advisory Council with the acronym NWWRAC where relevant. The changes to the Rules of Procedure were accepted and the Rules adopted by consensus.

11. Formal Adoption of the Budget

The President asked the secretariat to speak on this item. The secretariat informed the Assembly that the Budget Proposed and accepted in May had not changed. The Proposed budget was thus accepted by consensus of the General Assembly.

2 motions were put forward under this item on the agenda.

Motion 1: Subsistence rates for Members to attend meetings shall be based on a similar method to that used by the Commission and the 'perdiem' rate will be set at the same rate as that of the Commission.

This motion was accepted by general consensus of the meeting.

Motion 2: A subscription rate for membership of the RAC should be set for the year commencing January 2006. Subscription rates will be set by the Executive Committee and will be more than €500 but will not exceed €1000 per General Assembly member.

A lengthy discussion followed this motion. A query was raised as to whether the NGO's should pay a subscription, it was agreed by the Assembly that all members of the RAC should pay an equal amount in subscription as all have equal standing within the RAC. It was further agreed by the General Assembly that Executive Committee members should contribute a little more than General Assembly Members and figures of €500 total per General Assembly Member and €1000 total per Executive Committee member were discussed. However it was noted from the floor that if the RAC has a net profit by the end of its first year, the Commission will be obliged to claw back the equivalent amount in grant aid. As a result it was agreed that although a subscription rate should be set, the Executive

Committee will need to review the budget to consider the most appropriate rate for General Assembly and Executive Committee Members. The motion was amended to read:

Motion 2: A subscription rate for membership of the RAC should be set for the year commencing January 2006. Subscription rates will be set by the Executive Committee.

This motion was accepted by general consensus of the meeting.

12. Secretariat Presentation on Proposed Logo and Website

The Secretariat made a brief presentation on the Logo and website that had been designed for the RAC. The website address is www.nwwrac.org and will be used as a tool for the RAC to inform members and the general public on the activities of the RAC. The Website is still in development stages but it is hoped that it will go live in the coming months. Both the logo and the website were welcomed by the members of the General Assembly.

13. Open discussion on timetable and work programme of the Executive Committee and Working Groups

The President requested that the Executive Committee consider this item in detail.

14. Close of Meeting

The President closed the meeting by thanking the members of the General Assembly, the Ministers, the Speakers, the Interpreters and the Secretariat. He wished the Executive Committee ever success and looked forward to serving his term as President of the RAC.

Annex 1
List of Participants

Andre Le Berre

Minister Pat the Cope Gallagher

Minister Ben Bradshaw

David Griffith

Emilio Mastracchio

Miriam Garcia Ferrer

Chairman

Guest Speaker

Guest Speaker

Guest Speaker

Guest Speaker

Commission

Fisheries Sector

Alan Coghill

Alan Mc Culla

Alexis Maheut

Andre Gueguen

Anton Dekker

Barrie Deas

Beatrice Harmel

Bertie Armstrong

Daniel Lefèvre

Don Thompson

Frank Doyle

Hugo Crisanto González García

Ian Gatt

Jacques Bigot

Jacques Pichon

Jaun Carlos Corras Arias

Javier Garat Perez

Jesús A. Lourido García

Jesus Etchevers Duran

Jim Portus

Jo Maddock

Joey Murnin

John Hermse

John Mac Allister

Lorcan Kennedy

Louis Morvan

Luc Mellaerts

Mercedes Rodríguez Moreda

Michael Walsh

Mike Fitzpatrick

Mike Parry

Paul Trebilcok

Pierre Georges Dachicourt

Richard Brouzes

Robert Stevenson

Sam Lambourn

Sean O Donoghue

Steven Park

Thierry Lepretre

Tom Bryan Brown

Tom Geoghegan

Tom Watson

Víctor Badiola

Xavier Harly

Other Interest Group

Bernadette Clarke

Brendan Price

Brian Marshall

Claire Pescod

Dave Wall

Despina Symons

Helen Davies

Peigi Ryder

John Coleman

John Crudden

John Daly

Kara Brydson

Margaret Downey Harrington

Noel Carr

Norrie MacClean

Observer

Colm Lordan

Eamon Kelly

Eileen Sung

Elisabeth Sides

Francois Gauthiez

James Hugh Allister

James Lavelle

John Casey

John O'Connor

Kathleen Cameron

Niels Wichmann

Pat Keogh

Seamus O'Reilly

Álvaro Fernandez

Ann Bell

Barbara Strathern

Clare Eno

Concepción Sánchez Trujillano

Dafydd Morris

Karen Bell

Leon Lomans

Lindsey Harris

Marc Welvaert

Olof Williamson

Patrick Campbell

Tony Meaney

Secretariat

Claudia Saumell

Conor Nolan

Finian O'Luasa

Michael Keatinge

Patricia Comiskey

Annex 2

WELCOME SPEECH BY MARINE MINISTER PAT THE COPE GALLAGHER

Introduction and Welcome

In this historic location of Dublin Castle, we have gathered this morning to mark and celebrate a milestone event in fisheries policy in the EU – the first meeting of the General Assembly of the North Western Waters Regional Advisory Council.

The establishment of a Regional Advisory Council for fisheries in North Western Waters is a very welcome development. It covers an area which is one of the most productive in the world. Many highly commercial species are caught in these north-western waters, and the necessity to ensure their sustainable development is clear and compelling.

One of the cornerstones of the Common Fisheries Policy is the reality of the shared common resource. This requires an international approach by the six EU Member States which are involved in the North Western Waters RAC.

I understand that there are delegates in attendance from all six Member States concerned. In addition to Ireland, we have delegates from Belgium, France, the Netherlands, Spain and the UK. To all of you, I wish to extend the traditional Irish welcome – “Céad Míle Fáilte”, which means “A hundred thousand welcomes”

Need for co-operative approach

There is an urgent need for a co-operative approach between all stakeholders in fisheries management. In the waters being covered by this RAC, fishermen are pursuing their livelihoods from many countries around Europe. All of these fishermen have a legitimate expectation that the fish stocks on which their present and future needs depend will be managed sustainably.

The challenge of achieving such sustainability cannot be met successfully by one country alone. Co-operation between the fishing sectors of different countries is the only way to achieve such a successful outcome.

While there has been a measure of such co-operation over the years, it has tended to be sporadic and fragmented. There was no formal framework or structure into which a co-operative approach could be organised. RACs provide such a structure and I am confident that they will foster greater dialogue and co-operation, not just between the fishing sectors of different countries, but also between fishermen and other stakeholders.

Fisheries Management – Working with Science

Another area where I believe that RACs can make significant progress concerns the need to develop a closer working relationship between the scientist and the fishermen.

There can be no doubting the necessity to ensure that fisheries management decisions are firmly based on sound, expert scientific advice. That is the basis for ensuring sustainability of fish stocks. The marine scientific community around Europe is a comparatively small one, and its deliberations and assessments can certainly be helped by a greater input from the sector. Fishermen in particular have a lot of practical knowledge of the various fisheries, and it makes perfect sense to bring this knowledge to bear in developing our understanding of what is happening to the different stocks. I am thinking in particular of enhancing our knowledge of the location of nursery and spawning areas and also the migratory patterns of fish stocks.

The more information that is available to our scientists, the better will be the stock assessments which are critically important to guiding fisheries management decisions. I am therefore urging the RACs to promote and foster a closer relationship between scientists and the fisheries sector.

Influencing and improving the decision-making process

I now want to address the issue of the decision making process in fisheries management. Firstly, it must be acknowledged that the achievement of effective fisheries management is not a single task. It is in fact a very complex area and requires a variety of factors to be considered, ranging from the expert assessments of fisheries scientists to the practical on-the-ground experiences of the fishermen themselves.

Even allowing for the complexities of fisheries management, it has been recognised for some time that there is a need to improve the governance. Not only must we improve the quality of management decisions that we are taking, we must also strive for greater transparency in the whole process. The active involvement of all stakeholders in the Regional Advisory Councils will greatly assist progress in this important area.

It is also important to recognise that when stakeholders are directly involved in shaping and influencing the key decisions that have to be made if we are to manage fisheries in a sustainable manner, there will be greater confidence in the management measures. I believe that these recently established RACs can make a decisive contribution to achieving better management of fisheries in this area. An immediate priority is to contribute to the recovery management measures for 2006 – whether it is quota or fishing effort levels – and I look forward to the North Western Waters RAC making their contribution.

Conclusion

In conclusion, I want to express a particular word of thanks to BIM, who have worked extremely hard over the past few months to finalise the necessary administrative and organisational arrangements to establish the RAC over a short period of time.

In particular Michael Keatinge and Patricia Comiskey have been instrumental in pushing the process forward, and I am delighted to hear that they received a lot of co-operation and help from many people in Member State Administrations and stakeholders across the EU. To all concerned I say congratulations and well done.

Thank You.

Annex 3

ADDRESS BY EMILIO MASTRACCHIO OF THE EU COMMISSION

Minister,
Ladies and Gentlemen,

I am delighted to be here with you today to inaugurate the first General Assembly of the North Western Waters Regional Advisory Council. This is now the third Regional Advisory Council to be set up in the framework of the Common Fisheries Policy.

I appreciate that you have all committed a lot of time and resources to the setting up of this RAC and would like to warmly thank you for your efforts. I would also like to personally congratulate Ms Patricia Comiskey and Mr Michael Keatinge who have been actively working on the preparation of this RAC during the last months in close contact with my services.

This initiative that started in the framework of the structural funds has now succeeded in putting around the table a wide range of stakeholders willing to constitute this RAC. Ireland has also been very helpful in coordinating the establishment of this RAC with all the Member States concerned and submitting to the Commission a recommendation on its establishment.

Almost one year after the setting up of the first RAC in the North Sea, I am happy to confirm that already three of the RACs that we proposed are operational. I hope that the other RACs will finalise their preparatory works during the next months. The quicker all RACs are up and running, the sooner the CFP will benefit from their input and advice.

You are all aware that RACs are one of the pillars of the CFP reform adopted in 2002 and the Commission is fully committed to their success. Indeed, the Common Fisheries Policy will only succeed if fishermen consider that it takes into account their knowledge and experience.

RACs main task is to advise the Commission and/or the Member States on matters relating to fisheries management in respect of certain sea areas or fishing zones. I am convinced that sound and constructive advice from RACs will make a valuable contribution to the CFP. Although I acknowledge that it might be difficult to always ensure the adoption of consensual positions, it is very important that the different members of the RAC work closely together to try to find a common understanding and also to ensure that the advice sent to the Commission is representative of the views of the different groups of stakeholders.

The main focus of the RACs will be conservation issues in the area they cover. It is essential to avoid duplication and overlapping with other consultative bodies that already exist and I am referring notably to the Advisory Committee on Fisheries and Aquaculture (ACFA). ACFA will continue to advise the Commission on all horizontal matters at European level. Nevertheless, RACs can also play a major role in other aspects of the CFP such as the process of simplification of the CFP rules. My services have already contacted the North Western Waters RAC requesting your contributions on this area prior to the preparation of an Action Plan that will be finalised before the end of 2005. Your comments would be very much appreciated.

At the same time, you have to take into account that enlarging too much the scope of activity of the RAC could put a strain on the resources of your organisations and reduce the effectiveness of RACs' input into CFP policy-making. I recently participated in an informal meeting of Fisheries Directors organised by the UK Presidency in which the stakeholders involved in the different RACs also participated. During the debate, there seemed to be a general agreement on the fact that RACs should ensure a better focus of their agenda and identify the areas where they could play a role.

You can be assured that the Commission will actively support the work of the North Western Waters RAC. Nevertheless, we do not wish to interfere in the internal process of the RAC, as it is you who have to take on the ownership of these new bodies.

To facilitate your work, the Commission plans to organise on a regular basis coordination meetings with all the RACs in place. These meetings will provide you with an opportunity to discuss about the Commission's work programme and priorities, as well as about the follow up of your advice. I am happy to be able to announce to you already that the first coordination meeting will take place on 11th October in Brussels. Representatives of 3 RACs will be present during the meeting, as well as the UK Presidency.

We, the policy-makers and the stakeholders, have an important responsibility to ensure that RACs live up to the high expectations we have of them. We might need a period to adapt as the first years of your work will be a learning process. All of us will need to show flexibility and a willingness to cooperate as we learn to work together in these new structures.

Minister, Ladies and Gentlemen, before closing my speech, I would like to say welcome to the North Western Waters Regional Advisory Council and to renew the Commission's commitment to its success.

Thank you

Emilio Mastracchio
Director

Annex 4

Address by David Griffith General Secretary of ICES

Annex 5
List of Executive Committee Members

Fisheries Sector/Secteur de la pêche/Sector pesquero	
Comité National des Pêches Maritimes et des élevages Marins	Andre Guegen
Association Nationale des Organisations de Producteurs	Jacques Pichon
Killybegs Fishermens Organisation	Sean O'Donoghue
Irish South and West Fishermens Organisation	Jason Whooley
Federacion Espanola de Organizaciones Pesqueras	Hugo Crisanto González García
Organización de Productores de Pesca	Victor Badiola
National Federation of Fishermen's Organisations	Barrie Deas
Scottish Fishermen's Federation	Bertie Armstrong
Rederscentrale	Luc Corbisier
Flemish Fishery Committee/Foundation for Sustainable Fishing (SDVO)	Ivan Victor/Luc Mellaerts
Nederlandse Visserbond	Anton Dekker
Federatie van Visserijverenigingen	Geert Munn
European Ports and Auctions	Jesus A Lourido
E.U. Federation of National Organisations of Importers and Exporters of Fish (AIPCE)	Cliff Morrisson
Mna na Mara	Margaret Downey Harrington
ETF	Jacques Bigot

Other Interest Groups/ Autres groupes d'intérêt/ Otros grupos de interés	
Royal Society for the Protection of Birds, representing Birdlife International	Kara Brydson
Marine Conservation Society Representing Seas at Risk	Bernadette Clarke/Bryce Beukers-Stewart
European Bureau for Conservation and Development	Despina Symons
European Anglers Association	John Crudden
WWF	Claire Pescod/Helen Mc Laughlin
Irish Seal Sanctuary	Brendan Price
AquaTT	John Coleman
Irish Whale and Dolphin Group	David Wall