

### **NOTE ON CLARIFICATION ON SCIENTIFIC INPUT AT RAC MEETINGS**

At the recent Working group meetings in Madrid it was noted that at some of them there was a lack of scientific presence. As a result the secretariat was asked to clarify this absence and to ensure that it did not happen again.

To clarify the current situation on expert participation at meetings it is important to note that experts or scientists can be invited to a RAC meeting where there is a perceived need for input. Payment for attendance of an expert can be done in a number of ways:

- ICES experts can be paid by the EU Commission in accordance with the MoU between ICES and the EU Commission. However there is a limit on the number of meetings and participants that the EU Commission will pay for. In addition the Commission and ICES need to be informed in advance.
- The NWWRAC can pay for the expert out of the expert budget fund. Again this is limited to 1 expert per RAC meeting
- A Member State may opt to pay for an expert to attend the meeting as a benefit in kind, however this is becoming less frequent in practice.

With regard to the recent working groups the following actions were taken by the secretariat while preparing for the working groups:

The secretariat provided the EU Commission with the information that scientific participation would be required for both set of working groups (Jan/Feb and July) to be held in 2009, in September of last year. We received confirmation from the Commission on the 13/10/2008 that a request was being made for scientific input at both meetings pending on the topics that would be covered. The secretariat would need to follow up with EU Commission/ICES to clarify what scientist would be requested closer to the time of the meetings.

In January draft agendas were prepared by the secretariat and sent to the Chairpersons requesting comments and suggestions of expert input. None was received. Where there was an obvious need for an expert, the secretariat invited the relevant expert along (i.e. for Deep-sea stocks, DEEPCLEAN, Marine Natura 2000 sites). However as there was no perceived need for a general ICES expert at the meeting at that time (according to the agenda items) ICES were not approached again with a follow up request to send an expert.

In short there is a procedure in place with ICES and the EU Commission to allow scientific input into the RAC meetings, which is being availed off, but is best used when there is a dedicated topic with a need for a dedicated expert.

If Chairpersons feel there is a need for an expert at future meetings we would ask that they contact the secretariat in advance of the meeting (at least ONE MONTH) with details of the expert to be invited and what they will be expected to cover.