



MEETING REPORT

The North Western Waters Regional Advisory Council

Focus Group on a Management Plan for Northern Hake Stock Hotel Puerta del Camino, Santiago de Compostela 17 June 2009 – 9 a.m. to 4 p.m.

Chairman: Jesús Lourido
Rapporteur: Alexandre Rodríguez

1. Welcome

Inauguration by Mrs Rosa Quintana, Conselleira do Mar of the Xunta de Galicia

The Conselleira do Mar (Regional Minister for Maritime Affairs), Rosa Quintana, welcomed those present and thanked the NWWRAC for choosing Galicia as the venue to hold the meeting. She remarked that the fisheries of El Gran Sol had played a vital role in the historical development of the ports and fishing business in Galicia. She offered the Xunta's ongoing support as a firm ally of the Regional Advisory Councils, which she considered to be the ideal platform for the exchange of ideas and the consensual establishment of agreements on the management of fisheries. She encouraged the NWWRAC members to continue working to provide the national government bodies with essential information through their opinions and advice, as they are taken into consideration in the debates that decide regulations on aspects of fisheries management in Brussels.

The full version of the Conselleira's speech is attached as Appendix I.

A round of presentations then followed to identify those present (Appendix II)

2. Preliminary information and background

The Chairman of the Focus Group, Jesús Lourido, gave a thorough introduction covering the following aspects:

- Purpose of this meeting:

The background and reason for calling this meeting were explained. The Chairman justified the mismatch in timing of this meeting by explaining that he originally thought that the final decision on this management plan would be made at the Council of Ministers in June, prior to the hosting of the CCR-ANOC Working Groups (8-10 July).

He also pointed out the Secretary's intention for the conclusions reached in this forum to be jointly adopted with the South-Western Waters RAC (SWWRAC), whose representatives had also been invited to this meeting.

- Absence of presentation on the biological status of stock:

It was explained that, although a formal invitation was submitted to the ICES Working Group in charge of evaluating hake, monkfish and megrim stocks (WGHMM) and to representatives of national research institutes, the latter had to decline the offer to give a presentation on the biological status of stocks in 2009 because the ICES report was being reviewed by the expert committees and Advisory Committee and was thus still pending formal validation.

As a result, the best available scientific information would be used, which is based on ICES opinions for 2008 and STECF reports from June and December 2007. Furthermore, the scientists attending as observers¹ opened expressed their support and confirmed their readiness to answer any questions raised during the meeting and to contribute to improving knowledge of this resource.

It was agreed to revise the conclusions and proposals of the NWWRAC and SWWRAC to be presented to the Commission by e-mail in the light of the official ICES report (scheduled to be presented on 26 June) on the status of this stock in 2009.

- Summary of actions concerning Northern hake stocks in 2008

The Chairman's presentation is available at the website of the NWWRAC².

3. Adoption of minutes of the previous meeting and agenda of the current one

- Adoption of minutes of the last meeting (Madrid, 22 May 2008). A detailed explanation was given of the main conclusions reached at the previous meeting, held in Madrid on 22 May 2008. The minutes were adopted without comment.

- Adoption of the Meeting Agenda. The Agenda was adopted with the abovementioned changes.

4. Discussion on the biological status of Northern hake stock

The Chairman summarized the conclusions of ICES advice for 2008³, which succinctly illustrates the status of stock in relation to spawning stock biomass and fishing mortality parameters. It was noted that stocks are healthy and fishing is considered sustainable. Furthermore, some of the conclusions of STECF reports regarding transitional steps from a recovery plan to a long term management plan to achieve exploitation levels in terms of MSY are reminded here.

¹ Marina Santurtún (AZTI), Carmela Porteiro (IEO) and Javier Pereiro (IEO)

² Direct link: http://www.nwwrac.org/Meetings/Meetings_ENG/Navigation.php?id=366&language=English

³ ICES Advice 2008, Volume 9 – 9.4.1. “Hake – Northern Stock”

Direct link to the report: <http://www.ices.dk/committe/acom/comwork/report/2008/2008/hke-nrtn.pdf>

Hugo González asked the scientists a question about current biomass levels and, more specifically, about whether the target biomass level of 140,000 tonnes set down in Article 3 Regulation (EC) 811/2004 had been reached, as the scientific reports of 2007 and 2008 appeared to suggest. He added that, in the light of the provisions contained in the Commission's Draft Regulation on a Management Plan, this difference would have a very significant impact on the sector's financial activities and trading account.

Mr González also asked whether, based on the evolution of the stock since the 1990s and in line with recent biological studies, the MSY target could be reached by 2015 with a 5% annual reduction in fishing mortality. Lastly, he asked for a clear explanation of the meaning of maximum sustainable yield (MSY) in terms of levels of spawning stock biomass or stock volume.

Marina Santurtún (AZTI) stated that although specific data could not be given until the ICES Advisory Committee had reviewed and adopted the report submitted by the WGHMM Working Group, a clear and continuous trend towards an increase in B since 2003 and a reduction in F since 2005 could be confirmed, both of which are very close to cautionary levels (Bpa and Fpa). Mrs Santurtún added that the scientists are working with uncertainties and that revisions are made of stock status from previous years, but that the trend is clear.

The representative of the Commission stated that it would be useful if the scientific observers could clarify the elements of the methodology or modelling techniques used by ICES scientists to assess the stock that lead to revisions being made in the estimates of the biomass of the stock retroactively. The Commission argued that in the particular case of Northern hake, biomass estimates determine if the management of the stock must continue under a recovery regime or should instead move on to a long-term plan with a MSY Objective. The representative of the Commission requested an example to explain the mechanism of data insertion and interpretation in the model, as this would be very useful to understand the process and thus ensure that the right management decisions were made.

The scientific observers clarified that they used a scientific method contrasted with the best available information using a process of strict revision and quality. It added that the information available improved every year because there are more research campaigns and because the retrospective estimates in historical analyses are corrected. However, this does not mean that there is a revision of the data (with the exception of minor adjustments in landings) as uncertainties are already taken into account. It was clarified that the models applied to evaluate the population use historical series of invariable data but that the available mathematical model was better at predicting scenarios from previous years than current parameter-based ones.

The meeting was also reminded that all ICES Working Groups analysing information with prediction models (with the exception of groups of experts) are open to observers.

The representatives of the Commission are present at these meetings and familiar with the models applied. Therefore, the process used is transparent, open and certain.

Lastly, the scientific observers present at the meeting stated their support to a long-term scenario in which management decisions could be taken at multi-year intervals to facilitate the industry's adaptation to the measures and to prevent major annual fluctuations in TACs.

Jesús Etchevers requested an explanation regarding the apparent contradiction between the results released in scientific opinions and the perception by part of the sector of a great abundance of this species in the sea. He requested the reasons for this discrepancy, adding that he had put this question to the ICES and the Fisheries Council of the European Parliament on a number of occasions in 1990 and 2000. Numerous representatives of the sector have noticed both a significant increase in the quality and average size of hake caught in recent years.

The scientists present reminded the meeting that they base their opinions on data from fishing logs, sales forms and scientific campaigns. They admitted that there is a gap in relation to the sector's perception of levels of abundance but argued that these levels must be quantified. Other factors (such as the effects of climate change) are also having an effect on the integral management of living marine resources. Finally, it was pointed out that the adoption of management decisions was the responsibility of the Commission.

5. Presentation of the Proposal of Regulation [COM(2009)122 Final] - European Commission

Mrs María Fuensanta Candela Castillo, Head of the Unit responsible for Fisheries conservation and control in the Atlantic in the Directorate General for Fisheries and Maritime Affairs, stated that the RAC has had already various meetings concerning the Long-term plan. Accordingly, it did not seem necessary to present again the details of the proposal. She therefore focused her presentation on the key issues identified by the Secretariat of the NWWRAC:

a) Grounds and objectives of the proposal

With regards the legal and historical background, the Commission began working on a proposal for the transition to a long-term management when the conditions legally established by the recovery plan to switch to LTMP were met. In this respect, on the basis of the scientific opinion issued by the STCEF in June 2007, the Commission noted that the stock was assessed above Bpa for two consecutive years and therefore proceeded to elaborate a long term proposal in accordance with Article 3 of Regulation 811/2004. The reasons for the delay in the adoption of this plan were that by the time the Commission's impact assessment procedure had been completed, new advice was made available according to which the stock had been above Bpa only for one year. Given also the Commission's awareness on the potential impacts on the sector of a transition to MSY-based management targets, with more stringent conditions, the Commission considered best to revise its original proposal and include transitional provisions, which led to the procedure being delayed.

On that basis, the Commission made its proposal while noting that the Council might have questions on whether the legal conditions to a switch were met. In the Commission's view, the conditions related to the fact that the advice received at the time stated that the stock was above Bpa for two years. This was enough in formal terms for the Commission to proceed, even if the advice would revise this assessment subsequently. The Commission considered that in any event, a change towards long-term management was desirable if a suitable transitional regime could be agreed with the sector, and ultimately with Member States.

b) Socio-economic impact of the measures contained in the Draft Regulation

Mrs. Candela stated that the Commission has sought to analyse all relevant socio-economic factors in its impact assessment; however, such an analysis is not straightforward and drew the meeting's attention to the report of the April Plenary of STECF, where the difficulties in making this socio-economic assessment are discussed. She pointed out that management plans only cover biological and resource management objectives and do not take into account financial objectives, many of which remain the competence of national administrations, such as vessel quota allocation regimes and decisions on fleet adjustments. These are extremely important factors in the economic and social viability of a fishery over which the Commission has no power and cannot therefore form part of the long term plans it proposes. To the extent possible, the Commission tries to take these factors into account, but ultimately, decisions by national administrations may be of more weight on the economy of the fleet than the fishing opportunities determined by the plan.

The need was pointed out to set up mechanisms for closer collaboration and coordination between the different advisory bodies, given that there is currently a clear specialisation or division of work between ICES and STECF, a sort of “dual” scientific and socio-economic layer. The meeting was reminded that the last available report on this topic was the report of the STECF plenary session held in April 2009⁴.

The Commission representative is aware of the capital importance of the collaboration of all actors who will be affected by the management plan in order to avoid traumatic financial consequences. Hence, sector representatives and national government bodies of the Member States involved will play a decisive role. It is necessary for the fleet to be able to adapt its activity in terms of fishing capacity to the objectives set down in the LTMP; in addition, the national authorities must efficiently assign the quota they are awarded as a percentage of Community TAC to each segment of their fleet. It would therefore seem logical to state that not only the Commission but also the Member States and the industry representatives and general stakeholders will be responsible for the success of the management plans adopted.

⁴ Access to the STCEF Report of Spring Plenary Meeting (PLEN 07 01) can be found at the following link: http://fishnet.jrc.it/c/document_library/get_file?uuid=66d2d096-4698-42e7-920b-b3d9f9026778&groupId=1416

Mrs Candela added that other factors affecting this process included technical conservation measures, the discards policy and plans for adapting fleets and reducing their capacity, among others. She was aware that certain of the provisions on control in the long-term plan proposal had been firmly rejected by RAC members. However, she recalled that the Commission intends to replace this chapter with the one in the proposed General Control Regulation which, if passed, would repeal the control measures contained in the Hake Regulation.

c) Planned legislative procedure and timetable of action:

At the Council of Ministers for Fisheries in June, the Czech president is expected to obtain a compromise on this point, which will be presented to the newly constituted European Parliament after the summer break.

Once Parliament's opinion has been obtained, the Commission has requested that adoption of the text take place at the Council of Ministers in November. The text is expected to come into force on 1 January 2010. In addition, the Commission plans to base its TAC proposal for 2010 on the Draft Regulation for the sake of coherence.

6. Questions and answers

During the turn to speak of the Focus Group members, most of them expressed strong opposition to the idea that this Draft would go ahead on its current wording (see point 7: review of articles 1-2 of the proposal of Regulation). They did not question the objectives or the observance of the legal procedure of consultation by the Commission; however, they considered this proposal unjustified because it is based on a mistaken hypothesis on the perception of stock status and its exploitation patterns.

Representatives from the fishing sector stated that a sharp and immediate reduction in TACs coming from the current proposal would not achieve the objective of reducing fishing mortality; on the contrary, it would reduce the volume of landings, increase the level of discards and will have serious economic effects. Some members suggest that stock recovery should not follow the logic of linking TACs with fishing mortality, especially when the Commission's Green Paper on the reform of the CFP has called for a thorough review of the TAC and Quotas system. They added that the formula for reducing TACs could be discriminatory because it affects the national fleets and métiers of the different Member States with interests in these fisheries in different ways, given the set-up of the Community system of quota distribution and allocation.

The members of the Focus Group asked why the results of applying the proposed management plan would be harsher than the recovery plan itself and why the Commission's proposal does not take into account socio-economic or market policy aspects, both fundamental to fleets and that have been specifically analyzed by STECF. Jean Pierre Plormel asked for tighter control over catches in order to guarantee the cost-efficiency of boats that observe their quotas.

In response, the Commission representative considers this proposal to be pertinent because it meets the political objective ratified by Council and the High Representatives of Europe at the Johannesburg summit of 2002, which set a target of rebuilding fish stocks to MSY levels by 2015. The MSY level of fishing mortality (F_{max}) has been set at 0.17, based on the scientific advice by ICES and STECF. The Commission has no views of its own on this parameter; it relies on what the specialists advice in this regard.

Mrs Candela also clarified that in her view, objection by the industry to the plan on a socio-economic basis seems to leave aside the very important issue of markets. Clearly, the industry cannot benefit from increased catches if the prices slump down. She drew attention to the fact that expecting the EU to block imports would not be a solution. She therefore invited the fishing industry to contribute its knowledge and efforts to work towards profitability and product differentiation in the interests of regionalising markets, with effective measures to avoid falling prices.

Lastly, she responded that F levels were determined by a variety of factors (gear type, minimum size...); of which TACs form an integral part. She stated reservations as to the idea that a set of technical measures would ensure by itself the containment of fishing mortality necessary to ensure the growth of the stock to MSY.

With regards the reflection to the revision of the TAC and quota system in the context of the CFP reform, the key notion advanced in the Green Paper is a discussion on whether relative stability must continue being the cornerstone of the system. In no way does the Green paper question the usefulness of the catch controls as a management tool.

Borja Velasco added that the Spanish government's position on the management plan was the result of a consensus and joint work with the Spanish fishing industry, and that this position had been made known to the Commission and the Council through the Working Groups of the Council of Ministers. In all events, he reiterated his support for the consensual proposals with the Spanish fishing industry referred to in the debate that will be reflected in detail in the review that this NWWAC will do to the proposal of Regulation put forward by the Commission.

7. Detailed analysis of the articles of the Draft Regulation COM (2009) 122 Final

Articles 1 and 2. Object and Scope of application

The object and areas included in the scope of application of the management plan were accepted. A SWWRAC representative pointed out that the French fleet fishing Dublin bay prawn in the Gulf of Biscay was worried about how it would be affected by this plan, considering that it should acknowledge the fleet's efforts to introduce initiatives for selective improvement allowing the escape of juvenile hake.

Article 3. Definitions, 4. Plan Objective and 5. Procedure for setting TACs

The contents of these three articles were accepted without objection.

Article 6. Total planned catches

Gerard O'Flynn invited the Commission and the scientists present to calculate or derive the TACs from F rather than from estimates and fluctuations of spawning stock biomass. Hugo González and José Manuel Fernández Beltrán did not discuss F percentages, but they did ask the question whether it was really necessary to reach an F_{max} of 0.17 by 2015, or whether it would be sufficient to establish a higher coefficient (0.20-0.23) for reaching MSY levels. Luc Corbisier considered it essential to know where the figure of 0.17 came from and whether this percentage was up-to-date and relevant, since operating with $F=0.25$ already produces levels close to B_{pa} .

Marina Santurtún explained that the selected F_{max} of 0.17 is not dependent on levels of recruitment. It is a percentage approved by the STCEF in June 2007 that is linked to B_{pa} provided that the stock is over 140,000 t. She also expressed doubts about the MSY objectives (that is, if it seeks to obtain F_{max} alone or B_{max} as well), since the B_{max} objectives are not indicated and the management plan is based exclusively on F_{max} . Lastly, she added that the TACs recommended by scientists are calculated in relation to F and recruitment estimates.

Article 7 Calculation of TACs

Lorcan O'Cinnéide asked for clarification of the meaning of the phrase "other *relevant sources of fishing mortality*" used in section 1, and how these sources affect the calculation of TACs.

The Chairman claimed that this was new, since TACs for this stock were not previously calculated by deducting discards and other sources of mortality (as yet unknown), and that it would be dangerous to maintain this ambiguity in the legal text as the Commission or any institution or body in charge could use discretionary powers not duly counterbalanced or evaluated for setting TACs.

The Commission representative related this section to the Cod Plan as the precedent. She also clarified that the decision on the inclusion of "other relevant sources of F " corresponds to the STCEF, which will be responsible for identifying and quantifying them (for example, the incidence of predation of marine mammals). On the subject of the inclusion of discards in the calculation of TACs, underlined that the logic of the plan is to manage fishing mortality, and therefore, all catches (both landed and discarded) must be accounted for.

Víctor Badiola affirmed that the industry understands and supports the MSY concept, but feels that the reduction in F proposed since year 1 of application of this Regulation is circumscribed to too short a period. In its June 2007 report, the STCEF states that F_{msy} would be reached by 2015 with an annual F reduction of 5%. It does not therefore seem suitable to propose the reduction of the impact in fishing possibilities that would lead to a reduction of F at F_{msy} levels with a limit of variation in quotas of 10% within the three first years. The SWWRAC has also weighed up this issue and agreed to propose a more gradual transition accompanied by the development of technical measures to improve catch selectivity.

Lastly, the Commission was asked whether it would accept this proposal if a consensus was reached between the NWWRAC, the SWWRAC and the Member State governments.

The Commission representative agreed that she would take it into account and report to the Fisheries Commissioner on the matter but thought necessary to clarify that the EU's commitment is to ensure that stocks reach the size allowing MSY in 2015, this is different to reaching Fmsy in 2015. She reminded the meeting that in any case the Member States would have the last word in the adoption of the final decision.

Hugo González commented on the reduction of the fishing effort in real terms (over 30%), which would translate into a reduction in F from 0.25 to 0.17 over a period yet to be defined. He added that the Member States have already introduced fleet reduction plans following Regulation 744/2008 and application of a fleet capacity adjustment plan for the temporary or permanent cessation of ships. In Spain, this figure would be around 15% (with a minimum of 29 ships over a total of 197 registered ones). Jesús Lourido considered that the Draft Regulation should take into account issues affecting the fishing effort in matters concerning the gradual transition to Fmsy, given the funds allocated to the dramatic fleet reduction set forth in Regulation 744/2008 and in the European Fisheries Fund.

Juan Carlos Corrás asked the Commission to schedule an immediate revision – or in a short but specific period of time – of the target Fmsy and the reference levels Bpa and Blim in the articles, given that ICES and STECF set it at different values to the one indicated, as the current drafting does not set any timing or deadlines to the Council for modifying the legal text .

The Commission representative replied that this possibility was already contemplated in Article 9 and that the Commission would be obliged to submit a proposed revision to the Council if the conditions for this were met.

Article 8 Procedure for setting TACs in poor data conditions

Representative members of the French, Irish and Spanish fleets expressed their disagreement with points a) and b) because they propose scenarios of a drastic reduction in TACs that seriously compromise the economic viability of many floats. David Milly asked whether the socio-economic implications of application of this measure for the sector had really been evaluated.

It is also difficult to understand the reason for poor quality data on this stock. Lorcan O’Cinnéide suggested that STECF pinpoint the weaknesses in the process of data collection and analysis sufficiently in advance so that they could be rectified and their impact minimised in years to come.

Mrs. Candela responded that when no opinion or reliable assessment of stock is available, it is normal for plans to include rules about how to set TACs, following the precautionary principle, to avoid a legal loophole.

She also invited those in attendance to consult the table of declared and total catches (calculation of real landings) available in the annual scientific reports of ICES.

Jesús Lourido pointed out that the members were unanimously against the stipulation of these reduction levels. He said that professionals are not responsible for the lack of data and that if reliability was an issue, then a number of measures should be set in motion: reinforcement of control procedures, guarantee to access to ICES data and develop tools to avoid the repetition of these situations, etc.

Article 9 Adaptation of measures

The members expressed their doubts over the scope of temporary application of this article because it does not mention when it will take place. The Commission was asked to clarify this aspect and specify it in the future Regulation.

Article 10 Relationship with Regulation (EEC) No 2847/93 and Article 11 Logbook checks

No comments were made on these articles.

Article 12 Weighing of hake first landed and Article 13 Prohibition of transhipping

These provisions duplicate the control measures established in the proposal for a new General Control Regulation. Moreover, the entry into force of the electronic fishing logbook on 1 January 2010 should provide sufficient guarantees to render many provisions unnecessary.

The proposed measures on unloading and transport between Member States condition and seriously affect the practical operation and cost-efficiency of fishing ships (weighing equipment, unloading declarations and unloading at designated ports...)

The transport of the catches would have a negative impact both on the sale and the quality of the product and force each ship to go directly to their ports / points of sale to avoid losses in quality and delays caused by bureaucratic procedures, at the expense of a significant increase of the production costs.

It was requested that the contents of article 12 be revised because there are apparent contradictions between sections 1 and 2 and because it is difficult to comply with them in practice (e.g. weighing of boxes in adverse weather conditions, need for additional or extra crew availability, etc)

Articles 14-18: Prior notification; Designated ports; Margin of tolerance; Stowage; Transport

The members pointed out that some of these provisions are the same as those included in the cod recovery plans.

In the requirements for prior notification of unloading, there was confusion over the distinction established in articles 14 and 15 (1 tonne for “ordinary” ports and 2 tonnes for designated ports).

The members considered that this would give some ports priority over others, distort competition and have a negative impact on business for many. They also considered the figure of 50 kilos established in article 14.1c) very low considering the total volume of landings.

The members unanimously agreed that the 5% margin of tolerance in the management plan (and the General Control Regulation) is impossible in practice. They agreed that landing declarations should accurately declare the total catch, but they considered it pointless to require estimates or predictions on the exact volume of live weight of the species aboard, given their variability. Hence, an increase was requested in this percentage, which should not be less than 12% in any event. The sector offered its collaboration with the performance of observation campaigns with experts and Commission representatives on board to take the matter further.

The stowage requirement independent of hake catches in the fish room was also considered unnecessary as it would create extra work for the crew who would have to classify them by species and sizes during the trip.

In relation to requirements to weighing and transport of hake, it was recommended that transport of hake should be allowed to other Member States without need of weighting at the first landing, in line with the content of second paragraph of article 12, that is: prior verification and seal of the fish, it can be transported directly to avoid any loss in the quality of the product and any additional costs incurred due to related activities (landing, weighing, ice removal, road transport) An apparent contradiction was also detected in Article 18 when the different weighing requirements for transport are mentioned.

The Commission representative reminded the meeting that full application of this Chapter would depend on what was decided on the proposed control reform set down in a chapter on long-term plans, which would be the one applied once it had entered into force. In all events she took note of the proposals that could be extrapolated in this sense.

With regards the margin of tolerance, she informed the participants that the Working Groups of the Council had already included an amendment or suggestion to increase this percentage, which had been set to harmonise with the general control proposal.

Articles 19-21: National control action programmes; Inspection benchmarks; Specific control and inspection programmes

The members agreed to give a vote of confidence to the national governments of the Member States, which are responsible for application of these provisions.

Nonetheless, they asked that the statement in point 2), Annex II of article 20 concerning the strategy to take for specific control targets be modified: “The inspection and monitoring of fishing activities will focus on ships capable of hake fishing”. In this case, they requested removal of the term “*capable*” as it could give rise to discretionary interpretations of the article and create legal insecurity.

Article 22 Evaluation of the plan

Given the question raised by some members about the compulsory nature of the evaluation by the Commission, Mrs Candela stated that this article establishes the obligation to evaluate the success of the plan through consultation with ICES and STECF. Marina Santurtún also clarified that the benchmarks could be set at any time, in line with the evolution of the stock.

Articles 23-25: Assistance under the European Fisheries Fund; Repeal; Entry into force

No comments were made on these articles.

8. Other matters concerning Northern Hake

Gerard O'Flynn wished to point out the need for a debate on technical conservation measures (e.g. performing a study or assessing the utility of closed seasons and / or an increase in mesh size). He also considered it necessary to reflect on whether it is appropriate to derive TACs exclusively from fishing mortality rates and, finally, he reminded the meeting of the position of the Irish and British fleets of maintaining the minimum mesh size for gillnets in Area VII at 120 mm.

Mr. O'Flynn also raised the following questions:

1. Asked to STECF what assessment, if any, has been conducted to establish whether or not there has been any increase in effort or in the number of gill net vessels targeting hake in the waters west of the 200 m line, since the reduction in minimum mesh size.
2. Asked the Commission to clarify its intentions regarding retention of the hake boxes and in particular the minimum trawling mesh sizes as specified in 1162/2001.
3. Asked the Commission as to whether any evaluation had been conducted on the impact of hake boxes.

Due to the lack of time to begin discussions on this topic and the immediate priority of responding to the issues raised by the Proposed Regulation, the Chairman suggested to the participants that the issues raised by Mr O'Flynn were treated as a specific point at the next meeting of the Working Group 2, to be held on 9 July in Paris. STECF's request for advice on the assessment of the results of "boxes" or closure areas in stock recovery will also be debated by the WG2 and, if necessary, the possibility of putting the issue formally to STECF will be taken to the Executive Committee, preferably before the meeting of the European Parliament on 23 July. The members accepted the terms of the Chairman's proposal.

9. Presentation of the GEPETO project on long-term management plans

Due to time constraints, it was agreed to postpone this project until the next meeting of NWWRAC's Working Group 2 on 9 July in Paris.



10. Final Conclusions

The Chairman suggested a written procedure be set up for approval of the minutes and conclusions of the meeting, setting a minimum of 10 days to send in observations and comments.

The Consellería del Mar was thanked for her help with the organisation and for her active participation in this meeting. These thanks were extended to those present, the technical team and the interpreters.

The session was closed at 16:35 h

APPENDIX I. OPENING SPEECH FROM Mrs. ROSA QUINTANA PORTELA, SRA. CONSELLEIRA DO MAR DE LA XUNTA DE GALICIA, FOR THE INAUGURATION OF THE NWWRAC FOCUS GROUP ON NORTHERN HAKE MANAGEMENT (SANTIAGO DE COMPOSTELA, 17/6/2009) [IN SPANISH]

Sr. Presidente
Señores y señoras

Quisiera agradecer a este Grupo de Enfoque del consejo consultivo en su conjunto por haber elegido Galicia, y en concreto Santiago, para celebrar esta reunión, por todo el significado que para nuestro país tiene el mar y la pesca.

Porque hablar de Galicia sin el mar es perder buena parte de su esencia, de su sentimiento y carácter. Nuestra tierra es, como ustedes bien saben, un puerto común donde nuestros profesionales han desarrollado desde hace siglos una tradición viva y dinámica que aspira a recuperar su ilusión y su futuro.

Así, tiene especial fundamento hablar de pesca en este Finisterre español, motivo por el cual entendimos, desde la Consellería del Mar, que el apoyo a este evento de debate estaba más que justificado, máxime cuando se trataba de uno de los Consejos Consultivos Regionales de Pesca en el que nuestro sector tiene depositadas buena parte de la defensa y valoración de sus intereses.

Son sabedores de que Galicia ha construido buena parte de su sociedad pesquera y de su historia pesquera en las aguas noroccidentales europeas. Los legendarios mares de Gran Sol, el mar Céltico, las aguas de Irlanda, etcétera, fueron el punto de apoyo para el desarrollo de puertos como A Coruña, Vigo, Celeiro o Burela, por lo cual sentimos como propio ese vínculo con lo que allí suceda y se decida.

Buena parte de nuestro futuro, del de cientos de familias gallegas, pasa por estas aguas, de ahí que seamos firmes defensores de establecer medidas de conservación que permitan disponer acciones de sostenibilidad que contribuyan a mantener las opciones de pesca en equilibrio con los recursos.

Galicia ha realizado un importante esfuerzo por adaptar su flota, realizando fuertes procesos de adecuación de su esfuerzo pesquero y reduciendo su flota a dimensiones acordes con las disponibilidades de recursos pesqueros en las aguas norteñas de la Unión Europea.

Estamos en ese camino de adaptación, mas sabiendo también de la importancia de mantener un equilibrio en los ámbitos sociales y económicos, defendiendo los intereses de nuestros pescadores en cuanto que son un elemento clave de nuestra actividad productiva y comercial.



Por eso somos firmes aliados de órganos consultivos como el que hoy aquí se reúne, en cuanto que aúna diferentes puntos de vista, pone en común información clave y permite acuerdos que posibilitan el equilibrio citado.

Consejos como este son un punto de apoyo básico para las administraciones encargadas de decidir, motivo por el cual tengo que señalar que en esta Consellería y en mi persona tendrán siempre una firme aliada, en cuanto que entendemos que el diálogo con los ámbitos implicados en la explotación del mar es fundamental para tener toda la información y experiencia para tomar las decisiones correctas.

Por eso quisiera animarlos a debatir, a defender sus opciones y puntos de vista y a llegar a acuerdos que serán seguro de certidumbre y acierto. La defensa de buena parte de la pesca europea y de su futuro está en sus manos, por lo que tienen sobre la mesa un modo de construir Europa.

Decía Goethe que Europa se hizo peregrinando a Compostela, por eso, desde aquí, os pido que el camino que trae a Santiago las raíces de Europa sirva para acercar las mejores soluciones y consejos para el futuro de nuestra pesca y para seguir construyendo Europa desde el mar.

Moitas gracias
Muchas gracias
Merci beaucoup
Thank you

APPENDIX II. LIST OF THOSE PRESENT AT THE MEETING

NORTHERN HAKE MANAGEMENT PLAN FOCUS GROUP (SANTIAGO, 17 JUNE 2009)			
NAME	ORGANISATION	COUNTRY	STATUS
MEMBERS			
Jesús Lourido	PUERTO CELEIRO	SPAIN	Focus Group Chairman
Hugo González	ANASOL	SPAIN	NWWRAC representative
Juan Carlos Corrás	PESCAGALICIA	SPAIN	NWWRAC representative
Gerard O'Flynn	ISWFPO	IRELAND	NWWRAC representative
Luc Corbisier	SDVPO	BELGIUM	NWWRAC representative
Lorcan Kennedy	IFPO	IRELAND	NWWRAC representative
Jesús Etchevers	ARPESCO	SPAIN	NWWRAC representative
José Luis Otero	LONJA CORUÑA	SPAIN	NWWRAC representative
José Manuel Fernández Beltrán	OPP-07-LUGO	SPAIN	NWWRAC representative
David Milly	CAPSUD	FRANCE	NWWRAC representative
Thomas Diaz	FROM BRETAGNE	FRANCE	NWWRAC representative
Víctor Badiola	OPPAO	SPAIN	SWWRAC representative
Jean-Pierre Plormel	FROM BRETAGNE	FRANCE	SWWRAC representative
René Pierre Chever	CL GUILVINEC / PÊCHE ET DÉVELOPPEMENT	FRANCE	SWWRAC representative
María Fuensanta Candela Castillo	EUROPEAN COMMISSION	EU	European Commission
Alexandre Rodríguez	NWWRAC Secretary	EU	NWWRAC Secretary/Speaker

OBSERVERS			
Marina Santurtún	AZTI	SPAIN	Scientific observer
Carmela Porteiro	IEO	SPAIN	Scientific observer
Javier Pereiro	IEO	SPAIN	Scientific observer
Michael Sheppard	Community Fisheries Control Agency	EU	CFCA observer
Juan Carlos Maneiro	XUNTA DE GALICIA	SPAIN	Autonomous Government Representative
Borja Velasco Tuduri	SGPM MARM	SPAIN	Member State Representative
Hélène Syndique	Ministère de l'Agriculture et de la Pêche de France	FRANCE	Member State Representative
Francisco Etchevers	OPP-13	SPAIN	Observer
Antonio Sotelo	ANASOL	SPAIN	Observer
Manuel Otero Eijo	ARPENOR	SPAIN	Observer
Mariluz Alvarez	ARPESCO	SPAIN	Observer