



## **MEETING WITH THE NORTH WESTERN WATERS MEMBER STATES GROUP**

**Paris, Wednesday 19 February 2014, 15:50-16:40 h**

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### **North Western Waters Advisory Council (NWWAC) Delegation:**

Bertie Armstrong	(Chairman of the Executive Committee)
Jacques Pichon	(First Vice-Chair of the Executive Committee)
Marc Ghiglia	(President of the General Assembly)

### **Background**

The NWWAC has been a consistent supporter of regionalisation, facilitating in 2012 the joint RAC contribution to the future of the RACs and making a strong input of its own in late 2012. Noting the emergence of a Member State group for fisheries in the North Sea involving the North Sea Advisory Council, a letter was written in December 2013 to the Fisheries Ministers and Directors of the six relevant NWW Member States (EN-FR-IE-ES-BE-NE), with some ideas on infrastructure and how the NWWAC should contribute to such a grouping for our area.

### **Report**

The NWWAC was subsequently invited to the third meeting of the MS Group, held after a short postponement (originally scheduled for 29 January) on the 19 February in Paris. The AC delegation was: The Honorary President/GA, Marc Ghiglia; The Chairman, Bertie Armstrong; and the First Vice Chairman, Jacques Pichon.

We were given a 50-minute slot, and despite a late start, we had enough time to make our points. France had the Chair, and Cécile Bigot welcomed us and gave an introduction to the group. She noted that two previous meetings of the group had been held, and emphasised that their primary focus was on preparing for the Landing Obligations under the new CFP. The legal status of the AC, not as a co-manager but as an advisor, as laid down in legislation, was recognised and agreed.

The floor was then passed to us and after personal introductions we assured the group of our strong consistent commitment to regionalisation and our desire to participate with the group in a practical way, helping to form plans and making input on technical matters. We pointed out the avoidable difficulties, which would be created by forming plans without consultation with stakeholders, citing the live example of the “omnibus” regulation. This point seemed to be accepted and Jacques reinforced it with a description of the partial success in the Celtic Sea, and how this could be improved upon.

Each Member State representative seemed to be aware of our December letter and we based our address to the group on the 13 suggestions for consideration, the principal being the early establishment of a forum for dialogue, with a coherent infrastructure covering location and regularity of meetings and the appointment of a Chair and a Secretariat.



The Chair responded with the statement that the present arrangements were transitional, but the group intention was to have chairmanship and secretariat rotating round the Member States in turn (the UK will be next). We carefully and respectfully pointed out that, while recognising sensitivities, in our opinion that was not the best way to get practical work completed. On the matter of the establishment of a forum for they were not at this point intending to do as we had requested.

From the introductory statements and the early discussion, the UK representative noted that there were many shared agendas, and discussion moved to the discard ban. The group's focus was on forming plans for the rapidly upcoming pelagic landing obligations and our visit had been immediately preceded by a presentation from Sean O'Donoghue on the Pelagic Advisory Council proposals.

It was pointed out by the Irish and UK representatives that the Pelagic AC was constrained in its regulation to five species, and what were we doing about forming a plan for sprat, anchovy and argentine – particularly channel sprat? The answer at this point is of course nothing, but we are bound to look quickly at whether we have any pelagic fisheries in NWW on pelagic quota stocks not covered by the "Pelagic Five".

Reference was made also to Art 14 of the basic regulation, which enables Member State pilot projects taking into account the opinions of the ACs. We were encouraged to come up with suggestions as quickly as possible.

## **Conclusion**

This meeting was largely exploratory. We were made welcome and the group seems to have the intention to work with us, but it is clear that they have not yet given any real thought as to how that might be arranged or administered. We should consider how develop this. Regarding pelagic fisheries falling outside the remit of the Pelagic AC, we should as suggested above look at their template and see whether it might be quickly applicable to such fisheries, and also whether we have any projects in mind that might be in accordance Art 14.