

MEETING ON HIGH SEAS FISHERIES IN THE CENTRAL ARCTIC OCEAN
Tórshavn, The Faroe Islands
29 November – 1 December 2016

CHAIRMAN'S STATEMENT¹

Introduction

Delegations from Canada, the People's Republic of China, the Kingdom of Denmark in respect of the Faroe Islands and Greenland, the European Union, Iceland, Japan, the Republic of Korea, the Kingdom of Norway, the Russian Federation and the United States of America met in Tórshavn, The Faroe Islands, from 29 November to 1 December 2016 to continue discussions concerning the prevention of unregulated commercial fishing in the high seas area of the central Arctic Ocean and related scientific matters.

The meeting followed previous talks that took place in Washington, D.C. from 1-3 December 2015 and from 19-21 April 2016 and in Iqaluit from 6-8 July 2016.

All delegations reaffirmed their commitment to prevent unregulated commercial high seas fishing in the central Arctic Ocean as well as a commitment to promote the conservation and sustainable use of living marine resources and to safeguard healthy marine ecosystems in the central Arctic Ocean. Most delegations view this as part of a "stepwise" process in advance of possibly establishing one or more additional regional fisheries management organizations or arrangements for this area.

Delegations made good progress in resolving differences of view on a number of the main issues under discussion. Delegations worked on the basis of a Chairman's Text circulated in October 2016 that was in the format of a legally binding agreement. There was a general belief that these discussions have the possibility of concluding successfully in the near future.

Scientific Workshop

The meeting received a report on the outcomes of the Fourth Meeting of Scientific Experts on Fish Stocks in the Central Arctic Ocean, which took place in Tromsø, Norway on 26-28 September 2016. The terms of reference for that Meeting were to (1) complete the synthesis of knowledge; (2) develop a draft Joint Scientific Research and Monitoring Plan to address certain identified questions; and (3) provide a Framework for the Implementation Plan. The basic outcomes of the Meeting are summarized in Chairman's Statement issued at the conclusion of the Meeting, attached.

Delegations in Tórshavn also considered future scientific collaboration on this topic and considered to Terms of Reference for a Fifth Meeting of Scientific Experts.

¹ This Chairman's Statement attempts to capture the basic elements of the meeting but does not necessarily reflect the views of any individual delegation.

Summary of Negotiations

On the basis of the Chairman's text and many proposals made during the meeting, delegations made significant progress in resolving differences of view on many issues under negotiation.

Some of the key points that remain under discussion for the future include:

- the manner in which the agreement addresses exploratory fishing;
- the conditions under which a decision might be made to commence negotiations on an agreement to establish one or more additional regional fisheries management organizations or arrangements for the central Arctic Ocean; and
- decision-making procedures.

The Way Forward

Delegations remain committed to continue negotiations with the aim of reaching agreement in the near future.

The Chairman circulated an updated text immediately following the end of the meeting. Delegations will have the opportunity to circulate to other delegations written proposals for improving that text by 23 January 2017. The Chairman will circulate a new version of the text reflecting such proposals by 6 February 2017.

Iceland indicated a possibility that it might host the next meeting in the first quarter of 2017, to be confirmed through diplomatic channels.

Delegations expressed their sincere gratitude to the Government and people of the Faroe Islands for their excellent work in hosting and organizing the meeting and for their warm hospitality.