

MEETING ON FUTURE ARCTIC FISHERIES
Washington, DC April 29-May 1

CHAIRMAN'S STATEMENT

Officials from Canada, the Kingdom of Denmark, the Kingdom of Norway, the Russian Federation and the United States of America met in Washington, D.C. April 29-May 1 to discuss issues concerning possible future fisheries in the central Arctic Ocean.

The discussions built on a meeting of officials from these States that took place in Oslo in 2010 and on a meeting of scientific experts that took place in Anchorage in 2011.

At the meeting in Washington, officials reviewed the latest scientific information concerning the changes to the Arctic marine environment, including the dramatic changes resulting from the warming climate, that may affect the ranges and distribution of fish stocks and other marine life in the central part of the Arctic Ocean.

There was general recognition of the desirability of improving scientific understanding of the Arctic marine environment, in part to determine whether fish stocks might in the future occur in the high seas area of the central Arctic Ocean that could be harvested in commercial fisheries and the possible impacts of such fisheries on the ecosystem in question.

Based on available scientific information, it was generally understood that commercial fishing in the high seas area of the central Arctic Ocean is unlikely to occur in the near future.

Nevertheless, there was also general recognition of the desirability of addressing the possibility that commercial fishing could, at some point in the future, take place in the high seas area of the central Arctic Ocean.

In particular, the following points emerged from the discussions:

- At least one existing regional fisheries management organization (RFMO) – the North-East Atlantic Fisheries Commission – has a mandate to adopt fisheries conservation and management measures in a portion of this high seas area, should such fisheries ever take place there.
- At present, there is no need to establish any additional RFMO or RFMO(s) for this area.
- In the period from the present until the time when it *may* become necessary to establish an additional RFMO or RFMO(s) for this area, it is desirable to develop interim measures.
- The interim measures should advance the proposition that commercial fishing in the high seas area of the central Arctic Ocean should take place only pursuant to one or more regional or subregional fisheries management organizations or arrangements that are or

may be established to manage such fishing in accordance with modern international standards.

- Any commercial fishing that occurred in this area that was not conducted pursuant to such an organization or arrangement would be considered a form of illegal, unreported and unregulated (IUU) fishing.
- The States participating in the meeting will continue to strive to improve the scientific understanding related to these issues. It is also possible that the interim measures could serve as a framework to promote even stronger cooperation to advance relevant scientific understanding.
- It is appropriate for the States whose exclusive economic zones border this high seas area to take the initiative on this matter.
- Those States also recognize the interests of Arctic residents, particularly the Arctic indigenous peoples, in these matters and will engage with them as appropriate.
- Those States also acknowledge that other States may have an interest in this topic and that they should be included in talks at some point in the future as appropriate.

The Kingdom of Norway offered to host a workshop in October 2013 to make further progress on the scientific elements.

The Kingdom of Denmark offered to host a next meeting of officials to continue policy discussions among the same States on this topic, with the aim of holding that meeting after the science workshop in October and before the end of 2013.