

MEETING ON ARCTIC FISHERIES
Nuuk, Greenland, 24-26 February 2014

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 Nuuk, Greenland from 24-26 February 2014 to continue discussions toward the development of interim measures to prevent unregulated fishing in the central Arctic Ocean and to continue discussion of related scientific matters.

Scientific Matters

At the meeting in Nuuk, officials reviewed the outcomes of the 2nd Scientific Meeting on Arctic Fish Stocks held in Tromsø, Norway 28-31 October 2013 and decided on next steps to continue to advance scientific understanding of living marine resources and their ecosystems in the Arctic Ocean. They agreed:

- to continue to promote scientific research, and to integrate scientific knowledge with traditional and local knowledge, with the aim of improving understanding of the living marine resources of the Arctic Ocean and the ecosystems in which they occur;
- to promote cooperation with relevant scientific bodies, including but not limited to the International Council for the Exploration of the Sea (ICES) and the North Pacific Marine Science Organization (PICES); and
- to hold a 3rd Scientific Meeting no later than the end of 2015 and to finalize in the coming weeks terms of reference for that meeting.

Interim Measures

The meeting reaffirmed that, based on available scientific information, commercial fishing in the high seas area of the central Arctic Ocean is unlikely to occur in the near future. The meeting therefore also reaffirmed that there is no need at present to develop any additional regional fisheries management organization (RFMO) or arrangement for this area.

The meeting agreed on the desirability of developing appropriate interim measures to deter unregulated fishing in the future in the high seas area of the central Arctic Ocean.

Such interim measures will recognize that at least one existing RFMO – the North-East Atlantic Fisheries Commission (NEAFC) – has the competence to adopt fisheries conservation and management measures in a portion of this high seas area, should such fisheries take place there. The interim measures will neither undermine nor conflict with the role and mandate of any existing international mechanism relating to fisheries, including NEAFC.

Based on a proposal from the United States, which was developed further during the meeting, officials of the five States agreed that the necessary interim measures will:

- Apply to the single high seas portion of the central Arctic Ocean that is entirely surrounded by waters under the fisheries jurisdiction of Canada, the Kingdom of Denmark in respect of Greenland, the Kingdom of Norway, the Russian Federation and the United States of America.
- Commit States participating in the interim measures to:
 - authorize their vessels to conduct commercial fishing in this high seas area 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;
 - establish a joint program of scientific research with the aim of improving understanding of the ecosystems of this area;
 - coordinate their monitoring, control and surveillance activities in this area; and
 - ensure that any non-commercial fishing in this area does not undermine the purpose of the interim measures, is based on scientific advice and is monitored, and that data obtained through any such fishing is shared;
 - encourage other States to take measures in respect of vessels entitled to fly their flags that are consistent with the interim measures; and
- not prejudice the rights, jurisdiction and duties of States under relevant provisions of international law as reflected in the 1982 United Nations Convention on the Law of the Sea, or the 1995 UN Fish Stocks Agreement, nor alter the rights and obligations of States that arise from relevant international agreements.

The Way Forward

The meeting agreed that it is appropriate for the States whose exclusive economic zones border the high seas area in question to take the initiative on this matter. They also continued to recognize the interests of Arctic residents, particularly the Arctic indigenous peoples, in these matters and to engage with them as appropriate.

The meeting agreed to develop a Ministerial Declaration for signature or adoption by the five States based on the provisions described above. The meeting expressed the desire to finalize the Ministerial Declaration for signature or adoption in June 2014.

The meeting also reaffirmed that other States may have an interest in this topic and looked forward to a broader process involving additional States beginning before the end of 2014. The purpose would be to develop a set of interim measures, compatible with the Ministerial Declaration, that would include commitments by additional States. The final outcome could be a binding international agreement.