

# **The 13<sup>th</sup> Scientific Working Group Meeting**

**Tokyo, Japan**

**28-29 August 2015**

**Report**

## **1. Welcome and Opening Remarks**

Japan provided opening remarks. A list of attendees appears as Attachment 1.

## **2. Appointment of Chair and Rapporteur**

Mr. Joji Morishita (Japan) was appointed as Chair and Mr. Michael Clark (USA) was appointed to serve as Rapporteur by participants.

## **3. Adoption of Agenda**

The draft agenda (SWG13/WP1) was adopted.

## **4. Discussion on the Bottom Fish Stocks**

Participants conducting bottom fisheries in the Convention Area provided status updates and highlights regarding bottom fisheries based on their submitted Annual Reports (summary table included as Attachment 2). The Chair of the 1<sup>st</sup> Small Scientific Working Group on North Pacific armorhead (Dr. Tomio Miyashita, Japan) reported on the work and outcomes of the Working Group. The Working Group concluded that this species has highly variable recruitment patterns, resulting in highly variable estimates of biomass over the recent 20 years of fishing.

Reflecting above, the SWG agreed that new approaches need to be evaluated for this stock so that harvesting strategies on the anticipated stock biomass and dynamics can be developed. A proposal was made to develop a stock assessment procedure that would use incoming recruit strength data and adopt an adaptive harvesting strategy that would be commensurate to harvest the stock while maintaining spawning potential in the current and near-term harvesting years.

It will require the integration of the fishing vessels into a sampling program to gather the data for the recruitment assessments. Thus, it is proposed that the Small Scientific Committee on North Pacific armorhead meeting attended by scientists, managers, and industry participants should be conducted before the Scientific Committee meeting in order to develop the stock assessment and adaptive harvesting strategies.

## **5. Discussion on the Interim Measures on VMEs and Marine Species**

Dr. Loh-Lee Low (USA), Chair of the 1<sup>st</sup> Small Scientific Working Group on Vulnerable Marine Ecosystems (VMEs) made a report on the meeting. Dr. Loh-Lee Low also provided a summary of the FAO Workshop on Encounter protocols and

impact assessments held on 5-8 May 2015 in Norway. Ms. Jessica Sanders (FAO) provided a summary of the VME Practices and Processes publication to be published in 2015 including the FAO Workshop on VME Processes and Practices held from 3-5 March 2015 in Swakopmund, Namibia.

Dr. Shiroh Yonezaki (Japan) provided a presentation on the Research Vessel Kaiyo Maru research in 2014. Participants commended Japan's research efforts in this area and encouraged Japan to continue this important work in the future.

The SWG recognized the need to convert the VME and Marine Species interim and voluntary measures to formal NPFC measures in light of the coming into force of the Convention. The SWG recommended the following three steps to achieve this to the Commission through the 7<sup>th</sup> Session of the Preparatory Conference.

- approve continuation of all the current Interim Measures as the formal NPFC Interim Measures and also note continuation of all the Voluntary Measures implemented by Japan, Korea and Russia
- direct the Scientific Committee to initiate process for refinement of the formal NPFC Interim Measures and the Voluntary Measures to bring them up to formal Conservation and Management Measures (CMM)
- hold the 1<sup>st</sup> Scientific Committee and the 2<sup>nd</sup> Commission meetings in 2016 to speed up the refinement process and prepare for the UN Bottom Fisheries Review in 2016

The Northeastern Pacific part of the Convention Area is different from the Northwestern area in terms of fisheries, regulations, and scientific knowledge. The SWG recognized the need to take into account the differences in future discussions of the Scientific Committee.

## **6. Discussion on the Pelagic Fish Stocks**

Participants conducting pelagic fisheries in the Convention Area provided updates and highlights on pelagic fisheries from their submitted Annual Reports. Dr. Toshihide Iwasaki (Japan), Chair of the 1<sup>st</sup> Small Scientific Working Group on Pacific saury provided a summary of the meeting. Discussion focused on two significant issues, development of a stock assessment for Pacific saury and increasing fishing effort in the Convention Area.

As to the first issue, the SWG recommends the SC to make efforts to complete the stock assessment by its 2017 meeting and provide advice and recommendations, if appropriate, to the Commission. For this purpose, the Small Scientific Committee for Pacific saury will meet in 2016 (March is suggested) and 2017.

As to the second issue, Japan and Chinese Taipei shared a draft proposal (SWG13/WP8) on

Pacific Saury but no agreement was achieved. This issue could be addressed by the 7<sup>th</sup> Session of the Preparatory Conference.

Japan expressed its concern that the Chinese chub mackerel fishery has been increasing rapidly adjacent to Japan's EEZ according to the Japan's enforcement authority.

In order to improve stock assessment procedures for pelagic fish stocks, the SWG noted the need to integrate all available scientific information and coordinate stock assessment exercises. The SWG recommend to the Scientific Committee the need to improve reporting and information collection regarding all fisheries.

## **7. Discussion on the Progress of the SWG**

Participants discussed progress of the SWG on development of data system and standard based on a presentation by Dr. Seok Gwan Choi (Korea).

Korea will continue to lead this exercise, and compare NPFC objectives with their initial submission to determine what modifications are necessary regarding data needs. It was recognized that the data system issue could also require inputs from the TCWG. A correspondence group was formed, led by Korea, to continue this exercise.

Dr. Taro Ichii (Japan) provided an update (SWG13/WP14) on development of a systematic approach to conducting stock assessments. Dr. Janelle Curtis (Canada) provided an update on modification and development of a five-year research plan that includes the identification of near-time priorities and a draft Terms of Reference for the Scientific Committee (SWG13/WP13). This document could serve as a basis for consideration by the Scientific Committee to adopt their Terms of Reference.

## **8. Other matters**

### **(1) Terms of Reference (TOR) and Work Plan of Scientific Committee (SC)**

As to TOR, refer to Agenda 7 above. The five year research plan drafted by Canada should be combined with the work plan of the Scientific Committee and distributed by the Interim Secretariat. The combined document will be reviewed intersessionally and then adopted in the future.

### **(2) UN Review of bottom fisheries paragraphs 162 of resolution 69/109**

The UN bottom fisheries review is scheduled in the 2<sup>nd</sup> half of 2016. The Secretariat will provide a draft NPFC response to the UN and solicit comments and review from SWG members.

### **(3) UNFSA review**

The SWG discussed NPFC participation at the upcoming UNFSA review meeting in 2016 and recommend sending an observer to the meeting. The SWG recommends the 7<sup>th</sup> Session of the Preparatory Conference to nominate a representative.

#### **(4) Cooperation with other frameworks**

Mr. Chris O'Brien and Ms. Jessica Sanders (FAO) provided an update on the ABNJ Deep Seas Project to which the NPFC is a partner (SWG13/ref11). FAO described the new VME database and the SWG was informed about the development of a range of tools designed to assist future data collection. These included identification guides for vulnerable deep-sea species, a manual on the collection of data on deep-seas species and an electronic reporting application for reporting onboard.

#### **(5) Other matters**

No other matters were discussed.

#### **9. Planning of the Next SC Meeting and Nomination of Chair and Vice-chair**

Participants discussed holding the 1<sup>st</sup> Meeting of the Scientific Committee in 2016 in light of the discussion under agenda 5.

Discussions were made on the possibility of nominating an acting SC Chair. Consensus was not reached.

#### **10. Adoption of the Record of the Meeting**

The record of the meeting was adopted at 6:10 p.m. on August 29, 2015.

#### **11. Closing of the Meeting**