

(SWG/04/ )

**Fifth Inter-governmental Meeting on Establishment of New Mechanism for Management of High Seas Bottom Fisheries in the North Western Pacific Ocean**

**Tokyo, Japan  
14-16 October 2008**

**Report of Fourth Meeting of the Scientific Working Group**

**1 Opening**

Mr. Shingo Ota of Japan opened the fourth meeting of the Scientific Working Group at 10:00 am on Tuesday, 14 October 2008 and welcomed all delegations. Participants from Japan, Korea, Russian Federation, and United States attended the meeting (Attachment 1).

**2 Appointment of Facilitator and Rapporteur**

Dr. Akihiko Yatsu of Japan was selected as facilitator and LCDR Daniel Schaeffer of the United States agreed to serve as rapporteur.

**3 Adoption of Agenda**

The agenda was reviewed and adopted (Attachment 2). In addition, a list of documents was provided for the meeting (Attachment 3).

**4 Review of scientific information from the recent relevant meeting of the FAO**

The Interim Secretariat reported on the second session of the FAO Technical Consultation on International Guidelines for the Management of Deep-sea Fisheries in the High Seas held in Rome from 25-28 August 2008. Documents were provided on the presentation (SWG4/NWPBF5/WP3) as well as the FAO International Guidelines for the Management of Deep-sea Fisheries in the High Seas (SWG4/NWPBF5/Ref2).

**5 Review of outcome of the Third meeting of the Scientific Working Group**

The report of the Third meeting of the Scientific Working Group (SWG4/Ref1) was provided to the Participants.

A) Collection of Information

In accordance with the record of the last meeting, Participants agreed to provide missing data stipulated in paragraph 8A of Interim Measures.

Korea presented (SWG/WP4/K) *The Status of Korean Fishing Activities in the North Western Pacific Ocean* (SWG/WP4/K). Data presented from the Vladivostok meeting was revised. The seamounts where fishing activity occurred in the past were identified.

The Russian Federation presented *The Status of Russian Fishing Activities in the North Western Pacific Ocean* (SWG/WP4/R). The report contained revised data to correct mathematical errors from the previous report for 2001. The report also included information about Russian gillnet fishing in the seamount region.

Participants discussed timeliness for data submission and agreed that for the purposes of establishing the fishing footprint, in accordance with the Interim Measures, it is essential to have data through 2006 from all Participants. To this end, Russia indicated it will provide

data by the next SWG meeting. It is important to have the most recent available information (data collected beyond 2006) to help support assessments of the fisheries and refinement of conservation and management measures. Japan, Korea and Russia agreed to provide future data on NWPO deep-sea bottom fisheries as it becomes available.

Participants discussed the responsibility of nations for the conduct of their distant water fishing vessels. Though the provisions of UNGA 61/105 are not mandatory, they represent a commitment by states to undertake specific actions in respect of deep-sea fisheries on the high seas. The measures require certain safe guards to be in place to prevent Significant Adverse Impact on Vulnerable Marine Ecosystems. One such safe guard is the ability to monitor fishing effort, which includes the collection of catch data. Without these types of measures in place, vessels fishing after 31 December 2008 would be operating in a manner inconsistent with UNGA 61/105. Therefore, Participants are encouraged to have these measures in place for all future fishing efforts on the high seas.

#### B) Assessment of key species and management recommendations

Japan presented two revised papers of stock assessment of splendid alfonsin (SWG4/WP5/J1) and North Pacific armorhead (SWG4/WP5/J2).

The U.S. review of the alfonsin assessments noted several discrepancies between two papers. There is a need for further evaluation of the assessments and models to gain a better understanding of which model appears to be more accurate. Russia will provide new CPUE data. All Participating States will share necessary data and information to arrive at the best possible assessment for these stocks.

Participants understand they need to arrive at a unified view and way forward. Participants acknowledged the uncertainty of the existing data, stock assessments, and related documents. Participants also agreed there is a need for standardization and for more data collection and analysis. Participants will work in the inter-sessional period to collect additional data and information for use in the next SWG working group with the goal of adopting initial stock assessments for alfonsino and North Pacific armorhead at the meeting in December 2008.

#### C) Information necessary to assess associated and dependent species

Russia presented three papers on associated species, broad alfonsino, pencil cardinalfish, and dories. (SWG/WP 16, 17 and 18). Participants were asked to review the reports and provide any relevant comments.

#### D) Draft standards and criteria to identify vulnerable marine ecosystems (VMEs) and to assess impacts of bottom fisheries on VMEs and marine species

The Interim Secretariat presented the paper *The Draft Standards and Criteria to Identify VMEs and Assessment of SAI on VMEs and Marine Species* (SWG4/WP6). Participants discussed the paper and agreed on the final draft (Attachment 4) to be forwarded to the Inter-governmental Meeting for adoption.

#### E) Exchange of data necessary to identify VMEs and assess impacts of bottom fisheries on VME and marine species

##### i.) Seamount Bathymetry

Dr. Takashi Yanagimoto presented the paper, *Seamount Bathymetries* (SWG4/WP7/J). Dr. Humphreys presented additional information on the

bathymetry of the seamounts. Dr. Yanagimoto will compile the best versions of available maps.

Participants discussed the naming protocols and determined it is best to retain the naming regime established in the last meeting to maintain consistency and accuracy of data.

The seamount Suiko was not on the original chart showing fished seamounts but will be added. Seamount A will be retained on the list of historical fishing grounds but not as a part of the defined footprint. Seamount Jimmu will be removed from the defined footprint and Seamount B, or Showa, will be included if it is determined that fishing took place there in the period 2002-2006.

The Interim Secretariat provided a bathymetric map of the NWPO (SWG4/ref4) showing seamounts of FAO Statistical Area 61 provided by FAO. Participants decided to chart fishing status for Emperor Seamounts. This map will include all seamounts with labels depicting the status as fished or unfished.

ii) Location of Net Loss or Hang-Ups

Russia presented the paper, *Russian Data on Locations of Net Loss or Hang-Ups* (SWG4/WP20). The data presented can be used to locate outcroppings and ledges on seamount summits and upper slopes where trawl gear hang-ups have occurred. This would also include the locations that fishermen avoid due to previous gear loss or damage. These data were obtained from both research and commercial fishing vessels. Japan will seek similar data from research vessels from the 1970's.

iii) Bottom Trawling Corridors or Paths

No working papers or documentation was provided on this topic. Participants discussed the type and source of data that may be available. It was acknowledged that fishermen have this type of data but due to the confidential nature of the data makes fishermen reluctant to release these data. Participants agreed to continue to research data from past research cruise reports and other sources and share the findings with other Participants.

iv) Location of Incidental Coral Captures

Russia presented the paper, *Russian Data on Locations of Incidental Coral Captures* (SWG4/WP19). This data is from scientific vessels. Japan interviewed fishing vessel masters most of whom stated they do not normally catch corals. It is also difficult to identify a coral in a catch.

v) Remote Observations of Seamount Deep-water Corals

Japan presented paper *The Distributions of Corallium spp. In the Emperor Seamounts* (SWG4/WP8/J). Results indicated that the biomass of *Corallium* spp. is low. The U.S. noted that these locations may be associated with deep-water refugia habitats.

Further data presented by Dr. Humphreys of the United States *Drop Camera photography results over the SE-NHR Seamounts* (SWG4/WP21), showed low density of *Corallium* spp. in the areas surveyed.

vi) Records of Historic Seamount Coral Drag Fishery

Japan presented the paper *Information on Coral Fisheries in the Emperor Seamounts* (SWG4/WP9). Participants discussed the potential of other nations to be engaged in coral fishing as well as the significance of the historical catches that came from the region.

vii) Working Definition of Corals for the ES-NHR

Participants decided that four orders will be included in the working definition of corals for the ES-NHR. The list should be reviewed and amended as necessary as data become available. The four orders are:

1. Alcyonacea
2. Gorgonacea
3. Antipatharia
4. Scleractinia

Participants agreed that a field identification guide needs to be developed to assist observers and fishermen with correctly identifying a coral as belonging to one of the four orders listed above. It was suggested to assemble a group of coral experts to develop the field guide for identification of corals. To accomplish this task, each Participant will make efforts to compile information on corals.

F) Observer Programme Draft Standards

Participants discussed the *Observer Programme Draft Standards and Type and Format of Scientific Observer Data to be Collected* (SWG4/WP10).

Participants discussed difficulties in obtaining detailed gear design and specifications from fishing vessels due to confidentiality concerns. There needs to be a balance between confidentiality and the need for scientific data.

Two of the three Participants actively fishing in this area will not be able to provide a level of detailed information beyond that listed in annex 1 of SWG4/WP10. It was acknowledged that changes in gear design and target species would be useful in stock assessment adjustments, however historical data of this type will be difficult to obtain. Participants noted in the observer program draft standards there is information on intended target species that may be useful in resolving these issues.

The SWG will forward this information to the Inter-governmental Meeting and recommend the adoption of the annexes and the requirement for an annual report on observers.

**6. Establishment of SWG assessment review procedures for bottom fishing activity**

Participants discussed procedures for the bottom fishing activities in accordance with paragraph 6 of Attachment 3 to the *Record of the Third Inter-governmental Meeting on Management of High Seas Bottom Fisheries in the North Western Pacific Ocean*

(SWP/WP11). The SWG agreed to forward the paper as amended to the Inter-governmental Meeting for adoption.

Korea stressed it will not be able to provide its own identification and assessment of VME due to the limited information. However, Korea will make every effort to assist the SWG work.

## **7. Introduction of exploratory Protocol for New Fishing Areas in Other RFMOs**

The Interim Secretariat presented the actions taken by NAFO and CCAMLR regarding exploratory fisheries protocols (SWG4/WP12). This presentation provided points for discussion to establish similar protocols in the North Western Pacific Ocean. The Interim Secretariat will draft an exploratory protocol based on these discussion to be distributed to Participants before the next SWG meeting.

Participants agreed on a target date for submission of written comments to the Interim Secretariat of 14 November 2008. The Interim Secretariat will draft text of a proposed protocol and circulate along with appropriate documents to the Participants prior to the next SWG meeting in Dec 2008.

## **8. Discussion of Definition of Encounter of VMEs**

Interim Secretariat presented the paper, *Interim Encounter Provision by NAFO* (SWG/WP13).

Participants discussed this topic and determined more time will be needed to review appropriate documents and provide input to the Interim Secretariat utilizing the same time frame agreed to in Agenda item (7). The input for agenda item 8 should address the following five points:

1. Threshold limits: What amount of coral should trigger the encounter clause?
2. Living or dead corals: Should dead corals be included in determining the encounter provisions?
3. What position /what distance: From what point should the vessel be required to move from, i.e. the start, middle, or end of a trawl, as well as what distance from this point?
4. What action to take: Should the encountered area be closed or placed in a different status?
5. Existing versus exploratory fisheries: Should the existing and exploratory fisheries be treated differently regarding the encounter protocol?

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

The clarification of the term coral as discussed in agenda item E(vii) will be incorporated in the Interim Measures text. No other issues of scientific concern were addressed during this agenda item. The clarification of “existing level” within the Interim Measures will be brought forward to the Inter-governmental Meeting.

## **10. Other Matters**

The Interim Secretariat was approached by Canada concerning the paper, *Planning for an Expert Workshop on Applying Criteria for VMEs and EBS As proposed by Canada* (SWG4/WP15). Participants not already approached by Canada on this topic were made

aware and may submit comments on this paper to Canada. A response will not be provided to Canada on behalf of the SWG.

**11. Adoption of meeting record**

Participants adopted the report of the meeting.

**12. Closing of meeting**

The meeting was concluded at 17:54 on Thursday 16 October 2008.