

South East Atlantic Fisheries Organisation  
2009 Annual Meeting Press Release  
10 October 2009

**SEAFO responds to international calls for action**

**Swakopmund, Namibia** - The South East Atlantic Fisheries Organisation held its sixth Annual Meeting from the 6<sup>th</sup> to the 10<sup>th</sup> of October, 2009. The meeting focused on continuing to strengthen its fisheries management regime, protect vulnerable marine ecosystems (VMEs) and the establishment of a Special Requirements fund.

**SEAFO establishes precautionary stock measures for 2010**

Based on recommendations by the SEAFO Scientific Committee, SEAFO approved a precautionary reduction in the catch of Patagonian toothfish from 260 to 200 tons and for orange roughy from 100 to 50 tons. Quotas for Alfonsino and deep sea red crab remain at 200 and 400 tons respectively.

**SEAFO closes Convention Area to gillnet fishing**

Noting that the United Nations General Assembly has called on action to address the issue of ghost fishing or lost fishing gear, SEAFO has closed its Convention Area to all gillnet fishing. Gillnets are important contributors abandoned, lost or otherwise discarded fishing gear. This measure will protect marine life in the international waters of the South East Atlantic against effects of ghost fishing.

**SEAFO agrees to reduce VME thresholds and further work to define its fishing footprint.**

In response to UN calls for protection of Vulnerable Marine Ecosystems (VMEs) against the effects of Bottom Fishing, SEAFO has further reduced threshold levels defining encounters with VMEs, so that precautionary action kicks in at an earlier stage. SEAFO further has tasked its Scientific Committee to develop further measures specifically aimed at fishing activities and habitats typical to SEAFO.

SEAFO is in the process of establishing officially mapped areas in the SEAFO Convention Area where bottom fishing has historically occurred. This "footprint" distinguishes between existing and new fishing areas. In addition, further work has been tasked to gather all available data to allow scientists better to predict where VMEs may occur. This reconfirms SEAFO's commitment to protect vulnerable marine habitats and species.

**SEAFO agrees on performance review of the organisation.**

In response to international calls for Regional Fisheries Management Organisations to undertake performance reviews, SEAFO has agreed upon terms of reference, assessment criteria and composition of a panel to review the functioning of the Organization. The panel will consist of two external experts and two internal experts. The panel will undertake its work intersessionally and report back to SEAFO before the Annual Meeting in 2010.

For external experts, SEAFO will issue invitations to the Food and Agriculture Organisation of the United Nations (FAO) and to the International Council for the Exploration of the Sea (ICES). In addition two SEAFO Contracting Parties will have experts represented. The panel will be chaired by the expert nominated by the FAO. The Executive Secretary of SEAFO will act as facilitator and assist in drafting of the report.

**SEAFO establishes Special Requirements fund**

In response to international calls for aid to developing countries to fulfil their obligations for cooperation under SEAFO and under the Law of the Sea, SEAFO has agreed to establish a Special Requirements fund to assist developing State Party members of the Organisation. The fund will assist developing State Party members to participate in the Organisation and to enhance their ability to conserve and manage the fisheries resources.

**Status of SEAFO participation**

SEAFO was established in March 2004 after the entry into force of the SEAFO Convention in 2003. Angola, the European Community, Namibia, Norway and South Africa are currently members. SEAFO reaffirms its calls on other states, particularly those that have vessels currently fishing in the Convention Area, to join the Organisation as a matter of priority.

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