



## **PRESS RELEASE**

### **SEAFO Takes Major Initiative To Protect Vulnerable Sea Habitats in South East Atlantic Waters**

SEAFO adopted at its 3rd Annual Meeting on 4 October in Windhoek, Namibia, urgent measures to prohibit until 2010 fishing activities in 10 marine areas with prominent seamounts. These areas have in the past been subject to little or no fishing activity.

This action was taken to protect these habitats pending experimental fisheries research activities which may be authorised next year by SEAFO on a limited scale. This action responds to international concerns on the threats to sensitive marine eco-systems throughout the oceans. Regional Fisheries Management Organisations (RFMOs) have been called upon in recent months to take such action and this SEAFO action is a concrete reaction to these pressing demands.

For monitoring fishing activities, all vessels since 2006 that are fishing in the SEAFO Area must have scientific observers on board and report their positions through VMS signals.

In pursuing its vigorous policy to ensure sustainable responsible fisheries in the waters of the South East Atlantic and with SEAFO implementing an eco-system approach, it agreed the following conservation measures;

- To ban transshipments at sea in order to combat illegal, unregulated and unreported fisheries (IUU). It also adopted procedures to identify and blacklist IUU vessels;
- To control and monitor the fisheries through the establishment of a record of vessels, placement of scientific observers, VMS and catch reporting requirements;
- To reduce incidental mortality of seabirds, especially petrels and albatrosses, by fishing gear adjustments and other technical measures during fishing operations;
- To prohibit the “shark finning” practice whereby vessels cut the valuable shark fins off and retain them on board while discarding the carcass of the shark;
- To reduce incidental mortality of sea turtles in fishing operations, notably by promptly releasing turtles entangled in fishing gear;

SEAFO called on other parties, notably Japan and Russia, currently fishing in the SEAFO area, to join the organisation and accept the responsibilities and costs, thereby balancing the benefits they draw from their fisheries in the area.

SEAFO was established in March 2004 after the entry into force of the Convention in April 2003. Angola, European Union, Namibia and Norway are currently Members. It is expected South Africa will join in 2007 once its ratification procedures are completed.

John Spencer (EU) has been Chairperson of SEAFO since 2004.

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