

Report from SPRFMO observer (Faroe Islands) to the 45th Annual Meeting of the Northwest Atlantic Fisheries Organization (NAFO)

Vigo, Spain 18-22 September 2023

The 45th Annual Meeting of the Northwest Atlantic Fisheries Organization (NAFO) took place from 18-22 September in Vigo, Spain. Delegates from the 13 NAFO Contracting Parties attended the meeting with the opportunity of participating in person or/and online. NAFO delegates were welcomed to Vigo at the start of the meeting, 18 September, by the acting Chair of the Commission, Deirdre Warner-Kramer, and General Director of Fisheries Management and Aquaculture, Juan Ignacio Gandarias Serrano.

At the Meeting NAFO continued to advance the Organization's ecosystem and fisheries objectives, focusing on vulnerable marine ecosystems (VMEs) and climate change, while also reinforcing the protection of fishery observers, and labour standards in NAFO fisheries.

In addition, to the traditional total allowable catch (TAC) and quota decisions, significant decisions were made regarding the following:

- NAFO furthered its progress on the ecosystem approach framework to fisheries management by adopting the recommendation that its bottom fishing closures on seamounts and six of its sponge VME closures be submitted to the CBD Secretariat and to the UN Environment Programme World Conservation Monitoring Centre (UNEP WCMC) for inclusion in the World Database on Other Effective Area-based Conservation Measures (OECMs).
- NAFO agreed to maintain all its VME bottom fishing closures until 31 December 2026.
- NAFO agreed to consider the current and future impacts of climate change on NAFO managed stocks, non-target species, and associated ecosystems in the Convention Area, including, inter alia, as appropriate, in its decision making, and through its work in the Ecosystem Roadmap.
- NAFO reviewed and revised the NAFO Observer Program to include key provisions to reinforce the protection and independence of fishery observers.
- NAFO adopted a Non-Binding Resolution on Core Principles on Labour Standards in NAFO Fisheries.

Also, NAFO selected Deirdre Warner-Kramer (USA) as the new NAFO President and Chair of the Commission, for a two-year term, as well as Bernard Briand (France (in respect of St. Pierre et Miquelon)) as the vice-Chair of the Commission. Diana González Troncoso (EU) was selected as the new Chair of the Scientific Council, and Mark Simpson (Canada) as the vice-Chair of the Scientific Council and Chair of STACREC.

The 46th Annual Meeting of NAFO will take place 23-27 September 2024, in Halifax, Canada. This will be the first meeting that NAFO will go entirely paperless with the objective of reducing the Organization's carbon footprint.