12TH ANNUAL MEETING OF THE SPRFMO COMMISSION

Manta, Ecuador, 29 January to 02 February 2024

COMM 12 – Report ANNEX 8c
Decision 17-2024 to protect the Salas y Gomez and Nazca ridges area

(COMM 12 – Prop 20_rev7)

Decision XX-2024 on Nazca and Salas y Gomez ridges area

RECALLING the mandate to apply the precautionary approach and an ecosystem approach to fisheries management according to Article 3 of the Convention to ensure long-term conservation of fishery resources and safeguard the marine ecosystem where they occur;

RECALLING the need, as set out in Article 4 of the Convention, to ensure compatibility of Conservation and Management Measures established for the high seas and those adopted for areas under national jurisdiction, and the duty of Contracting Parties to cooperate to this end;

RECOGNISING that, under Articles 8 and 20 of the Convention, a primary function of the Commission is to adopt conservation and management measures to achieve the objective of the Convention, including, as appropriate, the general or specific locations and the periods in which fishing may or may not take place, and to protect the habitats and marine ecosystems in which fishery resources and non-target and associated or dependent species occur from the impacts of fishing, including measures to prevent significant adverse impacts on vulnerable marine ecosystems;

RECOGNISING the Salas y Gómez and Nazca Ridges ~~are~~ is a global biodiversity hotspots, with one of the highest levels of marine biological endemism in the world, that connects people and marine wildlife from across the Pacific Ocean, and that its more than 110 seamounts host an exceptionally high diversity of unique, fragile and often endemic organisms, including many indicator species for Vulnerable Marine Ecosystems;

[ACKNOWLEDGING the existing scientific evidence demonstrating the ridges' unique ecological value with at least 93 threatened or endangered species and their importance as a complex migratory corridor, refuge, feeding and nursery ground for protected and commercially relevant species, including a nursery zone for Chilean jack mackerel.]

RECALLING decision XII/22 of 17 October 2014, adopted by the Conference of the Parties to the Convention on Biological Diversity, recognised the Salas y Gómez and Nazca Ridges as an ecologically or biologically significant marine area (EBSA), and that decision was communicated and received by SPRFMO and presented at the Third Scientific Committee Meeting held in Port Vila (Vanuatu) in 2015;

ACKNOWLEDGING that marine ecosystems of the Salas y Gómez and Nazca Ridges face multiple threats, including climate change, harmful fishing practices and potential fisheries overexploitation, and ~~deep~~ seabed mining;

NOTING that Decision 13-2023 on Climate Change calls for the Commission to develop a comprehensive approach to understanding and addressing the impacts of climate change on fishery resources in the Convention Area;

RECOGNISING that one of the most effective approaches to address climate change issues in fisheries management and biodiversity conservation is through nature-based solutions, including protecting and restoring marine ecosystems, increase resilience to other threats, and strengthen adaptation, such as the Salas y Gómez and Nazca Ridges;

NOTING that the SPRFMO Scientific Committee (11th Meeting Report) raised concerns over the stock status of lobsters (*Jasus caveorum*~~) in an area with similar characteristics to the Salas y Gómez and Nazca Ridges, such as high biodiversity value and vulnerability~~, and that preliminary assessments at the Kopernik Seamount suggest that fishing mortality is estimated to be high and that the resource biomass has declined substantially (paragraph 223 and 227)~~;~~

CONSIDERING that the Government of Chile has submitted a CMM proposal (COMM12-Prop 20) with the objective, through the application of the precautionary approach and ecosystem approach to fisheries management, to adequately safeguard the fragile, vulnerable and ecologically relevant ecosystems of the Salas y Gómez and Nazca~~;~~ ~~ç.~~

RECALLING that scientific evidence for this CMM proposal, have been presented in the Scientific Committee in 9th meeting in 2021 and 10th meeting in 2022, in documents SC9-Doc31_rev1 and SC10-Doc30, respectively~~;~~

AFFIRMING its commitment to ensuring the long-term conservation and sustainable use of fishery resources in the South Pacific and to safeguarding the marine ecosystems in the SPRFMO Convention Area where they occur:

ADOPTS the following decision:

1. The Commission, taking into account the importance of the Nazca and Sala y Gómez Ridge for the Convention area and its fishing resources, ~~-~~tasks the Scientific Committee (SC) in 2024 and annually thereafter to include ~~Salas y Gomez and Nazca ridges~~this area as an agenda item. Within this agenda item, the SC taking into consideration its priorities and available resources (during the first year) will compile and review all relevant scientific information and data about the area and recommend possible~~a~~ measures to the Commission ~~committee o~~on (its following regular meeting), based on an ecosystem-based approach that aims at preserving its biodiversity and SPRFMO fishing resources, as well a sustainable use of marine resources.~~and the importance of the Nazca and Sala y Gómez Ridge for the Convention area and its fishing resources~~.

2. The ~~recommendation~~ discussion should ~~shall~~ also ~~provide~~ include the findings of any ~~a~~ scientific research and work developed under the SC Work Plan on ~~monitoring plan for the incoming years of~~ the Salas y Gomez and Nazca ridges.