

## **Minutes Pelagic RAC Executive Committee meeting held on 21 February 2007 at Hotel Schiphol A4, Amsterdam**

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The meeting was attended by 25 people (plus 2 interpreters and 2 technicians), (see annex 1)

### **1. Opening of the meeting.**

The chairman opened the meeting at 13.40.

### **2. Approval of the agenda.**

The agenda was approved and it was noted that the RAC response to the timing of scientific advice consultation and the matter of translation at meetings would be discussed under any other business.

### **3. Approval of the minutes of 15 November 2006.**

The minute of the meeting of 15 November 2006 was approved without amendment.

### **4. Rules of Procedure.**

The chairman explained the importance of having rules of procedure in place to ensure that all members were aware of how RAC decisions were arrived at. He noted that the Executive Committee was ultimately responsible for making decisions and it had the power to accept, amend or reject Working Group recommendations. The chairman then took the members through each section of the draft Rules of Procedure circulated with the meeting agenda noting that much of its content came from the Council Regulation and articles of association. The following amendments were agreed:

- 4b: second paragraph and d). To read “**Discuss and, where appropriate**, endorse recommendations put forward by the Working Groups.”
- 5. The word “senior” to be deleted from second paragraph and replaced with ‘**qualified**’.
- 5. Final paragraph to read “For additional research and data the Pelagic RAC **may** draft proposals to be submitted under the EC Framework Programmes.”
- 7. Third paragraph to read “The contribution from the Commission shall be as defined **under the relevant regulation.**”

Following discussion it was decided not to include a rule requiring a minimum number of members to be present at a meeting to make decisions valid. The Secretariat was tasked with presenting draft text to the next Executive Committee meeting covering the use of written procedure by the RAC. Notwithstanding this however, the present rules of procedure were agreed subject to the revisions noted above.

On the enquiry of Javier Garat, the chairman confirmed that the provisions relating to non-payment of contributions applied to the Executive Committee as well as the General Assembly.

## **5. Budget changes.**

The Secretariat presented the RAC mid-term budget and invited questions. Attention was drawn to the fact that a number of member organisations and Member States had not yet paid their contributions. The Secretariat was instructed to send out reminders to members who had not yet paid and it was agreed that Executive Committee members would remind their respective Member States to pay their contributions.

The chairman explained that it had been suggested that the RAC pay per-diem payments for attendees to bring it in line with other RACs. The Pelagic RAC did not however have sufficient funds at present to do this and this matter would be revisited once the new funding instrument had been implemented.

The Secretariat informed the meeting that Gerard van Balsfoort proposed to reduce his hours to 0,05 fte and that the secretarial support of Babette van Kreveld (0,1 fte) would be terminated to allow for the RAC to employ another member of staff. This would not affect the overall budget. The Executive Committee approved this change.

## **6. Report on meeting ICES.**

The chairman explained that over the last year the Pelagic RAC had made several calls on ICES for advice and that ICES had responded helpfully. The RACs had met with ICES in January and in summary the outcomes had been:

- There was much goodwill within ICES towards the RACs. To foster this, ICES would like the RACs to participate more in its processes, particularly its Annual Science Conference (ASC). It had extended an invitation to anyone who wished to attend and ICES will fund the attendance of a young fisherman from each Member State in 2007.
- It had been agreed that the RACs and ICES needed to co-ordinate activities more closely. The North Sea herring debate in 2006 had been an example of the RACs being requested to provide additional advice. Although ICES was willing to continue to provide advice to RACs, the RACs were being asked to prioritise their requests.

The secretariat agreed to post the report of the meeting on the RAC website and to append the report action points to the Executive Committee meeting minute.

Sean O'Donoghue reminded the Committee of the RAC's wish to have a budget approved by the Commission that allowed the RACs to approach ICES direct for advice. The Commission had rejected this request and decided that all requests for advice from ICES had first to be submitted to the Commission.

## **7. Results Working Group I, including:**

The chairman invited Christian Olesen, chair of Working Group I, to report on the meeting held on 7 February 2006. Mr Olesen explained that the WG had compared the RAC recommendations to the external negotiations / December Council outcomes. Overall, the Commission had followed many of the recommendations and the Pelagic RAC was particularly satisfied with the result of the North Sea herring negotiation.

### **a. Letter to ICES on North Sea herring scenarios.**

Mr Olesen introduced the draft letter to ICES requesting various scenarios on North Sea herring which had been prepared following discussion at WG I. This was a follow-up to the request made by the RAC in 2006. Following discussion the letter was approved subject to question (1) being amended to include scenarios for reductions of 20%, 25% and 35%.

### **b. Letter to ICES on mackerel management strategies.**

Mr Olesen reminded members that one of the RAC recommendations on mackerel was for the Coastal States to address management plan issues. This had not yet been done. Industry (Northern Pelagic Working Group) had therefore been considering the issues and learnt that the Commission had asked ICES to look at a multi-annual approach. An alternative approach using a constant TAC had been suggested to NPWG by a scientist and NPWG had written to ICES asking them to expand their work to consider the merits of this option. WG I recommended that the RAC write to the Commission asking them to support this request and a draft letter had been circulated with the meeting agenda. The Executive Committee approved the letter.

### **c. Letter to Commission on Butt of Lewis herring closure.**

Mr Olesen advised that the RAC had become aware at the Working Group I meeting that the VIaN herring management plan would not be in place until 2008 at the earliest. Considering this, it had been the view of the Working Group that the removal of the Butt of Lewis herring closure be separated from the management plan and effected immediately. A letter to the Commission requesting this had been drafted and following discussion was approved by the Executive Committee.

## **8. Results Working Group II, including:**

The chairman invited Working Group II chair, Sean O'Donoghue, to explain the outcomes of the meeting on 7 February 2006. Mr O'Donoghue explained that the Working Group had been very pro-active.

### **a. Workshop western horse mackerel management plan.**

Mr O'Donoghue reported that the western horse mackerel workshop had been looking to find a workable solution to a horse mackerel management plan. The horse mackerel assessment was

presently very unsure and scientists Beatriz Roel and Ciaran Kelly had presented suggestions from which much could be taken towards a management plan. The Working Group had been very encouraged by the workshop.

Mr O'Donoghue added that the Working Group was now at the stage where it felt that a small Focus Group should be established to liaise with the informal group of scientists to elaborate on the work to date. It was agreed that the RAC members of the Focus Group would be: Sean O'Donoghue, Christian Olesen, Gerard van Balsfoort, Andrew Tait, Marc Ghiglia and a Spanish catching sector member. A NGO member would also be invited to participate. It was noted that translation services would not be available for Focus Group meetings. The objective would now be to design and draft a horse mackerel management plan using a different approach from that adopted in the past. It was hoped that the group would bring forward concrete suggestions before summer-2007 with a view to having the management plan in place for 2008. The Executive Committee endorsed this approach.

**b. Letter to Commission on follow-up recommendations blue whiting including the protection of juvenile blue whiting, stock components, and the timing of the Coastal States meeting (also for mackerel).**

Mr O'Donoghue stated that the RAC had been "paralysed" in 2006 by the timing of the issue of scientific advice, and of the blue whiting and mackerel Coastal State meetings. Indeed the Coastal States had decided on the respective TACs before the RAC had met to consider its recommendations. Working Group II had considered this situation and agreed that it was unacceptable. Mr O'Donoghue and the Secretariat had been tasked with preparing a letter addressing this and the other outstanding blue whiting issues, namely the protection of juveniles and issues relating to a management plan. The letter, which had been circulated with the agenda, was discussed and approved by the Executive Committee.

**9. Technical Measures.**

Mr O'Donoghue felt that there had been a good and thorough discussion at Working Group II on the Commission's consultation on technical measures. It was agreed that the draft reply to the Commission, circulated with the agenda, reflected the views of the Working Group subject to the following amendments:

- a) Simplification. Paragraph two would be adjusted to read "**could** lie with the Management Committee."
- c) Harmonisation/regionalisation. This paragraph would be amended to reflect that a comprehensive document should be prepared showing the technical measures appropriate to the pelagic fisheries on both geographical and species levels.
- d) Mesh sizes. The wording of paragraph three would be adjusted to clarify that the RAC was recommending the abandonment of the mesh size point in the non-paper for pelagic species only.
- h) Marine environment. The final sentence would be adjusted to reflect that scientific evidence would be necessary.

It was further agreed that a presentation obtained by Sean O'Donoghue on the subject of discards would be appended to the RAC response.

#### **10. MSY: RAC study proposal.**

Ingvild Harkes introduced her proposal for a study on the socio-economic impacts of the implementation of MSY on pelagic fisheries which had been sent to the Commission in December to be eligible for funding in 2007.

In order to speed up the process of implementing MSY in the pelagic fisheries, independent socio-economic impact evaluations need to be carried out. A pro-active approach would help in being able to assist in the definition of the reference points.

Marc Ghiglia suggested that aside from direct impacts, indirect impacts would also need to be measured. Pim Visser suggested coordinating with the North Sea RAC which is also in the process of carrying out impact analyses.

A first step would be to see what the Commission decides in terms of funding the above proposal. Then an approach would have to be determined to study the impacts of other stocks.

The Secretariat was tasked with investigating alternative methods of funding independent scientific work. It was further resolved that if the proposal was accepted a RAC research group would be formed to develop the necessary terms of reference.

#### **11. IUU.**

The Executive Committee agreed that the Commission consultation on illegal, unreported and unregulated fishing was a horizontal issue and not within the remit of the RAC to deal with. Bruno Hoffstadt from the German Fisheries Ministry stated that the German Presidency would make this a subject for an exchange of views at Fish Council.

#### **12. AOB.**

##### **a. Letter timing scientific advice.**

The Secretariat tabled a draft letter to the Commission as a suggested response to the consultation on the timing of scientific advice. The Executive Committee approved the letter subject to adding the point that the Coastal States should take advantage of any changes to the timing of the issue of annual scientific advice when deciding on their meeting schedule.

##### **b. Need for interpretation at ExeCom meetings.**

The Secretariat raised the issue of the provision of translation services at RAC meetings, stating that the service was made greater use of at Working Group meetings than at the Executive Committee. Following discussion it was agreed that the continued provision of interpretation was

necessary if appropriate levels of communication and transparency were to be maintained. It was however agreed that delegates requiring translation would give 15 days notice to the Secretariat of their intention to attend meetings.

The chairman thanked the interpreters for their work.

### **Date of next meeting**

The chairman reminded members that the next Working Group meetings were due to be held on 16 May. To allow sufficient time for the issue of papers reflecting Working Group recommendations, it was agreed that wherever practically possible there would be a space of 3 weeks between Working Group meetings and meetings of the Executive Committee. The chairman, Working Group chairs and Secretariat would meet to decide the RAC meeting dates for the remainder of 2007.

There being no further business, the chairman closed the meeting.

## Annex 1

### Participants list Executive Committee 21 February 2006 Amsterdam

<i>Nr</i>	<i>Name</i>	<i>Organisation</i>	<i>E-mail</i>
1	Gerard van Balsfoort	Pelagic RAC secretariat	gbalsfoort@pvis.nl
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4	Javier Garat	Federación Española de Organizaciones Pesqueras	javiergarat@feope.com
5	Marc Ghiglia	UAPF (replaces Dhellemmes)	ghiglia.m@wanadoo.fr
6	Ingvild Harkes	Pelagic RAC secretariat	iharkes@pvis.nl
7	Colm Hayes	Irish Permanent Representation to the EU	Colm.Hayes@dfa.ie
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13	Iain MacSween	Chairman	iain.macsween@scottishfishermen.co.uk
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