

MEETING ON HIGH SEAS FISHERIES IN THE CENTRAL ARCTIC OCEAN
Iqaluit, Nunavut, Canada
6-8 July 2016

CHAIRMAN'S STATEMENT¹

Introduction

Delegations from Canada, the People's Republic of China, the Kingdom of Denmark in respect of the Faroe Islands and Greenland, the European Union, Iceland, Japan, the Republic of Korea, the Kingdom of Norway, the Russian Federation and the United States of America met in Iqaluit from 6-8 July 2016 to continue discussions concerning the prevention of unregulated commercial fishing in the high seas area of the central Arctic Ocean.

The meeting followed previous talks that took place 1-3 December 2015 and 19-21 April 2016 in Washington, D.C.

All delegations reaffirmed their commitment to take interim measures to prevent unregulated commercial high seas fishing in the central Arctic Ocean as well as a commitment to promote the conservation and sustainable use of living marine resources and to safeguard a healthy marine ecosystem in the central Arctic Ocean. Most delegations view this as part of a "stepwise" process in advance of possibly establishing one or more additional regional fisheries management organizations or arrangements for this area.

Delegations made good progress in resolving differences of view on a number of the main issues under discussion. There was a general belief that these discussions have the possibility of concluding successfully in the near future.

Consideration of Possible Measures

Delegations recalled the three possible approaches that were identified at previous meetings, which could be combined in a stepwise fashion:

- Adjusting the Declaration Concerning the Prevention of Unregulated High Seas Fishing in the Central Arctic Ocean signed by five of the participating States with input from other participants such that a new, broader non-binding declaration could be adopted;
- Negotiating a legally binding international agreement; and
- Negotiating in the foreseeable future an agreement or agreements to establish one or more additional regional fisheries management organizations or arrangements for the area.

¹ This Chairman's Statement attempts to capture the basic elements of the meeting but does not necessarily reflect the views of any individual delegation.

The July 2016 meeting continued discussion of these options. Opinions differed whether to develop a new non-binding declaration or a binding international agreement. All options remain under consideration.

The meeting considered a Chairman's Text, circulated in advance of the meeting, which reflected proposals from many delegations. On the basis of the Chairman's Text and many proposals made during the meeting, delegations made progress in refining the basic elements that could be included in either a new non-binding declaration or a binding international agreement.

In particular, delegations discussed a joint program of scientific research and monitoring and the importance of indigenous and local knowledge, and noted the need for further discussion of the scope of the program. Delegations looked forward to input from the scientific workshop to be held in Tromsø, Norway on 26-28 September 2016.

In addition to the question of the format of the instrument under consideration, some of the key points that remain under discussion for the future include:

- the manner in which the instrument addresses exploratory fishing;
- the conditions under which a decision might be made to commence negotiations on an agreement to establish one or more additional regional fisheries management organizations or arrangements for the central Arctic Ocean; and
- decision-making procedures.

The Way Forward

The Chairman indicated an intention to circulate an updated text by 15 July 2016. Delegations will have the opportunity to submit written proposals for improving that text by 15 September 2016. The Chairman will circulate a new version of the text reflecting such proposals by 30 September 2016.

The Kingdom of Denmark indicated a possibility that it might host the next meeting in the autumn of 2016, to be confirmed through diplomatic channels.

Delegations expressed their sincere gratitude to the Government of Canada and to the Government and people of Nunavut for their excellent work in hosting and organizing the meeting and for their warm hospitality.