

MEETING ON HIGH SEAS FISHERIES IN THE CENTRAL ARCTIC OCEAN
Reykjavik, Iceland
15 – 18 March 2017

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 Reykjavik, Iceland, from 15 – 18 March 2017, to continue discussions concerning the prevention of unregulated fishing in the high seas area of the central Arctic Ocean and related scientific matters.

The meeting followed previous talks that took place in Washington, D.C. from 1-3 December 2015 and from 19-21 April 2016, in Iqaluit, Canada from 6-8 July 2016, and in Tórshavn, The Faroe Islands, from 29 November to 1 December 2016.

All delegations reaffirmed their commitment to prevent unregulated 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 healthy marine ecosystems in the central Arctic Ocean. Most delegations view this as part of a “stepwise” process in advance of establishing in the future one or more additional regional or subregional fisheries management organizations or arrangements for this area.

Delegations worked on the basis of a Chairman’s Text circulated in March 2017 that was in the format of a legally binding agreement. Delegations made considerable progress in resolving differences of view on many issues under discussion, such that only a small number of key provisions remained to be agreed. There was a general commitment to conclude the negotiations in the near future.

Summary of Negotiations

On the basis of the Chairman’s text and many proposals made during the meeting, delegations made considerable progress in resolving differences of view on many issues under negotiation.

Recognizing that “nothing is agreed until everything is agreed,” delegations resolved language in the draft Agreement concerning the use of terms, its objective, many of the measures that would apply under the draft agreement, all provisions relating to a Joint Program of Scientific Research and Monitoring, the value of incorporating indigenous peoples’ knowledge, all provisions relating to exploratory fishing, dispute settlement and most provisions concerning signature, accession, entry into force, withdrawal, and relation to other agreements. To the extent that some issues remain to be resolved among these provisions, there was a belief that this would be

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.

accomplished easily in the near future. Delegations welcomed with appreciation Canada's offer to serve as the Depository.

Delegations also made progress on other elements of the draft Agreement that nevertheless remain under discussion for the near future. These include:

- a description or definition of the Agreement Area;
- the conditions under which a decision might be made to commence negotiations on an agreement to establish one or more additional regional or subregional fisheries management organizations or arrangements for the high seas portion of the central Arctic Ocean;
- the possibility to adopt other conservation and management measures that could apply after such negotiations have commenced; and
- decision-making procedures.

The Way Forward

The Chairman circulated an updated text immediately following the end of the meeting. The Chairman also offered to circulate no later than 24 March 2017 his recommendations for resolving the remaining issues under negotiation.

If all delegations can accept those recommendations within two months, there will be no need for another round of negotiations, although a meeting of experts may be convened to conduct a legal and technical review of the draft Agreement.

If one or more delegations cannot accept those recommendations, it is anticipated that another round of negotiations will occur in the near future with a view to finalizing the text.

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