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Subject: NEAFC. Extraordinary PECCOE meeting

An extraordinary PECCOE meeting was held in London on 27 and 28 of January. The background for the meeting was mainly questions related to fishing in the Loophole.

Russia has now sent updated coordinates for the eastern part of the Barents Sea, which means that questions regarding the delimitation of the Loop Hole have now been resolved. Agreements were made regarding procedures for updating any future changes to national borders, which then define NEAFC's Regulatory Area.

As is well known, a conflict arose last year between the EU and Russia regarding an inspection in the Loop Hole when a vessel sailing under the flag of Lithuania was seized in international waters for breaches of rules in Russian waters. PECCOE noted that this is a matter between coastal state and flag state, but it was also pointed out that when inspections are made in NEAFC's Regulatory Area, they must be conducted in accordance with NEAFC regulations, with the exception of Law of the Sea rules regarding uninterrupted pursuit from national waters into the NEAFC Regulatory Area.

The EU had proposed to define prawns and snow crab as resources managed by NEAFC, including the obligations that follow from this regarding reporting etc. Both Russia and Norway said that they are still considering the status of snow crab and that it is very likely that it is to be defined as a sedentary species, and therefore will be under the jurisdiction of the coastal state in accordance with Article 77(4) of the Convention on the Law of the Sea. Russia put forward the same argument regarding prawns (!). PECCOE will therefore not submit proposals to the Commission regarding either prawns or snow crab.

It is quite obvious that fishing has taken place in parts of the Loop Hole that does not comply with NEAFC regulations regarding sensitive marine ecosystems. In so-called new areas (defined by NEAFC as areas outside those where fishing has taken place), there is a requirement that trial fishing, including impact assessments, must have been carried out and evaluated by the Commission before commercial fishing is permitted. This has not been implemented in new areas in the Loop Hole. There was no new information apart from the activity maps (based on VMS data) that were distributed at the annual meeting in November last year. At the PECCOE meeting in April, the NEAFC parties are requested to provide all available information on this fishery for a thorough review.

In order to identify fishing that employs bottom gear (important for the implementation of the regulation regarding sensitive marine ecosystems/bottom fishing), Norway has proposed to include reporting requirements if such fishing gear has been used. After various modifications, the proposal received support from the Faroe Islands and Russia, while Iceland and the EU were not able to support the proposal as it is now. As usual, Iceland argues that this will be solved by establishing ERS, which Norway agrees with, but we believe that there is an immediate need for mapping the use of bottom gear, which can now only be solved by building on the current system. Norway has already submitted

the revised proposal to the NEAFC Secretariat so that it can be discussed again at the PECCOE meeting in April.

PECCOE recommends that Panama and Liberia receive collaborative partner status in NEAFC. Vessels sailing under the flag of these countries will then have the opportunity to tranship in the NEAFC Regulatory Area in 2015. These are countries to which very many vessels are registered, and they will be made aware of the general principle that the number of notified vessels must be in proportion to transshipment possibilities. At the next PECCOE meeting, discussions will take place about whether a specific limit should be set regarding the number of vessels that can be notified by partners.

The next PECCOE meeting will be held in London on 14 and 15 April.

Terje