



Submission by the North East Atlantic Fisheries Commission

regarding

Part I of the report of the Secretary-General of the United Nations on oceans and the law of the sea, pursuant to General Assembly resolution 71/257 (provisionally available as A/RES/71/L.26)

The following is the contribution of the North East Atlantic Fisheries Commission (NEAFC), to the preparation of Part I of the report of the Secretary-General of the United Nations on oceans and the law of the sea, pursuant to General Assembly resolution 71/257 (provisionally available as A/RES/71/L.26). This is as requested in a letter from Miguel de Serpa Soares, Under-Secretary-General for Legal Affairs and United Nations Legal Counsel dated 16 December 2016 (your reference LOS/SGR/2017).

NEAFC is a regional fisheries management organisation dealing with fisheries for fish stocks that occur in the high seas of the North East Atlantic. Its objective is to ensure the long conservation and optimum utilisation of the fishery resources in the Convention Area, providing sustainable economic, environmental and social benefits.

In carrying out its objective, a part of what NEAFC does is to react to any changes in the marine environment and marine ecosystem, caused by climate change or any other factors. However, NEAFC does not undertake any scientific work but rather relies on the International Council for the Exploration of the Sea (ICES) for scientific advice.

This was reiterated by the NEAFC Commission in 2015 when it agreed “that the clear separation between the scientific role of ICES and the policy and management role of NEAFC should be maintained. NEAFC should not take any action that would blur this separation, such as carrying out its own scientific work or doing its own assessment of the scientific advice from ICES.”

Scientific assessments, monitoring or other scientific tasks are therefore not undertaken by NEAFC. This applies to work relating to climate change in the same way as it applies to other scientific work.

NEAFC has not adopted any conservation and management measures that are explicitly aimed at addressing climate change. However, in 2015 the NEAFC Commission agreed to set up “regular meetings with ICES to discuss long term development, such as possible multispecies advice, possible climate effects and other ecosystem considerations. ICES could then develop appropriate research programs to meet longer term issues raised by NEAFC,

and take these issues into account in presenting its advice to NEAFC meetings now take place on a biennial basis.

The NEAFC Contracting Parties have thereby demonstrated that they are concerned about the possible future effects that climate change may have. This further shows that NEAFC will not undertake any scientific work, it is in dialogue with its scientific advisor to ensure that it receives advice that will, to the extent possible, enable NEAFC to address the possible effects of climate change in a timely manner.

The NEAFC Contracting Parties are Denmark (includes the Faroe Islands and Greenland), the European Union, Iceland, Norway and the Russian Federation. They will continue to be involved in various efforts relating explicitly to climate change outside the framework of NEAFC

It is noted that an invitation to contribute to Part II of the report regarding all other developments in the field of ocean affairs and the law of the sea is expected to be sent in due course. NEAFC will have a more substantive contribution regarding that part.