

**Information on actions taken to give effect to General Assembly Resolution 61/105,  
64/72, 66/68 and 71/123**

**Submission by Norway**

**Resolution 61/105 from 2006 calls upon states to take action individually or through regional**

based on scientific advice from ICES (the International Council for the Exploration of the Sea).

In 2012, an extensive review of NEAFC's regulation of bottom fisheries was carried out. Although it was concluded that "the NEAFC bottom fishing regulation is in general consistent with the UNGA resolutions and the FAO Guidelines" improvements were made, which resulted in the new Recommendation on the protection of VMEs, adopted in 2014. The Recommendation includes all the general rules regarding the protection of VMEs, as well as the details of what areas are considered as "existing bottom fishing areas" and what areas are closed to bottom fishing. It also includes annexes on a "VME Data Collection Protocol", the "Assessment of Exploratory Bottom Fishing Activities" and on "VME Indicator Species". Furthermore, the Recommendation underlines a process of annual advice from NEAFC's scientific adviser ICES, including the possibility of advice on revision of the closed areas. In addition, the Recommendation

**NEAFC is also taking part in efforts to increase cooperation and coordination among those with legal competence under international law to manage different types of human activities in areas beyond national jurisdiction, such as the OSPAR Commission**

**The Northwest Atlantic Fisheries Commission (NAFO)**

**NAFO has made efforts to ensure that the measures it has taken to promote sustainable fisheries and protection of ecosystems in the deep sea area are consistent with the FAO**

**Under these measures a total of 11 sub areas known or likely to contain VMEs in the SEAFO Convention Area have been closed to bottom fisheries activities. The measures also include a protocol on the landing and reporting of corals and sponges. Furthermore, landing data for corals and sponges should also be recorded on the individual scientific forms.**

**In 2015, following a Norwegian proposal, SEAFO adopted Conservation Measure 30/15, thus expanding its protection of VMEs from significant adverse impacts. A research survey conducted by the FAO's EAF Nansen Ecosystem Approach to Fisheries Program, in collaboration with the Norwegian Institute of Marine Research (IMR), constituted the scientific basis for the proposal.**

incident to its flag state and more at least 2 nautical miles from the area. The latter obligations apply regardless of fishing area category.

In 2018-2019 Norway undertook a review of the bottom fishing regulation. New knowledge about the Barents Sea, including information on seafloor conditions, fishing activity in the area and catch and research data, showed that the bottom fishing regulation was inadequate in this area, as the biodiversity and the seafloor depths are different from other areas. Hence, amendments were required to ensure protection of the vulnerable marine ecosystems in the Barents Sea.

The amendments to the regulation, now named as Regulation to protect vulnerable marine ecosystems, were adopted in 2019 and include closing ten areas for bottom fishing activities. Furthermore, the coordinates outlining the existing bottom fishing areas and the areas where bottom fishing activities require a special licence from the authorities were redefined. Finally, significant changes to the conduct and technology of bottom activities within existing bottom fishing areas now require a special licence from the authorities.

### Other national legislation relating to protection of VMEs

Pursuant to the Marine Resources Act of 6 June 2008, the Norwegian fisheries authorities have adopted regulations to protect cold water coral reefs. According to these regulations, intentional and negligent destruction of known coral reefs is prohibited, and precaution is required when fishing in the vicinity of known cold water coral reefs. Furthermore, a selection of coral reef areas are granted special protection by a ban on the use of fishing gear which is dragged along the bottom (such as bottom trawl).

So far eighteen reefs have been given this type of special protection pursuant to the Marine Resources Act; the Sula Reef (1989), Iveryggen Reef (2000), the Røst Reef (2008), Tisler and Fjellkruserne Reefs (2008), Tjønnreven, Breisundfjæret and an area north-west of Søyvåginn Fjerrak (2009), Rauerfjorden Reef (2010) and Solbakkren, Fugloyreven, Stamsset, Aktivreiset, Høla, Midsundrevet, Serde Søster, Stamsneset and Nalden Reefs (2016). In some of these areas the use of gillnets, long line and pots is also prohibited. Pursuant to the Nature Diversity Act of 19 June 2009 Saltstraumen, Tauteryggen (which includes the world's shallowest known *Lophelia* reef, Selligurnen) and Framnaena are now marine protected areas with vulnerable/rare bottom habitats. In addition the Marine National Park Hvaler includes the Tisler coral reefs.

Since 1999 there has been in place a general attention duty for vessels fishing close to identified coral reefs in order to protect the reefs against damage.

### MAREANO seafloor mapping program and scientific research

Implementation and adoption of the above mentioned regulations on bottom fishing activities in Norwegian waters requires scientific information and advice on vulnerable marine ecosystems. Mapping of existing and new areas is ongoing.

Norwegian authorities have since 2005 systematically mapped a total of 219950 km<sup>2</sup> of bathymetry data of the Norwegian seafloor through the MAREANO seafloor mapping

**programme** The programme is a national, interdisciplinary research programme whose objective is mapping the Norwegian ocean floor. Until 2019 approximately 1.1 billion Norwegian kroner has been spent in total.

**MAREANO** maps depth and topography, sediment composition, contaminants, biological communities and biotopes/habitats in Norwegian waters, and hence the MAREANO