

ASSESSMENT AND AVOIDANCE OF INCIDENTAL MORTALITY OF ANTARCTIC MARINE LIVING RESOURCES

Marine Debris

6.1 In accordance with established practice, the Commission received information and advice from the Scientific Committee on the topics of marine debris and the impact of marine debris on Antarctic animals.

6.2 Members' activities on monitoring marine debris in the Convention Area in 1999/2000 were summarised in CCAMLR-XIX/BG/28.

6.3 The Commission noted the following points from the Scientific Committee report (SC-CAMLR-XIX, paragraphs 4.60 to 4.72) that:

- (i) Australia submitted data on lost and discarded fishing gear and marine debris collected at sea;
- (ii) surveys of beached marine debris were conducted by Brazil, Chile, UK, Uruguay and the USA. Data had been reported to the CCAMLR debris database by the UK; submission of the other data (and of historical data) was encouraged.
- (iii) the reports by the UK indicated that:
 - (a) at Bird Island (South Georgia) the amount of debris collected was half the total in 1997/98 and the second lowest ever; longline fishing materials made up the majority of items; several packaging bands were reported; the low level of entanglement of fur seals continued; an unprecedented quantity of fishing hooks (54% higher than the previous year) and monofilament fishing lines were observed in association with wandering albatrosses; otherwise, quantities of fishing gear associated with seabird colonies was similar to levels of previous years; one wandering albatross was recorded with a small patch of oil; and
 - (b) at Signy Island (South Orkney Islands) the debris survey recorded a total amount 35% lower than in 1998/99 and the second lowest total ever; plastic waste was predominant, including 10 packaging bands; 46% of items small enough to be ingested by seals and seabirds was polystyrene packaging foam – the Scientific Committee advised Members to use alternative packaging material wherever possible (SC-CAMLR-XIX, paragraph 4.65); only five entangled fur seals including one in a packaging band were reported – the lowest total yet;
- (iv) beach debris surveys reported by Uruguay at King George Island (South Shetland Islands) reported a small amount of debris, mainly fishing line material, but also a packaging band; and
- (v) surveys by Chile at Cape Shirreff (South Shetland Islands) collected some 265 kg of beach debris; one juvenile female fur seal was released from entanglement with plastic debris; five fur seals with signs or marks of entanglement were observed.

6.4 The Commission noted that the abovementioned information indicates that the use of packaging bands still persists in Subareas 48.2 and 48.3 in contravention of Conservation Measure 63/XV. While these may originate from IUU fishing activities, these are believed to be relatively restricted in these subareas; the widespread occurrence of plastic packaging bands therefore remains a point of concern.

6.5 The Commission endorsed the understanding of the Scientific Committee that information on marine debris is currently reported by Members on the following six topics (SC-CAMLR-XIX, paragraph 4.56):

- (i) loss or discards of fishing gear;
- (ii) collection of marine debris by vessels at sea;
- (iii) surveys of marine debris on beaches;
- (iv) entanglement of marine mammals in marine debris;
- (v) marine debris associated with seabird colonies; and
- (vi) animals externally contaminated (i.e. soiled) by hydrocarbons or other substances.

6.6 The Commission noted that only a very small number of observations have been reported by Members on the first topic from the start of monitoring marine debris in 1987; surveys of beach marine debris are now being reported in accordance with the standard method adopted by the Commission in 1993; observations on entanglement of Antarctic animals in marine debris are being reported annually from a number of sites; and observations of soiled animals may be important in monitoring oil pollution.

6.7 The Commission requested Members to consider intersessionally whether the collection and submission of data by vessels on marine debris collected at sea should be continued. If Members decide at CCAMLR-XX to continue such observations, then a standard form developed by the Secretariat for reporting these data should be used.

6.8 The Commission endorsed the decision of the Scientific Committee that the Secretariat be requested to ensure, in consultation with Members, as appropriate, that standard forms are available for the submission to the Secretariat for all categories of data related to monitoring marine debris and its impact on Antarctic animals (SC-CAMLR-XIX, paragraphs 4.56 and 4.58).

6.9 The Commission also endorsed the decision of the Scientific Committee that the Secretariat be requested to prepare annual summaries of these data in a manner that would enable the Committee to view trends across time for data from each site or source from which information was reported. It should consult intersessionally with Members, as necessary, in order to ensure that an appropriate consolidated report was available for consideration at next year's meeting of the Scientific Committee (SC-CAMLR-XIX, paragraph 4.59).

6.10 The Commission further endorsed the advice of the Scientific Committee on the content of a report on marine debris which should be submitted to next year's meeting of CEP by the Secretariat (SC-CAMLR-XIX, paragraphs 4.73 to 4.75; see also paragraph 11.3(i) of this report).

Incidental Mortality of Marine Animals during Fishing Operations

6.11 The Commission noted the information and advice received from the Scientific Committee's ad hoc WG-IMALF (SC-CAMLR-XIX, paragraphs 4.12 to 4.50). Further research requirements into the status of seabirds at risk were noted (SC-CAMLR-XIX, paragraphs 4.13 and 4.14).

Regulated Longline Fisheries in the Convention Area

6.12 The Commission specifically noted that:

- (i) based on the available information, seabird by-catch in Subarea 48.3 has been reduced to negligible levels due to fishing season restrictions and improved compliance with Conservation Measure 29/XVI (SC-CAMLR-XIX, paragraphs 4.15(i) and 4.16);
- (ii) greater fishing effort and poorer compliance with Conservation Measure 29/XVI has led to increased seabird by-catch in Subareas 58.6 and 58.7 (SC-CAMLR-XIX, paragraphs 4.15(ii) and (iii));
- (iii) concern was expressed over the proportion of hooks being observed to derive estimates of seabird by-catch and that this would need to be addressed in the forthcoming review of observer tasks (SC-CAMLR-XIX, paragraphs 4.18 and 4.19);
- (iv) it is desirable to obtain IMALF data from the French EEZs in Subarea 58.6 and Division 58.5.1 (SC-CAMLR-XIX, paragraphs 4.20 to 4.22);
- (v) compliance with Conservation Measure 29/XVI has improved slightly in Subarea 48.3 while being slightly poorer in Subareas 58.6 and 58.7, poor in Division 58.4.4 and complete in Subarea 88.1 (SC-CAMLR-XIX, paragraph 4.23); and
- (vi) there was continued lack of compliance with the line-weighting requirements of Conservation Measure 29/XVI by all vessels and some vessels still did not comply with the measure's streamer line, offal discharge and night-setting requirements (SC-CAMLR-XIX, paragraphs 4.23 to 4.25).

6.13 The Commission noted that France would be submitting information on seabird by-catch relating to its EEZs and that this would permit a comprehensive evaluation of the whole Convention Area (SC-CAMLR-XIX, paragraph 4.20).

6.14 New Zealand noted that its vessels fishing in Subarea 88.1 had no seabird by-catch for the third consecutive year, 99% of hooks had been observed in order to ensure that complete compliance was achieved, and there was no offal discharge during these cruises. It also noted there were consistent failures by other Members' vessels to comply with Conservation Measure 29/XVI and noted the concerns of the Scientific Committee that new vessels were entering the Convention Area and failing to comply with Conservation Measure 29/XVI.

6.15 South Africa drew attention to its comments in paragraph 8.7 concerning misunderstandings relating to potential contraventions of this conservation measure by one of its vessels.

6.16 The Commission noted the following results of research into, and experiences with, seabird by-catch mitigating measures (SC-CAMLR-XIX, paragraphs 4.37 to 4.39):

- (i) the promising results of research on underwater setting devices;
- (ii) the success of New Zealand autoline vessels in achieving the necessary line-weighting sink rates;
- (iii) the need for further trials before a line-weighting regime for autoliners in the whole Convention Area could be incorporated into Conservation Measure 29/XVI; and
- (iv) no seabirds were taken by the pot fishery for *D. eleginoides* in Subarea 48.3.

6.17 The Commission agreed with the Scientific Committee that while some relaxation of provisions of Conservation Measure 29/XVI may be possible in the future through underwater setting, appropriate line weighting and full compliance with all elements of Conservation Measure 29/XVI, the adoption of such an approach is premature at this time and every effort should continue to be made to ensure full compliance with Conservation Measure 29/XVI (SC-CAMLR-XIX, paragraphs 4.40 to 4.42).

6.18 The Commission noted the proposed amendment to Conservation Measure 29/XVI that line-weighting provisions should be changed from 6 kg at 20 m intervals to 8.5 kg at 40 m intervals. It was noted that many vessels using the Spanish longline system were using a line-weighting regime similar to that now proposed.

6.19 Chile noted that these technological changes might produce significant improvements that may lead to elements of Conservation Measure 29/XVI becoming obsolete; therefore research efforts into line weighting and underwater setting should be supported and encouraged.

6.20 Australia recalled the Commission's decisions (CCAMLR-XVII, paragraph 6.42(i)) that vessels failing to comply with the offal discharge provision of Conservation Measure 29/XVI shall not be allowed to fish in the Convention Area. It indicated that given the continuing lack of compliance with a number of measures under Conservation Measure 29/XVI, particularly with regard to the discharge of offal, certain amendments to the measure were required. This view was supported by New Zealand, which also expressed interest in taking into account links with other international environmental measures, e.g. MARPOL 73/78 and the Environmental Protocol of the Antarctic Treaty.

6.21 The Commission noted the conclusion of the Scientific Committee that the levels of mortality resulting from IUU fishing continue to be unsustainable for populations of albatrosses, giant petrels and white-chinned petrels breeding in the Convention Area (SC-CAMLR-XIX, paragraphs 4.27 and 4.28). The Scientific Committee urged the Commission to continue to take the most stringent measures possible to combat unregulated fishing in the Convention Area (SC-CAMLR-XIX, paragraph 4.30).

6.22 The Commission noted this advice and indicated its intention to adopt this year a number of new and revised measures aimed at combating IUU fishing in the Convention Area (see paragraph 5.20(iii)).

New and Exploratory Fisheries

6.23 The Commission noted the following advice of the Scientific Committee in respect of new and exploratory fisheries proposed for 2000/01:

- (i) that some potential conflicts exist between fishing seasons recommended by the Scientific Committee on the advice of ad hoc WG-IMALF and the fishing seasons proposed (SC-CAMLR-XIX, paragraphs 4.31(iv)(a) and (b)); and
- (ii) that it supported New Zealand's proposal to continue its line-weighting regime experiment in Subarea 88.1 (SC-CAMLR-XIX, paragraph 4.32).

6.24 The Commission endorsed the recommendation of the Scientific Committee that all vessels in Subarea 88.1 which require exemption from the night-setting requirements of Conservation Measure 29/XVI, should undergo line sink-rate certification prior to entering this subarea and that any vessel catching a total of three seabirds must immediately revert to the setting of its lines at night (SC-CAMLR-XIX, paragraph 4.33).

6.25 New Zealand noted that no other Contracting Party had notified the Commission of the details of any proposal for a line-weighting experiment in Subarea 88.1 within the time period required for notifying such research plans (Conservation Measure 65/XII).

6.26 However, South Africa confirmed that its vessels intending to fish in Subarea 88.1 will comply with all conditions of the proposed line-weighting regime experiment.

International and National Initiatives relating to Incidental Mortality of Seabirds in Longline Fishing

6.27 The Commission recollected its requests to Members to develop and implement their national plans in support of the FAO International Plan of Action on the Reduction of Incidental Catch of Seabirds in Longline Fisheries (IPOA–Seabirds). It commended New Zealand and the USA for their prompt action in this regard (SC-CAMLR-XIX, paragraph 4.43(i)) and also Brazil and Chile for encouraging reports on progress (SC-CAMLR-XIX, paragraph 4.43(ii)). The

Commission also encouraged Members to participate actively in the next meeting to develop a Regional Agreement for the Conservation of Albatrosses under the Convention on the Conservation of Migratory Species of Wild Animals (CMS) (South Africa, 2001) and in the meetings to be held in New Zealand (November 2000) and Uruguay (2001) to promote discussion with the fishing industry on finding solutions to the problem of seabird by-catch in longline fisheries (SC-CAMLR-XIX, paragraph 4.45).

Incidental Mortality in Trawl Fisheries

6.28 The Commission noted with concern that the trawler *Betanzos* (Chile), targeting icefish in Subarea 48.3, killed 19 black-browed albatrosses in a single haul using pelagic trawl gear (SC-CAMLR-XIX, paragraph 4.49). The Commission welcomed advice from the Scientific Committee as to how such incidents could be avoided in the future.