

ASSESSMENT AND AVOIDANCE OF INCIDENTAL MORTALITY OF ANTARCTIC MARINE LIVING RESOURCES

33. In considering this item, the Commission had reports from six Members describing the results of surveys undertaken to detect marine debris and entanglement-related problems. It also had before it the drafts of an information bulletin (brochure) and placard prepared by the Secretariat to inform operators in the Convention Area of the marine debris problem and the proper handling of different types of refuse. The Commission also had a paper from the United States that described international regulation of vessel-source pollution under Annex V of the International Convention for the Prevention of Pollution from Ships at Sea 1973 (known informally as MARPOL) as modified by the Protocol of 1978.

Members' Reports on the Assessment and Avoidance of Incidental Mortality

34. In the Commission's report last year, Members agreed to request their nationals working in the Convention Area to report any observations of lost or discarded fishing gear and to survey periodically beaches and seal and penguin colonies in the vicinity of their coastal stations. Reports were received from Argentina, Australia, Japan, Republic of Korea, United Kingdom and the United States.

35. While several Members observed no marine debris or entanglement problems, others reported sightings of derelict debris consisting of fishing buoys, gas bottles, plastic containers, trawl net fragments and plastic packing bands. In addition, two fur seals were seen entangled in derelict fishing nets and a third was observed entangled in the dropper of a longline. Members agreed that these reports provided useful information about the loss of Antarctic marine life from entanglement in marine debris.

36. To ensure that the loss or disposal of nets, net fragments, and other potentially hazardous debris does not contravene efforts to achieve the objectives set forth in Article II of the Convention, it was agreed that Members would continue to take those steps outlined in the Commission's report last year under this agenda item (CCAMLR-V, paragraphs 40–43). Such steps include maintaining a complete record of lost fishing gear, collecting where feasible derelict marine debris, periodically surveying beaches and seal and penguin colonies near coastal stations, requesting nationals to report observations of derelict debris, determining practical methods for marking fishing gear, and maintaining an inventory of the types and quantities of netting used in the Convention Area.

Information Brochure and Placard

37. In response to the Commission's decision at the Fifth Meeting, (CCAMLR-V, 40 b) the Executive Secretary submitted a document CCAMLR-VI/9 containing drafts of an information brochure 'to advise fishermen, researchers, and others working in the Convention Area of the sources, fates and effects of potentially hazardous marine debris' and a draft placard 'that could be displayed in appropriate places aboard ships operating in the Convention Area, describing "do's and don'ts" with respect to handling, storing, and discarding different types of refuse.' The drafts were agreed with some amendments, and the Executive Secretary was asked to proceed with the publication of the brochure and production of the placard. It was agreed that a graphical presentation should be used to add emphasis to the message. The text of the brochure and placard is given in Annex F.

38. Members were urged to distribute the brochure widely among their people working in Antarctica and to ensure that all vessel operators were provided with the placard. Members were asked to advise the Executive Secretary of the numbers of copies of brochures and placards they would require.

Regulation of Vessel Source Pollution under Annex V of the MARPOL Convention

39. The MARPOL Convention is designed to control pollution generated by ships, including the accidental disposal of wastes incidental to normal vessel operations. Annex V of the Convention prohibits the disposal of 'all plastics, including but not limited to synthetic ropes, synthetic fishing nets and plastic garbage bags', and requires commercial fishing fleets to take 'reasonable precautions' to prevent the accidental loss of synthetic material incidental to the repair of synthetic fishing nets. In addition, the Annex places certain restrictions on dumping of other types of garbage from vessels at sea.

40. Annex V of the MARPOL Convention will only become binding a year after at least 15 nations representing more than 50% of the gross tonnage of the world's merchant shipping fleet choose to ratify it. To date, 28 countries, (including several CCAMLR Members), have ratified the Annex but they only represent approximately 48% of the world merchant shipping fleet. As a result, the Annex has not entered into force. However, the United States, which represents 4.9% of the world's shipping tonnage, indicated that it expects to ratify the Annex by the end of this year. As a result, the Annex will likely come into force by the end of 1988.

41. Because the MARPOL Convention applies to vessels operating in Antarctic waters it was agreed that those Members who have not done so would consider and take such steps as may be appropriate to accept or ratify optional Annex V of the MARPOL Convention. In addition, the Commission drew attention to the desirability of Members operating in the Convention Area observing the measures outlined in the Annex.

Future Work

42. It was agreed that this item should be included on the agenda of subsequent annual meetings of the Commission and that, prior to such meetings, Members would advise the Executive Secretary of steps that have been or are being taken to implement the measures agreed to in paragraphs 40–43 of CCAMLR-V.