

## DEVELOPMENT OF A CONSERVATION STRATEGY FOR ANTARCTIC MARINE LIVING RESOURCES

106. The Commission considered this item through the Working Group established at its Fifth Meeting in 1986 in order 'to carry forward the development of possible conservation approaches for achieving the objectives of the Convention, as set out in Article II, by the application of the conservation measures specified in Article IX'. The Working Group met three times. The Convener (Australia) reported orally to the Commission on progress made by the Group.

107. As the basis for its initial work the Working Group adopted the following terms of reference:

1. To develop a common understanding as to the management implications of Article II of the Convention.
2. To develop possible conservation approaches for achieving the objectives of Article II by means contained in Article IX.
3. To select and apply performance criteria for assessing each approach.
4. To identify, for preferred approaches, specific short and long term goals consistent with the objectives of the Convention.
5. To formulate the framework of a strategy for managing activities in order to achieve these goals.
6. To report to the Commission recommending appropriate action.

These are working terms of reference and may be altered as the Group progresses.

108. The Working Group had before it submissions on possible conservation strategies from Argentina, Australia, Chile, the EEC, Japan, South Africa, the USSR, the United Kingdom and the United States. In accordance with Rule 34(a) of the Rules of Procedure, the Commission also received a submission from IUCN and a supplementary paper to the UK submission.

109. Submissions to the Working Group showed a common interest in providing for the harvesting of Antarctic marine living resources on a sustainable basis. It was also recognised that the

maintenance of ecological relationships required under the Convention calls for consideration of alternative scientific approaches to fisheries conservation.

110. The Working Group decided to focus initially on performance criteria for assessing different conservation approaches.

111. The specification of performance criteria will require specialist technical advice to the Working Group. In order to formulate this advice a sub-group of technical and scientific specialists will meet just prior to the next Commission meeting in Hobart. This sub-group will report to the Working Group which will meet at the beginning of the Commission meeting. A particularly important part of the specialist sub-group's work will be to present its findings in a way which clearly explains the concepts to the wider range of disciplines in the Working Group.

112. Australia, as convener of the Working Group, will prepare a discussion paper on the sub-group's work program, inviting comments from Members. This paper will be distributed early in 1988. An integration of the responses will be prepared by the Convener and circulated as the basis for the agenda for the meeting of the sub-group.

113. The Working Group agreed that it would be useful to reach a common understanding for working purposes of the term 'rational use' as it is employed in Article II of the Convention. It was agreed that this term would require progressive refinement as knowledge and understanding of the Antarctic marine ecosystem developed.

114. The Group noted that, under Article II, the term 'conservation' includes rational use. Harvesting and associated activities are to be conducted in accordance with the following principles of conservation:

- (i) maintenance of ecological relationships
- (ii) maintenance of populations at levels close to those which ensure the greatest net annual increment
- (iii) restoration of depleted populations
- (iv) minimisation of the risk of irreversible change in the marine ecosystem.

115. With these principles in mind the Working Group felt that rational use involved inter alia the following elements:

- (i) that the harvesting of resources is on a sustainable basis
- (ii) that harvesting on a sustainable basis means that harvesting activities are so conducted as to ensure that the highest possible long-term yield can be taken from a resource, subject to the general principles of conservation above
- (iii) that the cost-effectiveness of harvesting activities and their management is given due weight.

116. The Group underlined the importance of considering the quality and quantity of information required in order to achieve rational use, as well as the above principles of conservation.

117. The Commission considered that the Working Group had made a useful start in its work. In receiving the Group's report the Commission affirmed the importance it placed on the Working Group's report the Commission affirmed the importance it placed on the Working Group's role in defining a strategy to achieve the Convention's objectives as set out in Article II. It reaffirmed that any harvesting and related activities within the Convention Area must be carried out in accordance with the provisions of the Convention. It re-emphasised the need to ensure that no irreversible damage is done to the Antarctic marine ecosystem while comprehensive conservation measures are being further developed.