

**PERSONAL STATEMENT BY THE CONVENER OF THE
WORKING GROUP ON FISH STOCK ASSESSMENT**

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The Working Group on Fish Stock Assessment is a group of highly qualified scientists both in the fields of Antarctic fish research as well as in fish stock assessment and I am sure nobody will deny that. Our work is guided by questions put forward to the Scientific Committee by the Commission as well as by our own responsibilities and credibilities as scientists in the light of Article II. In the last years we were able to improve our assessments considerably and those results presented in the recent Report of the Working Group on Fish Stock Assessment were by no doubt the best scientific advice available based on all information currently available.

2. However, this does by no means mean that our advice is always unequivocal. At the Working Group meeting each Member of the Working Group has the opportunity to express his opinions. When he is not in agreement with other Members of the Working Group, the report will note that. As a second forum the Scientific Committee has to comment on our deliberations and the Working Group has noted with satisfaction that the Scientific Committee usually has endorsed our views with very little additional comments or dissent opinions to our work. This support added further motivation to our work and ensured that the way we have developed our work in the Working Group is widely acknowledged among Member countries.

3. In previous years and in particular this year, however, we were increasingly faced with the situation that our advice was discredited or even ignored during informal discussions among Members of the Commission by simply stating that there was not enough scientific evidence for a particular advice without, however, qualifying other scientific information nor indicating what level of certainty is necessary for a particular advice to support this opinion.

4. As Convener of the Working Group on Fish Stock Assessment, I would like to express my deep concern about that development currently taking place. I further think that I should protect my colleagues in the Working Group against what I feel are unsubstantiated statements. I would be glad to see these statements discussed in the Working Group or the Scientific Committee. I cannot accept, however, the present dislocation of the discussion into the Commission and I would like to draw the attention of the Commission to that. It puts not only unnecessary constraints on our work but has considerable implication for the credibility of the whole CCAMLR system.