

DEVELOPMENT OF APPROACHES TO CONSERVATION

7.1 The Convenor of the Commission's Working Group for the Development of Approaches to Conservation of Antarctic Marine Living Resources (WG-DAC), Australia, presented the Working Group's report which is included in Annex 7. The Commission's attention was also drawn to the discussion by the Scientific Committee under the same agenda item (SC-CAMLR-IX, paragraphs 8.1 to 8.16), which elaborates on some of the questions related to this work posed to it by the Commission.

7.2 The determination of catch levels for allowing the restoration of depleted populations, usually by-catch species, was a feature of the work in both the Working Group (Annex 7, paragraphs 4 to 5) and Scientific Committee (SC-CAMLR-IX, paragraphs 8.8 to 8.14). This work illustrated, in principle, how these catch limits could be calculated such that they have specified levels of probability of achieving the requisite stock recovery according to the requirements in Article II, taking into account the levels of uncertainty in stock assessments.

7.3 As a result of this work, the Commission noted that setting catch limits according to a fishing mortality at $F_{0.1}$ is not appropriate for depleted stocks.

7.4 The Commission agreed that this approach should be developed further by the Scientific Committee as a means for providing an objective basis for determining by-catch limits for depleted stocks. According to Article II, paragraph 3 (a), the target level for recovery of depleted stocks is one that is 'close to that which ensures the greatest net annual increment'. The Commission recognised that for the above approach to be refined an operational procedure for determining the level of 'greatest net annual increment' needs to be developed. Similarly, an operational definition for the words 'close to' will also be required.

7.5 The Commission also noted that such an approach, with modifications, may be useful for taking into account uncertainty when calculating fishing mortalities appropriate for exploitable stocks at all levels of development.

7.6 The Working Group also considered what constitutes the 'best scientific evidence available' that Article IX.1 (f) of the Convention requires to be used as the basis for formulating Conservation Measures (Annex 7, paragraphs 6 to 9). The Commission endorsed the view that it should regard the Scientific Committee as the source of the best scientific evidence available.

7.7 The Commission agreed that scientific evidence used as the basis for management decisions should be submitted in a timely fashion to the Scientific Committee for consideration and formulation of advice. It was noted that the Commission is still obliged to make management decisions when the Scientific Committee has insufficient information to formulate advice. The Commission endorsed the principle that the absence of essential data should be taken into account when determining catch limits: in the absence of data, very conservative catch limits should be set.

7.8 The Chairman of the Scientific Committee, Dr Everson, indicated that in order for the Scientific Committee to review Conservation Measures it would be useful for the Commission to give full attribution to any scientific evidence not arising from the Scientific Committee's report that it has been used in formulating Conservation Measures.

7.9 The Commission agreed that full and prompt submission of data by Members as required under Article XX is essential for its efficient operation.

7.10 The Working Group's report reiterated the need for information on Members' plans for fishery development and descriptions of operational tactics applied to fishing activities. It was stressed that this information is important:

- (i) for the formulation of approaches to conservation of fisheries at all stages of their development; and
- (ii) for the setting of priorities in the Commission's work.

7.11 The Chairman and Members commended Australia for its energy and tenacity in initiating the work undertaken by WG-DAC. It was acknowledged that the subject matter of this Working Group is complex, but it was clear that good progress had been made and the Working Group had made a valuable contribution to the work of the Commission. Many issues that had originated in the Working Group's discussions were now finding their way into the discussions on management in the Commission's meetings.