

ASSESSMENT AND AVOIDANCE OF INCIDENTAL MORTALITY

5.1 This year for the first time the practical division of work on this item between the Scientific Committee and the Commission was implemented. The Scientific Committee had primarily considered evidence of the ecological impact of incidental mortality of marine mammals and birds (SC-CAMLR-XI, paragraphs 8.1 to 8.35), while the Commission concentrated on general issues concerning the incidence of debris, dumping and pollution.

Marine Debris

5.2 The Commission noted that Reports of Assessment and Avoidance of Incidental Mortality had been received from Australia, Brazil, Japan, Korea, Russian Federation and USA, describing steps that had been taken to minimise the impact of entanglement in and ingestion of persistent marine debris of human origin on Antarctic Marine Living Resources (CCAMLR-XI/BG/6, 7, 8, 11, 15, 17 and 19).

5.3 Brazil has started periodical surveys of debris in the vicinity of the Brazilian Antarctic Station, Comandante Ferraz, King George Island (CCAMLR-XI/BG/19).

5.4 The United Kingdom reported that, compared to the 1991 season, there was a dramatic drop in the weight of beach litter recovered at Signy Island (CCAMLR-XI/BG/14). However, this result should not be taken to mean that the impact of marine debris at Signy Island has decreased in the same proportion, since it conceals the importance of plastics, especially plastic packaging and banding material which, though light in weight, are abundant and are a proven threat to marine life.

5.5 In the course of demographic studies of Antarctic fur seals conducted at Cape Shirreff (Livingston Island), Chile conducted three beach surveys (SC-CAMLR-XI/BG/7). The analyses of 1 346 objects showed that, on average, 91% of them comprised plastic material and synthetic fibres.

5.6 To facilitate comparison among surveys there is a need to standardise survey methods and formats for presenting results. The Commission requested the Secretariat to prepare guidelines suggesting standard methods for conducting marine debris surveys and

formats for reporting their results. The draft guidelines should be distributed to Members for comments before the 1993 meetings of the Working Groups of the Scientific Committee.

Incidental Mortality in Longline Fisheries

5.7 The Scientific Committee reviewed the information available on incidental mortality of seabirds in longline fishing in the Convention Area (SC-CAMLR-XI, paragraphs 8.10 to 8.11). The Scientific Committee recommended that the Commission consider redrafting Conservation Measure 29/X, “Minimisation of the Incidental Mortality of Seabirds in the Course of Longline Fishing or Longline Fishing Research in the Convention Area”, so that the use of streamer lines is required for all deployments of longlines regardless of whether these occur during daylight or darkness.

5.8 The Commission amended the text of Conservation Measure 29/X in order to take into account the concern of the Scientific Committee. The amended conservation measure is included in Section 9 of this report as Conservation Measure 29/XI.

5.9 The Commission welcomed the advice of the Scientific Committee that Conservation Measures adopted at recent meetings appeared to be having some effect in reducing the incidental mortality of seabirds in the longline fishery (SC-CAMLR-XI, paragraph 8.23). It also noted the Scientific Committee’s comments concerning reports from fishing nations on actual cases of seabird entanglements and agreed that further action may be needed as a precautionary measure if the information necessary to assess the level of impact was not forthcoming.

5.10 The Commission noted that Russian longline vessels were having some success with a new device to deter birds from taking baits and looked forward to receiving more information on this innovation (SC-CAMLR-XI, paragraphs 8.15 to 8.16).

5.11 The Commission urged Members to continue to collect and report data on incidental mortality of seabirds during longline fishing operations for the purpose of assessing the effectiveness of measures taken by the Commission.

5.12 Members noted that there is currently widespread international concern over incidental mortality of seabirds in longline fisheries and several national and international organisations (e.g., International Council for Bird Preservation (ICBP), Worldwide Fund for Nature (WWF) and the World Conservation Union (IUCN)) are actively campaigning to reduce such seabird mortality. The Commission agreed with the Scientific Committee's suggestion that CCAMLR provide relevant organisations interested in this issue with information on CCAMLR's efforts in reducing seabird mortality (SC-CAMLR-XI, paragraph 8.19).

Prohibition of Net Monitor Cables

5.13 Last year the Commission adopted Conservation Measure 30/X, which prohibited the use of net monitor cables on harvesting vessels in the Convention Area from the 1994/95 fishing season. In the meantime, Members were required to gradually phase out the use of such cables and to deploy cables only in accordance with the method stipulated in CCAMLR-X, Annex 6.

5.14 Members were invited to report on the implementation of this Conservation Measure. The Delegation of Chile reported that such cables have never been used during trawl fishing by Chilean vessels. The Delegation of Russia advised the Commission that Russian trawlers had implemented the recommended method of deploying net monitor cables and by the 1994/95 fishing season the use of net monitor cables would be phased out completely.