

ASSESSMENT AND AVOIDANCE OF INCIDENTAL MORTALITY OF ANTARCTIC MARINE LIVING RESOURCES

Marine Debris

6.1 A summary of current activities of Members in respect to surveys of beached marine debris is summarised in CCAMLR-XVIII/BG/14. In addition, Members' Reports on Assessment and Avoidance of Incidental Mortality in the Convention Area were received from Australia (CCAMLR-XVIII/BG/31), Brazil (BG/40), Japan (BG/25), New Zealand (BG/20), Republic of Korea (BG/36), Poland (BG/13), South Africa (BG/11), UK (BG/12), Ukraine (BG/19), Uruguay (BG/18) and USA (BG/35). Results of investigations on marine debris and entanglement of marine animals were submitted by Chile (CCAMLR-XVIII/BG/39), Republic of Korea (SC-CAMLR-XVIII/BG/10), and UK (CCAMLR-XVIII/BG/7).

6.2 As agreed last year, the Commission this year received advice from the Scientific Committee on the impact of marine debris on Antarctic animals and on the accumulation of beached marine debris, its composition and origin (SC-CAMLR-XVIII, paragraphs 4.82 to 4.90).

6.3 In particular, the Scientific Committee drew the Commission's attention to the following:

(i) Atlantic Ocean (Area 48) –

- The number of entangled Antarctic fur seals (37) at Bird Island, South Georgia, increased by about 84 to 86% compared to the 1997/98 figure.
- The number of entangled Antarctic fur seals (10) at Signy Island, South Orkneys, also increased compared to the 1997/78 figure, but was lower than in 1996/97.
- The continued presence of plastic packaging bands (including transparent bands) was reported at three sites (Bird Island, Signy Island and Cape Shirreff).
- Birds soiled with paint, tar and oil were noted at South Georgia, indicating that vessels could be the source of this pollution.
- Increased summer totals of marine debris at South Georgia at times when no licensed fishing occurred.

(ii) Indian Ocean (Area 58) –

- Standardised surveys at Marion Island revealed a slight decrease in fishery-related items found in association with albatross nests, apparently as a consequence of decreased IUU fishing activity in the area; the most common items were rope nooses and fishing hooks.

6.4 Based on the abovementioned advice, the Commission concluded that problems with marine debris pollution, mainly originating from fishing vessel activities, are unfortunately persisting.

6.5 More information is clearly required to establish the origin and extent of pollution in Antarctic waters. In this connection, the Commission recalled that it has approved the additional task for scientific observers on board vessels to collect data on garbage disposal and

lost fishing gear (see paragraph 8.21).

6.6 New Zealand informed the Commission that each of its two longline vessels which operated in Subarea 88.1 in 1998/99 returned three tonnes of non-biodegradable waste to their ports at the end of exploratory fishing. Similarly, South African fishing vessels also returned non-biodegradable waste to their ports. New Zealand proposed that all CCAMLR Flag States should be encouraged to follow this example and to retain all non-biodegradable waste on board vessels for disposal in ports.

6.7 Chile advised the Commission that residues of plastic incineration had been found at Cape Shirreff. This indicates that vessels are disposing of such residues at sea. Taking this information into account, the Commission reminded Members of the necessity to fully comply with the regulation concerning use and disposal of plastic packaging bands contained in Conservation Measure 63/XV.

6.8 The Commission recalled that storing plastic and other non-biodegradable materials on board vessels in Antarctic waters is compulsory under MARPOL Annex V and, in particular, Annex IV to the Protocol on Environmental Protection to the Antarctic Treaty.

6.9 Accordingly, the Commission urged all CCAMLR Flag States to comply with the requirements of Annex IV to the Protocol of Environmental Protection to the Antarctic Treaty. In accordance with the licence provision of Conservation Measure 119/XVII, Members were also urged to ensure that their fishing vessels intending to operate in the Convention Area had adequate storage capacity for the retention of garbage aboard if the vessels are not equipped with incinerators.

Incidental Mortality of Marine Animals during Fishing Operations

Trawl fishing

6.10 Since the prohibition of the use of net monitor cables in the Convention Area, very few cases of incidental mortality of seabirds and marine mammals have been reported from trawl fisheries in the Convention Area.

6.11 The Commission discussed a number of operational aspects of trawl fisheries related to the disposal at sea of waste and to deck-lighting requirements in the context of minimising incidental mortality of seabirds and marine mammals in trawl fisheries (SC-CAMLR-XVIII, paragraphs 4.79 to 4.81).

6.12 The Commission decided that trawl fishing requires rules on avoidance of incidental mortality similar to those established for longline fishing under Conservation Measure 29/XVI. Accordingly, Conservation Measure 173/XVIII was adopted.

Longline Fishing

6.13 The Commission noted the advice provided by the Scientific Committee on this matter (SC-CAMLR-XVIII, paragraphs 4.42 to 4.78). Based on available information, the Scientific Committee concluded that there continued to be substantial reductions (e.g. by 65% in Subarea 48.3 and by 70% in Subareas 58.6 and 58.7) in seabird by-catch during longline fishing in the Convention Area in 1998/99 compared to 1997/98. This trend has been evident over the past three years and is directly attributable to improved compliance with Conservation Measure 29/XVI and the later commencement of the fishing season in most areas (SC-CAMLR-XVIII, paragraphs 4.46 to 4.49).

6.14 The Commission concluded that significant progress had been achieved by CCAMLR Members in the reduction of seabird by-catch during longline fishing in the Convention Area. If IUU fishing in the Convention Area were to be eliminated, seabird by-catch in longline fisheries in CCAMLR waters would practically stop.

6.15 However, the Commission realised that due to the geographical range of distribution of most vulnerable species of seabirds, the problem of by-catch would persist in waters to the north of the Convention Area. A concentrated international effort is needed to eliminate this

serious problem. In this connection, the Commission recalled its request to Members to implement by 2001 their own National Plans of Action in support of the FAO International Plan of Action on the Reduction of Incidental Catch of Seabirds in Longline Fisheries (IPOA–Seabirds) (CCAMLR-XVII, paragraph 6.27). The Commission also noted that the Valdivia Group has generated a program on albatross protection under the Bonn Convention.

6.16 The Commission encouraged Members to continue experiments on underwater longline setting devices. The first ever commercial trial of such a device in the Convention Area demonstrated its potential in the elimination or, at least, substantial reduction of seabird by-catch (SC-CAMLR-XVIII, paragraph 4.73). The Commission also endorsed the Scientific Committee's recommendation that further line-weighting experiments be conducted (SC-CAMLR-XVIII, paragraph 4.52).

6.17 The Commission welcomed the publication of the book *Identification of Seabirds of the Southern Ocean. A Guide for Scientific Observers aboard Fishing Vessels* which was published by CCAMLR and the National Museum of New Zealand in 1999. The Commission noted the importance of the guide in assisting CCAMLR to gather more accurate data on incidental by-catch of seabirds, and thanked the sponsors for supporting this publication.

6.18 New Zealand invited Commission Members to participate in an international forum for fishers on solving the incidental capture of seabirds in demersal and pelagic longline fisheries, during the fourth quarter of 2000 (SC-CAMLR-XVIII/BG/16).

6.19 There were several suggestions put forward by the Scientific Committee (e.g. SC-CAMLR-XVIII, paragraphs 4.72 and 4.76(iv)), and also by some Members of the Commission on possible amendments to Conservation Measure 29/XVI. However, the Commission agreed with the Scientific Committee that Conservation Measure 29/XVI should be retained unchanged for 1999/2000. The Commission will consider proposals for amending this measure at the next meeting.

6.20 In the meantime, the Commission reminded Members of their obligation to comply in full with all provisions of Conservation Measure 29/XVI (see also paragraph 8.6).