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## **WWF's Measures of Success: 2010 NAFO Annual Meeting**

*September 20-24, 2010 Halifax, Canada*

For several years, the World Wildlife Fund (WWF) has been working with the Northwest Atlantic Fisheries Organization (NAFO) to achieve its objectives of optimum utilization, rational management, and conservation of the fishery resources of the NAFO Convention Area. Some of NAFO's Contracting Parties have taken significant steps to rebuild depleted populations within national waters, using targets and timelines in line with the precautionary approach. This type of leadership can be demonstrated in the NAFO Regulatory Area (NRA) if the NAFO Fisheries Commission takes the steps needed now to rebuild populations of key species (i.e. Grand Banks cod) and protect Vulnerable Marine Ecosystems (VMEs) such as corals, sponges, and deep-sea fishes from destructive bottom fishing practices. NAFO is poised to firmly establish itself as a leading RFMO in implementing the precautionary and ecosystem approach to fisheries management, which would have long-term benefits for all Contracting Parties. However, there is more work to be done before NAFO can fulfil its international commitments.

At the 2010 Annual Meeting, WWF will measure NAFO's success in terms of four well chosen priorities:

### **1. Minimize bycatch and apply the precautionary approach to rebuild Southern Grand Banks cod**

After 16 years of moratorium on directed fishing, Grand Banks cod is showing signs of improvement. However, the stock biomass is still well below the limit that defines safe levels for harvesting. Bycatch of cod in other fisheries threatens to undermine any positive signs of rebuilding. Although NAFO has taken several important steps in recent years to rebuild the stock, NAFO has an opportunity to strengthen its commitment to the precautionary approach by adopting more effective measures to rebuild Grand Banks cod: draft a rebuilding strategy that includes both target and limit reference points, and Harvest Control Rules that incorporate reference points, Amend the Conservation and Enforcement Measures to ensure the Cod Rebuilding Strategy is legally binding, and Maintain the current 3NO cod bycatch target to protect the strong year classes and allow further stock growth.

### **2. Use fisheries management plans, impact assessments, and non-invasive sampling methods to ensure long-term protection of Vulnerable Marine Ecosystems**

To date, NAFO has temporarily closed 32 areas containing vulnerable habitats to bottom fishing. These areas consist of seamounts, cold water corals, and sponges. WWF congratulates NAFO's progress in meeting the international commitments to protect vulnerable marine ecosystems. However, due to the vulnerability of these areas, temporary closures do not suffice. A number of area closures that include the Orphan Knoll, Fogo Seamounts 1 and 2, Corner Seamounts, Newfoundland Seamounts, and New England Seamounts will expire on 31 December 2010. In addition, several management measures required by international commitments have not yet been met. Measures needed to protect VMEs, that if implemented poise NAFO as a leading RFMO in protecting vulnerable ecosystems by: conducting fisheries impact assessments in bottom fishing areas, adopt fishery management plans to ensure protection of VMEs, designate the Orphan Knoll and seamounts as VMEs, and adopt non-intrusive sampling methods to monitor and delineate VME areas.

### 3. Increase transparency and accountability in NAFO's decision-making process

Transparency in NAFO's decision making processes is important because the conservation of fish stocks in the high seas is a common interest of the whole international community, and not only of NAFO member states. It legitimizes and strengthens the decisions taken by NAFO. In past Annual Meetings, especially 2009's meeting in Bergen, Norway, the Fisheries Commission made several management decisions "behind closed doors", and in numerous instances the Commission gave no explanation for its decisions. This year, NAFO should adopt a more transparent process by making fisheries management decisions in the presence of all meeting participants including observers, and provide accountability by justifying all fisheries management decisions.

### 4. Conduct transparent and independent Performance Reviews on a regular basis

The United Nations has called on NAFO (and other RFMOs) to conduct transparent and independent performance reviews on a regular basis to strengthen their mandate and conservation measures. NAFO has already taken steps to review its performance, and to ensure accordance with international standards, NAFO should ensure its performance reviews use transparent criteria and incorporates relevant policy and soft law instruments, and that they are transparent and conducted on a regular basis.

WWF is continuing to use science, advocacy, and market forces to change attitudes in favour of more responsible and sustainable practices on the water. We are committed to helping NAFO conserve its fishery resources in the NRA. Implementing WWF's measures of success will demonstrate NAFO's commitment to manage its fisheries in a manner consistent with the precautionary and ecosystem approach, and help Contracting Parties achieve consistency in how fisheries are managed on both sides of the Atlantic.

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