

ADVANCE UNEDITED REPORTING MATERIAL

Seventy-seventh session

Item 72 (b) of the provisional agenda*

Oceans and the law of the sea: sustainable fisheries, including through the 1995 Agreement for the Implementation of the Provisions of the United Nations Convention on the Law of the Sea of 10 December 1982 relating to the Conservation and Management of Straddling Fish Stocks and Highly Migratory Fish Stocks, and related instruments

Actions taken by States and regional fisheries management organizations and arrangements in response to paragraphs 113, 117 and 119 to 124 of General Assembly resolution 64/72, paragraphs 121, 126, 129, 130 and 132 to 134 of General Assembly resolution 66/68 and paragraphs 156, 171, 175, 177 to 188 and 219 of General Assembly resolution 71/123 on sustainable fisheries, addressing the impacts of bottom fishing on vulnerable marine ecosystems and the long-term sustainability of deep-sea fish stocks

Report of the Secretary-General

Summary

The present report has been prepared pursuant to paragraph 212 of General Assembly resolution 75/89 <https://undocj.tj> -0.5(ttp1841 132.54 re W n BT3s292)0..5824 229.44 495.841

The report is a follow-up to earlier reports prepared by the Secretary-General (A/61/154, A/64/305, A/66/307, A/71/351, and 75/175). It should also be read in conjunction with earlier interim reports of the Secretary-General on the measures taken by States and regional fisheries management organizations and arrangements to implement resolution 61/105 (A/62/260, paras. 60–96, and A/63/128, paras. 63–78).

* A/77/50.

I. Introduction

1. Since the adoption of resolution [61/105](#) in 2006, the General Assembly has been monitoring how States and regional fisheries management organizations and arrangements (RFMO/As) address the impact of bottom fishing on vulnerable marine ecosystems (VMEs) and the long-term sustainability of deep-sea fish stocks. It has conducted reviews of actions taken by States and RFMO/As in response to its resolutions on sustainable fisheries of 2009, 2011 and 2016.

2. Following the last review in 2016, the General Assembly, in its resolution 71/123, decided to undertake a further review in 2020 of the steps taken by States and RFMO/As in response to paragraphs 113, 117 and 119 to 124 of resolution [64/72](#), paragraphs 121, 126, 129, 130 and 132 to 134 of resolution [66/68](#) and paragraphs 156, 171, 175, 177 to 188 and 219 of resolution [71/123](#), with a view to ensuring effective implementation of the measures therein and, where necessary, making further recommendations. In resolution [73/125](#)<https://undocs.org/en/A/RES/73/125>, the General Assembly requested the Secretary-General to report to the General Assembly at its seventy-fifth session-

A. Vulnerable marine ecosystems: an updated review

6. No universally agreed definition of what constitutes a VME exists, however, States

B. Deep-sea fish stocks

10. Deep-sea fish can be found in all parts of the global ocean occupying seamounts, water columns, and the seabed of continental slopes.¹⁰ It is estimated that around 90 per cent of the global fish biomass lies in the uppermost layer of the deep-sea, between 200 and 1000-meters depth.¹¹ Fish in this zone play a number of significant roles in the ecosystem^{Error! Bookmark not defined.} and also provide a significant contribution to the ocean food chain, connecting the upper and lower layer of the ocean.^{Error! Bookmark not defined.}

11. Deep-sea fish possess several characteristics such as slow growth, low natural mortality, and long-life expectancy.¹² These characteristics, however, create vulnerability to overexploitation,^{Error! Bookmark not defined.} which could permanently damage deep-

Guidelines.²⁶ NAFO has since taken steps to increase the areas closed to bottom fishing for the protection of VMEs.

23. In 2019, NPFC and PICES adopted a framework for enhanced scientific collaboration in the north Pacific that identified broad areas of interest, including VMEs, over the next five years. The framework also identified mechanisms for implementing enhanced collaboration, including workshops and joint working groups, as well as coordination of science plans.²⁷

24. NPFC developed VME indicator taxa identification guides for the northwestern and northeastern Pacific Ocean and planned to complete a fish identification guide in 2022. NPFC was also continuing work on its combined significant adverse impact assessment. Fishing footprints had been identified at the seamount scale and compilation of more detailed information was ongoing. Current VME indicators were comprised of four coral taxa, however, sponges and hydrocorals were also being considered as indicator taxa.

25. SEAFO reported that the fishing pressure in the SEAFO Convention Area was considered to be very low, as the annual fishing effort had not exceeded five vessels and four contracting parties since 2005. Longline and pot fishing was conducted with maximum catches of 60 tonnes and 196 tonnes, respectively, since 2013. Due to the low level of exploitati

significant adverse impacts on VMEs. Guidelines for the preparation and submission of notifications of encounters with potential VMEs were also adopted.

37. SPRFMO also

and to address more effective gear identification. It also assessed whether reporting on encounters with VMEs was functioning effectively. Following implementation of new electronic reporting systems and new analysis approaches, which included detailed data on catch to determine if bottom gear was used, a significant reduction in false positive alerts was reported.

47. NPFC reported that its regional vehicle 2.5(u)-1.5(11.6(C)-1.1(r)00.5((a)28Bi Tf 0[(s w)1.5(a)-3.1(s f)2.(c)2.6

61. Comprehensive measures adopted by SPRFMO in 2022 required that bottom fishing assessments were submitted at least every three years, and also when a substantial change in the fishery occurred such that it was likely that the risk or impact of the fishery may have changed. In addition, the SPRFMO scientific committee was required to review all available data and provide advice on the ongoing effectiveness of the management measures to ensure they meet objectives. An intersessional working group was also established to support a review of the new measures in 2023. SPRFMO also reported that all bottom fishing assessments and scientific reviews of such assessments were made public and public comment was invited.

B. Actions taken by States to regulate bottom fisheries

62. Several respondents reported on the implementation of the relevant provisions of General Assembly resolutions 64/72, 66/68 and 71/123, in line with the FAO Guidelines, including by enacting and implementing national laws and regulations.

63. Several respondents also reported on their fishing vessels operating in the areas of RFMO/As with competence to regulate bottom fisheries and that they had addressed the regulation of bottom fisheries by implementing measures adopted by those RFMO/As.

1. Identifying VMEs and assessing significant adverse impacts from bottom fishing

64. Bulgaria reported that its fishing fleet, which is mainly small-scale, does not engage in any form of fishing in the high seas, including bottom fishing. It has not participated in research and collection of data on the impact of deep-sea fishing on VMEs or the long-term sustainability of deep-sea fish stocks in areas beyond national jurisdiction (ABNJ).

65. Canada noted that its domestic legislation and policy framework contains measures for the identification and protection of VMEs, including a Policy for Managing the Impacts of Fishing on Sensitive Benthic Areas and an Ecological Risk Assessment Framework. It reported that, in 2021, it contributed to NAFO's review of the boundaries of its VME. Canada promotes continued research into the identification and protection of VMEs through the NAFO working groups on ecosystems science assessment and an ecosystem approach framework to fisheries management. Through the NPFC, Canada also contributed to efforts in 2021 to develop a quantitative definition for VMEs.

66. Japan stated that it has taken several measures to protect VMEs and to ensure sustainability of deep-

several actions to identify VMEs and to reduce the risk of significant adverse effects from deep-sea fishing to such areas during this period. In 2022, it will collaborate with Canada to better understand the distribution of VMEs on northeast Pacific seamounts both within the countries' EEZs and in the NPFC region.

with the competence to regulate such fisheries or interim measures, until measures are taken in accordance with the FAO Guidelines and relevant General Assembly resolutions.

C.

D. Recognition of the special circumstances and requirements of developing States

89. Due

Monitoring Control and Surveillance⁴¹ (MCS) and of the legal support necessary. The DSF project is scheduled to start during 2022 and end in 2027.

97. The DS project also undertook an assessment of the status of deep-sea fish stocks. As the assessment of some of these deep-sea stocks remains problematic, especially for those that are associated with seamounts, the upcoming second phase of the DS Project will have a

