

21 January 2019

## ICES contribution to the report of the Secretary-General on oceans and the law of the sea

(i) Advancing ocean science and identifying and addressing gaps in knowledge and ocean science;

The International Council for the Exploration of the Sea (ICES) is an intergovernmental marine science organization with headquarters in Copenhagen, Denmark. ICES coordinates and promotes research on oceanography, the marine environment, ecosystems, and living marine resources in the North Atlantic Ocean and adjacent sea areas.

As a global scientific organization, we focus on advancing the scientific understanding of marine ecosystems and their relation to human activities. Every year more than 1500 experts contribute to fulfilling the organization's mandate to give advice on human activities affecting, and affected by, marine ecosystems.

Science is the foundation on which integrated and successful environmental marine policies are built to achieve agreed objectives. ICES works at the science-policy interface, providing the best available science to sustainable management. The science is carried out in a way that is transparent and auditable, covering areas from the regional to the global level. The advice produced is independent of political influence, based on established scientific advisory frameworks, reviewed, and developed according to an inclusive, transparent and well-documented process.

ICES has just launched its Strategic Blue Science Platform focusing on areas where cooperation at ICNATUN Ocean Conference

\_\_\_\_\_ in June 2018 support of the  
SDGs one on developing the science basis to assist ecosystem based management and the other to enhance marine science training and capacity building

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Support for SDG 14 (Conserve and sustainably use the oceans, seas and marine resources for sustainable development) outlined in a statement which covers the ways in which ICES contributes to the goal: by providing the scientific evidence for decision making via integrated ecosystem assessments (IEAs) and ecosystem overviews, addressing the impacts of ocean acidification, and assessing fish stocks in order to provide advice on the sustainable level of fishing activity.

(iv) the integration of traditional knowledge in ocean research

As part of the developing IEA framework, ICES has been working towards production of knowledge. A recent ICES and PAME (Arctic Council's Protection of the Arctic Marine Environment Working Group) workshop entitled Ecosystem Approach guidelines and Integrated Ecosystem Assessment in the Arctic was held at NOAA Alaska Fisheries Science Center in Seattle, US. The workshop included indigenous perspectives as they are crucial in the ecosystem approach, not only to avoid risks to human life and to secure resources important for indigenous peoples and their cultures, but also to support the scientific basis for p8c t83 4.2(s)-6(r) 1ind bu2t on3 Tw -27.-0 Tw 3.696 0 T

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the ICES/NAFO Working Group on Deep Water Ecology. ICES has worked to develop a complete database of records of Vulnerable Marine Ecosystem indicators and habitats, including deep-water areas inside and outside national jurisdiction. At present, this database holds more than 40,000 records that span more than 60 years. The database is used by ICES in providing annual advice to NEAFC on seabed ecosystems, such as water coral reefs and coldwater seeps that require protection from fishing activities that might damage them. At present, fourteen closures to mobile bottom fishing in the ABNJ in the Northeast Atlantic have resulted from this advice. These closures are protecting Vulnerable Marine Ecosystems on the Mid-Atlantic Ridge, around certain seamounts and on offshore banks to the west of Scotland. ICES is now working to develop mechanisms to provide an assessment of the confidence that a VME is present when only indicators (such as a small sample of a coral) are available.

ICES has also advised OSPAR on several issues relating to biodiversity conservation in the High Seas of the Northeast Atlantic. We have advised on habitat sensitivity, reviewed proposals for listing of habitats and species as Threatened or Declining, advised which deep