



## Northwest Atlantic Fisheries Organization

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In all correspondence,  
please refer to:

NAFO/24-114

15 April 2024

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**Subject:** NAFO input on the topic “*Sustainable fisheries management in the face of climate change*” to the United Nations Division for Ocean Affairs and the Law of the Sea

Further to your correspondence dated 16 January 2024, please find enclosed the submission of the Northwest Atlantic Fisheries Organization (NAFO) on the topic “*Sustainable fisheries management in the face of climate change*” to the United Nations Division for Ocean Affairs and the Law of the Sea.

Yours sincerely,

Brynhildur Benediktsdóttir  
Executive Secretary

BB:ll

Enclosed: (02 pgs.)

## **Contribution of the Northwest Atlantic Fisheries Organization (NAFO) to UNGA resolution 78/68 topic “Sustainable fisheries management in the face of climate change”**

### **Background**

The Northwest Atlantic Fisheries Organization (NAFO) is an intergovernmental fisheries science and management body. NAFO was founded in 1979 as a successor to ICNAF (International Commission for the Northwest Atlantic Fisheries). NAFO has thirteen (13) Contracting Parties, namely four (4) coastal States Canada, United States of America, France (in respect of St. Pierre et Miquelon) and Denmark (in respect of the Faroe Islands and Greenland), as well as Cuba, the European Union, Iceland, Japan, Republic of Korea, Norway, the Russian Federation, Ukraine and the United Kingdom. The international fisheries managed by NAFO take place outside the 200-mile Exclusive Economic Zones (EEZs) of the four coastal State Contracting Parties and Bermuda.

NAFO’s constituent bodies are the Commission, Scientific Council and the Secretariat. The NAFO Scientific Council provides scientific advice to the NAFO Commission, which adopts conservation measures for the species under its mandate. NAFO’s mandate covers the fishery resources (all fish, molluscs and crustaceans) within the Convention Area excluding (i) sedentary species over which coastal States may exercise sovereign rights consistent with Article 77 of UNCLOS; and (ii) in so far as they are managed under other international treaties, anadromous and catadromous stocks and highly migratory species listed in Annex I of UNCLOS.

In 2017 an amended NAFO Convention came into force, incorporating a precautionary and an ecosystem approach to fisheries management. The Convention also streamlined decision-making processes, strengthened obligations of Contracting Parties and instituted a formal dispute settlement mechanism.

NAFO has a comprehensive set of regulations to monitor, survey and control the fishery, including an At-sea Inspection and Surveillance Scheme, a Vessel Monitoring System (VMS), and port State control measures, which have been aligned to the FAO Port State Measures Agreement. NAFO also maintains a list of vessels presumed to have engaged in illegal, unreported and unregulated (IUU) fishing and shares this list with other regional fishery management organizations (RFMOs).

NAFO has prohibited the use of bottom contacting fishing gear in 27 areas, approximately 14% of the NAFO Regulatory Area, for the protection of Vulnerable Marine Ecosystems (VMEs). In particular, all seamounts at fishable depth (i.e., shallower than 4000 metres) are closed.

NAFO has undergone two performance reviews, in 2011 and 2018. The second performance review addressed conservation and management, compliance and enforcement, governance, science, international cooperation, and financial and administrative issues. The report of the second performance review, with 37 recommendations, was adopted by the NAFO Commission at its Annual Meeting in 2018. NAFO established a process for addressing each of the recommendations, which have been reviewed at NAFO’s Annual Meetings. NAFO cooperates extensively with other international organizations, and routinely shares information with other fishery organizations and UN bodies such as FAO and the UN Division for Ocean Affairs and the Law of the Sea (UN-DOALOS).

## **Sustainable fisheries management in the face of climate change**

The Northwest Atlantic Fisheries Organization (NAFO) addresses climate change in both the fisheries management and scientific components of the organization. Most recently, in September 2023, NAFO agreed to adopt a resolution to strengthen how the organization addresses the impacts of climate change on target stocks, non-target species, and associated ecosystems, including supporting scientific efforts, building upon the Scientific Council's existing climate related work ([NAFO COM Doc. 23-13](#)).

In addressing the impact of climate change on NAFO fisheries, NAFO resolves to:

1. *Consider the current and future impacts of climate change on NAFO managed stocks, non-target species, and associated ecosystems in the Convention Area, including, inter alia, as appropriate, in its decision making, and through its work in the Ecosystem Roadmap.*
2. *To that end, take into account the best scientific advice available on the current and future impacts of climate change on NAFO-managed stocks, non-target species, and associated ecosystems, when developing conservation and management measures, with a view to address the effects of such impacts.*
3. *Further, evaluate how the management of target and non-target NAFO-managed stocks and associated ecosystems, as well as fishing activities, may be affected by climate change and examine if there are actions that could be taken to reduce or mitigate such impacts, including, as appropriate, consideration of adapting NAFO management approaches.*
4. *To inform the work in paragraphs one through three, and while recognizing the capacity challenges of the Scientific Council, request that the Scientific Council at its 2024 meeting summarize the information it currently has available regarding the current and future impacts of climate change on NAFO-managed stocks, non-target species, and associated ecosystems. The Scientific Council should further identify any consequential data gaps, research needs and opportunities for productive research.*
5. *Based on that information, the Commission should at the 2024 Annual Meeting consider appropriate next steps to advance NAFO's work on this important issue.*

Furthermore, the Scientific Council is already engaged in a number of climate change related efforts. The Scientific Council Standing Committee of Fisheries Environment (STACFEN) provides environmental analysis to the Scientific Council to inform stock assessments, as well as publishes the observations and overview of the hydrographic conditions annually to the [NAFO website](#).