

Contributions of Spain to Bottom Fishing Workshop 5-6 August 2020

According to General Assembly Resolution 71/123 of 7 December 2016, it was adopted to conduct in 2020 a further review of actions taken by States and Regional Fisheries Management Organizations and arrangements in response to paragraphs 113, 117 and 119 to 124 of Resolution 64/72 of 4 December 2009 with a view to ensuring implementation of measures and to make further recommendations and decided to precede that review with a two-day workshop (paragraphs 212 and 213 of Resolution 74/18).

Spanish Experience

From 2005 to 2008, EMV studies were carried out at the Hatton Bank “PROJECT ECOVUL / ARPA” to study vulnerable marine ecosystems in relation with fishing gears. That project provided a challenge, due to it involved the development of multidisciplinary work with a scientists team of IEO (biologists, ecologists and geologists). In the **NEAFC area**, Hatton Bank's campaigns were carried out on board the Research vessels of the General Secretariat of Fisheries (Vizconde de Eza and Miguel Oliver). In addition to this, experimental fishing surveys were implemented in collaboration with the Spanish fishing industry on board commercial fishing vessels. For instance in *Edora bank* to these campaign it permitted to identify and close some VMEs. The data on vessels in VMEs of this area which were used to close the area to bottom fishing activities and came from the experimental campaigns organized by Spain, with EU funding, in collaboration with the Spanish fishing sector.

A part from the already mentioned Hatton Bank Project, researchers conduct VMEs studies in other parts of the world. This is the case of the Walvis Dorsal in the southeast Atlantic, where since February 2008 campaigns have been carried out to study the location and identification of bio-constructions associated with underwater mountains, as potential vulnerable marine ecosystems exposed to interactions with bottom fishing.

In the **NAFO Regulation Area** it is considered one of the backbone study regions for its fishing wealth. Specifically, the *Grand Banks of Newfoundland* is one of the most important fishing grounds for the Spanish fleet. Since 2005, an international project (Project NERIEDA) has been carried out in that area, with Canadian, Russian and British and Spanish participation to study the identification and distribution of benthic invertebrates and the effects of fishing activities, mainly, over deep-sea corals and sponge fields. As the result of these studies 13 areas were closed in NAFO:

Another areas of EMVs studies is **in international waters of the Patagonian platform**, beyond the 200 nautical miles corresponding to the Argentine EEZ and the Malvinas Islands Conservation Zone, up to 1,500 meters deep (PROJECT ATLANTIS).

A multidisciplinary campaign was carried out by the Spanish Institute of Oceanography and the National Marine Information and Research Centre (Namibia), in 2008 and 2009 on board the research vessel "Vizconde de Eza" on the seamounts of the Walvis Ridge off the coast of Namibia.

In the framework of CCAMLR and SPRFMO, Spain carried out exploratory fisheries, previously approved by those organisations' Scientific Committees, where stock data and indicators of VMEs are collected.

In the Barents Sea, Spain regulates its fishing activities in the area of "Svalbard", through the Treaty of Paris (1920). In this framework, Spain complies with Norwegian regulations to protect VMEs. Furthermore, Spain has a scientific observer programme that not only collects stock assessment data but also indicators of VMEs. Moreover, Spain carries out an annual scientific assessment survey on stock evaluation in which data of VMEs indicators were collected. All the data from observers and campaigns are presented in ICES Working Groups by Spanish scientists.

During the last semester of 2020, led by Spain, a scientific campaign is going to be put in place, which will include activities in Cape Verde waters and also international waters under SEAFO competence

The Mirabilis campaign is an international multidisciplinary expedition which will study both the water and the seafloor with advanced technology. This allows to explore benthic ecosystems in great detail producing large high-resolution photographic results that will be processed automatically using new machine learning approaches without damage these ecosystems.

The results of these surveys will be used to produce high resolution habitat maps in South Atlantic areas and to obtain information on environmental parameters and demersal deep-sea fish fauna.

Another essential backbone has been the management measures in terms of control activities of the Spanish Fleet implemented in those areas. Spanish experience has demonstrated that control mechanisms are essential to understand the utility of such measures, with a view of improving them, and to ensure compliance with current regulation in favour of sustainable fishing

In this sense, Spain can provide a useful example of best practices according to the obligation of the Spanish fleet authorized to exercise fishing activities in international waters of the South West Atlantic Ocean to follow specific instructions and the obligation of temporary permits including the following conditions:

- Prohibition of joint operations/transshipment or others with vessels identified by an RFMO as IUU fishing vessels.
- Operational Vessel Monitoring System
- Electronic fishing logbook
- Vessel registered in a National Fleet Register
- European fishing licenses in force
- Authorized fishing gear (Deep trawling and pelagic trawler)
- Species objective of catch

-In the case of capturing *Dissostichus*, the *Dissostichus* Catch Certificate/Document must be completed for commercialization, in accordance with the provisions of Community Regulation (EC) No 1035/2001, which establishes a system of documentation system for catches of *Dissostichus* Catch Certificate, as well as in the Conservation Measure 10-05 of CCAMLR

-Certificates for exporting catches.

-Presence of control observers on-board

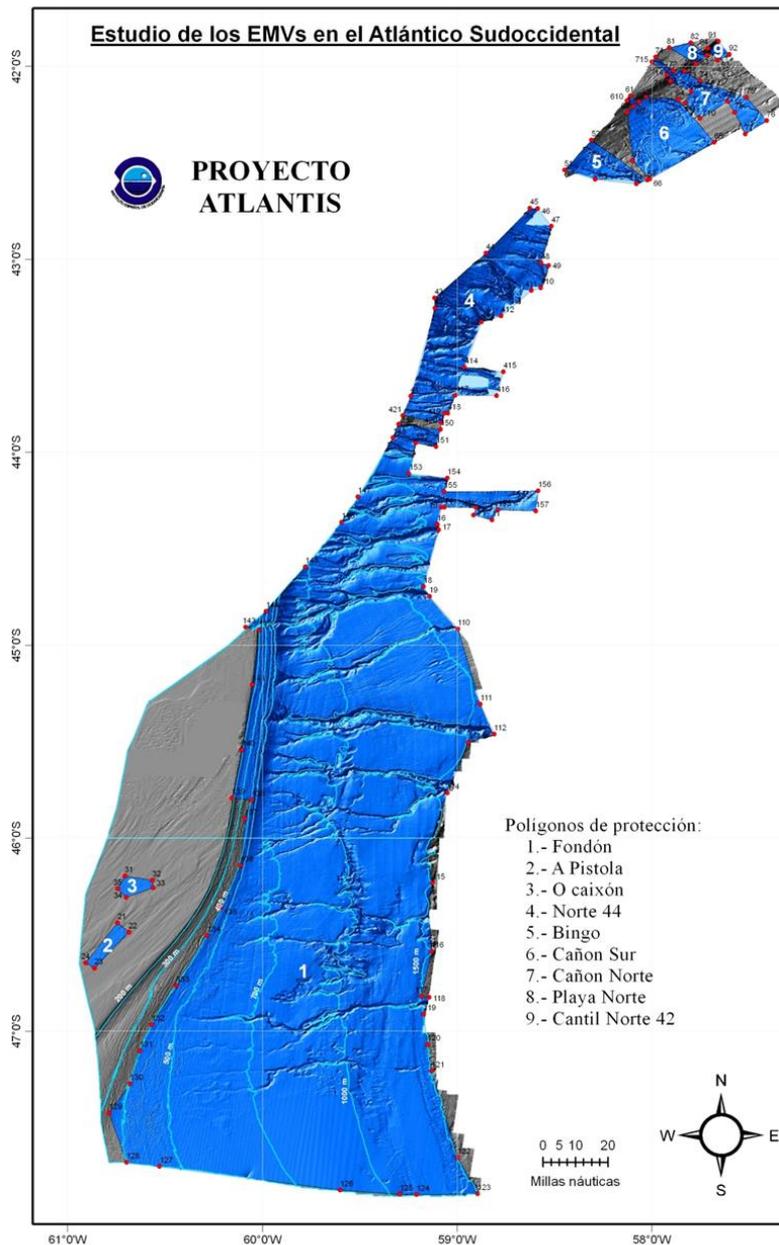
-scientific supervision. In addition to the mandatory control observer established in regulation (EC) 734/2008 the vessel must obligatorily admit on board a scientific observer from the Spanish Institute of Oceanography (IEO), if the General Secretariat of Fisheries considers it adequate and convenient.

-Rules to follow in case of encounters with vulnerable marine ecosystems

-Prohibition of fishing activity with fishing gears in contact with sea bottom in nine marine protection zones, established based on biological, geological, geomorphological and mixed criteria, in which the presence of vulnerable marine ecosystems has been found, such as:

1. Fondón
2. A Pistola
3. Caixón
4. Norte 44
5. Bingo
6. Cañón Sur
7. Cañón Norte
8. Playa Norte
9. Cantil Norte 42

A graphic of the protected areas is attached below this paragraph:



Conclusions

Regarding the UNGA Resolutions on sustainable fishing, especially regarding the identification and protection of Vulnerable Marine Ecosystems (VMEs) on the high seas, Spain as a European Union Member State has implemented robust developments to achieve successful goals. However, there remain important issues to solve. Efforts made by international agents within the United Nations process framework have been quite successful in stimulating progress of high sea fisheries management. This positive message is an incentive to continue ongoing research and to take on new challenges. Regional Fisheries Management Organizations (RFMOs) are essential instruments for regulating deep-sea fisheries in the high seas and for facilitating international

collaboration. International advisory scientific committees are essential for compiling scientific knowledge and for drafting advice required to underpin management measures.

VMEs research (identification and protection) has been carried out by Spain (either by itself or in collaboration with other Nations) and should be considered as examples of ad hoc actions of fishing Nation to contribute to the implementation of Resolutions 61/105 and 64/72. The scientific data obtained has improved the knowledge of high seas VMEs and has led to the proposal and/or implementation of protection measures.

Although such multidisciplinary scientific research was adequate for studying the VMEs issue, it however did not resolve all concerns regarding deep-sea fisheries impacts in the high seas as other fishing countries in the area, where there is no RFMO (South West Atlantic) were not involved and are not taking the same measures as Spain. Nevertheless, it has been an important step forward in terms of the ongoing improvement to fisheries regulation and international collaboration.

Spain considers the presence of RFMOs facilitates implementation of VMEs protection measures. The advisory bodies (such as Scientific Councils, Working Groups and Advisory Committees) are the multilateral fora that provide, analyse, discuss scientific data, and promote collaboration between Nations and underpin the work of RFMOs, who take measures on the basis of scientific advice, to bring into effect conservation (e.g. closed areas to fishing) and monitoring and control measures.

Within the scope of their mandates, the RFMOs are a perfect tool to protect marine species and their habitats and play an essential role as key actors in the fight against IUU fishing. They are demonstrating their commitment and good example on the sustainable management and the improvements in the monitoring and control system and compliance based on the 1995 United Nations Agreement for the Conservation and Management of Straddling Fish Stocks and Highly Migratory Fish Stocks.