

Konferansen “RFMOs – Fit for the Future?”, Brussel 1. juni 2012.

Innlegg på vegne av SEAFO (full tekst)

Madam Chair,

Good afternoon, every one. My name is Odd Gunnar Skagestad, I represent the South East Atlantic Fisheries Organisation (SEAFO) in the capacity of its Chairperson, and I would like to thank the Hon. Commissioner Ms. Maria Damanaki for the kind invitation to participate in this Conference.

I'd furthermore like to thank the Commissioner as well as the Under Secretary of Commerce for Oceans and Atmosphere (Administrator of the NOAA) Ms. Jane Lubchenco for their excellent introductions to our discussion.

Ms. Damanaki informed us not only of some recent accomplishments of the European Union, aiming at sustainability in its own waters, but also identified some very important key issues still to be addressed by RFMOs, notably better science, sustainability (efficient management measures) and compliance.

The points made by the Commissioner were echoed by Ms. Lubchenco, who also further underlined the “Three Grand Challenges” facing the RFMOs today, notably implementing science-based management, compliance and addressing all sources of IUU fisheries.

I think we can all agree that these are challenges which all our RFMOs have to face up to and deal with. At the same time, we have to acknowledge that there are a few basic and sobering realities which we have to bear in mind when staking out the best course of tackling such challenges, notably the following:

- No RFMO is better than what its members allow it to be.
- No chain is stronger than its weakest link.
- Nevertheless, it is important to have everybody on board, - even the laggards, those lacking in resources or robust institutions.
- This calls for patience, - on the part of those who would like to accomplish everything immediately, in a “great leap forward”.

But the RFMOs also need members who can take the lead, who can be pro-active and inspire others. We need members who have the resources and the motivation to share in carrying the burden of fulfilling the tasks and obligations of membership, members who have the ability to lead by example, thus performing the important function of being strong role models.

These are considerations that affect not only the individual RFMOs or the EU, which (conspicuously) is taking the lead by hosting this event here today. These are concerns that

also affect the wider global community, including individual countries – acting within or outside of RFMOs.

This is also why I find it extremely useful and most appropriate to have the United States with us here today – in the person of Under Secretary Ms. Lubchenco as an inspiring keynote speaker.

As for its own domestic fishery management policies, the United States has an excellent track record which, *inter alia*, was highlighted in the most recent (May 26) issue of the reputed journal *The Economist*, and was praised as a true success story. With regard to its involvement in international fishery managements issues and forums, the United States – as a major global player – has the capabilities to make a difference.

As one of the original signatories to the SEAFO Convention, the United States made an important contribution to making this organization come into being and become a reality. This contribution has been highly appreciated, and it remains the backdrop of the standing invitation to ratify the Convention and join as a Contracting Party and a become a full-fledged member of this RFMO.

RFMOs such as SEAFO need members like the United States, - members who can assist in the common endeavour of facing up to such “grand challenges” as outlined in Under Secretary Lubchenco’s thought-provoking address, and thereby also perform such leadership which this country is eminently capable of. This is also why I would like to reaffirm the standing invitation and confirm that the United States would be most welcome to join as a full member of the SEAFO.

Thank you very much for your attention.