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ICES Consultative Committee

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Report of the Workshop on Review of the ICES Committee and Expert Group Performance (WKREP)

15 March 2006

EEA, Copenhagen, Denmark



International Council for the Exploration of the Sea
Conseil International pour l'Exploration de la Mer

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1 Executive Summary

The Workshop on Review of the ICES Committee and Expert Group Performance (WKREP) was held on 15 March 2006 in the premises of the European Environment Agency (EEA) in Copenhagen, chaired by the President of ICES. The meeting was well attended by 31 Expert Group and Committee Chairs from both the Science and the Advisory Programmes of ICES, and Delegates. Presentations were given by the Chairs of ConC, MCAP and also by DG Research, Alan Edwards on the future challenges for marine science. The salient conclusions of the meeting were:

- The problem of communication and responsiveness between the science and advisory bodies was identified as being crucial. The great majority of Expert Groups appears to function well, but communication between them and across disciplines needs to be improved with a new structure.
- In order to achieve improved commitment to the Expert Group and Committee work excellent contents and attractiveness is needed.
- Implementation of the Ecosystem Approach to Management requires new layers of knowledge and a new culture of communication. There is a clear need for new information.
- A new structure must be able to cope with future challenges and therefore should bear a certain feature of flexibility. Innovation should be a prominent feature of the bottom up science process in ICES.
- On the other hand, some degree of continuity is required in order to protect corporate knowledge and experience in the Expert Groups and Committees.
- The science priorities in ICES must allow for alignment with Member Country priorities and with the ICES Strategic Goals.
- There is a clear need for a forum for strategic thinking in ICES. ConC is the obvious body for that, which would also disburden ConC from micromanagement.

An ad-hoc subgroup will be created by ConC to further develop the review process and development of a new structure, consisting of the Chairs of LRC (Chair), ACFM, ACME, PUB and BCC, and the Head of Science Programme (Secretary). Final recommendations will be made to the Council at its Statutory Meeting in autumn 2006.

2 Opening

Gerd Hubold (ICES General Secretary) opened the meeting at 09.00 and welcomed all participants to the EEA. The workshop is an important step to improve the structures for the science work – one of the two pillars that ICES is built upon. Much has been said about the advisory process in recent years and much less has been said about science. However, the science structure is the backbone of ICES, and priority must be given to assure that it functions well. Now that there are more institutions that are attractive alternatives ICES competes for the best marine scientists. There is an urgent need to make our structure as attractive as possible for marine science in the North Atlantic.

Open discussion chaired by Mike Sissenwine

There have been many changes concerning reorganisation of structure and process in the past. The structure was last changed a decade ago. Change is a healthy process –not a signal that anything is seriously malfunctioning. This Workshop was stimulated by ConC and MCAP last September as a very important mechanism for opening the process to the ICES Community so that there can be broad discussion of issues and options. The ICES Delegates strongly supported the idea of this open workshop. This meeting was not structured to make any

decisions. ConC will meet the following day to make recommendations based on the input from this meeting. The major part of the meeting was dedicated to listening to the ICES scientists.

The aim of the day was therefore to generate ideas, and no formal conclusions were expected to emerge at the Workshop. Concerning aspects of the Strategic Plan that relate to the science work, it was noted that the Strategic Plan will be updated in the near future.

The President welcomed the guest speaker, Dr Alan Edwards, DG Research, who spoke about “Challenges for marine science in the next decade”.

Harald Loeng, Chair of ConC, gave a presentation on “Review process from a ConC perspective”.

Paul Connolly, Chair of MCAP, gave a presentation on “ICES Science and Advice: An MCAP Perspective”.

3 Plenary session

The Chair distributed a list of “trigger” questions to stimulate discussion in plenary.

Robin Cook, UK Delegate, presented the UK’s reflections. We are now back to where we were ten years ago; this shows us that by restructuring along the same lines as we have done previously, we will sooner or later end up in the same position. We do have a Strategic Plan – what organisational structure do we need to fulfil the mission statement? Scientific capacity and Advice are the two keys. Science in ICES must be more strategic. Where in ICES are we trying to get some scientific strategic direction? ConC gets bogged down in administration, so right now there is no forum for such discussions. ICES networking capability is also critical; we need a structure that stimulates networking and innovation.

Three Science Committees are suggested: Ecosystem, Environment, and Fisheries. A Strategic Science plan needs to be developed. There is a need for a broader interaction with the public.

The presentation was followed by an initial open discussion before breaking into subgroups.

What is really the scientific objective of a Science Committee? This question will need thorough consideration today and the answer will give valuable guidance to the process of restructuring. Historically, the Scientific Committees were seen as a vehicle for summarizing the science going on in each member country. They were the forum for the exchange of information, with the committee members being the national focal points. Then the Committees started to coordinate knowledge through presentations of scientific work. They have now become the interface between Expert Groups and the Council, including the Consultative Committee.

The point was made that we must look at the outside world and the ongoing changes there. The Chair made it clear that there is no intention to keep the outside world out of the discussion. As an additional challenge, however, the science pillar must also appreciate the need for two-way communication with the advisory side of the ICES world. This meeting was focused on the science pillar, but comments on the advisory structure were welcomed as well.

Moving towards one Advisory Committee as a possible option for future advice, as presented by the MCAP Chair, might mean reviewing the role of national representation. Some Delegates suggest moving away from national representation and instead towards regional representation – this is in keeping with the Ecosystem Approach, and would ensure more appropriate expertise. Regional, more integrated ecosystem-based advice is closer related to what the science should deliver. Should we work more disciplinary or regionally? While it was felt that these approaches cannot be separated an underlying issue is, however, the

capacity for science to turn towards regional advice. Regions are incredibly different. Some science issues will be region-specific, while others are generically important for all regions.

ICES is a network of excellence comparable with those that have been created by EU Research Framework Programmes. We really should be able to spawn science projects and programmes in the European and North American areas. We should provide the fora for generating science to be considered for funding. This should be borne in mind when thinking about a new structure – especially when it is to be cross-disciplinary. ICES has embarked on relatively few funded projects outside the advisory area. The idea is that ICES should be more dynamic to develop a portfolio of projects. Would the present or a new structure facilitate that?

A crucial question will be how to design a system that will work for all issues – there may be times when we want regional structures and times when inter-disciplinary structures would be better. Therefore, it will be paramount to set up flexible structures that can be optimised to suit the changing world around us. Last time the system was reviewed, the committee structure was blocked by the Rules of Procedure. Thus, bureaucracy should not be an impediment to change if there is agreement on the change that will enhance mission performance.

The invited speaker of DG Research, Alan Edwards reflected on what EuroGOOS has achieved. Unlike ICES it is not inter-governmental but rather a collection of agencies, brought together under a common understanding. DG Research has managed to persuade the Commission to include operational oceanography in its funding priorities and it now funds research topics on a regional basis. It is a model which has been successful in terms of lodging projects.

ICES Expert Groups have been and still are involved in EU-funded projects. However, these activities are not explicitly labelled as being ICES-specific, nor do they have ICES as “corporate” organisation. How ICES interacts with the EU Framework Programmes is revealing. ICES was founded to foster scientific collaboration between countries and this is similar to what the Framework Programmes do. ICES needs to find out where it fits into this system. ICES should not compete for the same resources. It should help to shape priorities and strategies with an aim toward making scientific results more valuable, and if appropriate, providing sound scientific justification for more funding when it is needed to fulfil societal expectations.

Future Framework Programmes will open more towards international engagement beyond the European community and welcome the participation of institutes from around the globe, such as in environmental science, and also welcome participation from developing countries. ICES can be a valuable vehicle for making it happen and is welcome to reply adequately to calls for proposals.

The question is therefore what should be ICES role in the 7th Framework Programme, and how can we make best use of it and generate mutual benefit for Expert Groups and the funding agency.

The plenary broke into subgroups for afternoon discussions, taking a starting point in the assignments/trigger questions included in Annex 2. The three subgroup reports can be found in Annexes 3–5.

4 Conclusions by President

The Chair of the meeting summarized the discussion and offered a few keywords as guidance for the follow-up evaluation and recommendations to be made by the Consultative Committee.

- Communication – responsiveness is crucial between the science and advisory bodies as well as within and across disciplines;
- Commitment – excellent contents and attractiveness is needed;
- Identification of needs – implementing the Ecosystem Approach to Management requires new layers of knowledge and a new culture of communication;
- Flexibility – a new structure to be able to cope with future challenges and new issues;
- Innovation – from the bottom up;
- Continuity – protecting corporate knowledge and experience;
- Don't rush things;
- Need for cross-disciplinary approach;
- Align science priorities with Member Country priorities and with ICES Strategic Goals;
- Concern about ConC's performance – more strategic thinking is necessary.

It was a very useful meeting highlighting options for the evolution of the ICES science structure and future programmes. There was a clear agreement on the need for change and some guidance on how to make these changes was presented. While ICES has a strategy to guide science for a huge range of issues, ICES is suffering from work overload and must prioritize. Much can be transferred to real proposals in the coming months and eventually to the Council in the autumn. The General Secretary expressed that he is optimistic that the Council will agree to changes to allow for better work in this changing world, while allowing also for the small steps to start the process that is ahead.

5 Closing

The Chair thanked the three subgroup Chairs for their work, and thanked Alan Edwards of the European Commission for his incentive presentation. The EEA was acknowledged for providing the excellent meeting facilities and the director, Jaqueline McGlade was thanked for her warm welcome and hosting the meeting. He thanked the ICES Secretariat staff for excellent preparations and work during the meeting and all the participants for coming and providing invaluable input. The meeting closed at 17.30 hrs.

Annex 1: Agenda and timetable

Workshop on Review of the ICES Committee and Expert Group Performance (WKREP) 15 March 2006 Draft Agenda

9.00	Welcome	ICES President, ICES General Secretary
9.30	Challenges for marine science in the next decade	Alan Edwards, EU-DG Research
10.00	Introduction to the review process in ICES: views of the Science Committees	Harald Loeng, Chair of ConC
10.15	Introduction to the review process in ICES: views of the Advisory Committees	Paul Conolly, Chair of MCAP
10.30	<i>Coffee</i>	
11.00	Plenary discussion	
12.30	<i>Lunch</i>	
14.00	One or two thematic workshops	
15.30	<i>Coffee</i>	
16.00	Reports of the workshops and plenary discussions	
17.30–18.00	Summary and concluding remarks: The revised Committee and Expert Group structure of ICES	ICES President

Meeting documents

		<i>Updated</i>
Doc 1	Agenda and timetable	13 Feb 2006
Doc 2	Reviewing the structure of ICES Expert Groups and Science Committees	2 Feb 2006
Doc 3	Development of a unified ACOM structure	25 Jan 2006

Annex 2: WKREP breakout group assignment

Consider the system of Expert Groups, Science Committees, ConC, and the Annual Science Conference.

1. How well does the system work?

- What's good about it?
- What does it do poorly?
- Where are the weak links?

2. In particular, how well does the system match science priorities with advisory system needs?

- How well do Science Committees know what (in terms of science) is needed for advice?
- Are they responsive to needs?
- Do Advisory Committees know what science is needed?
- Do Advisory Committees recognize opportunities arising from new science?

3. Underlying causes – what's behind problems?

- Lack of funds?
- Lack of commitment?
- Over work and over commitment?
- Lack of expertise?
- Unclear roles and responsibilities?
- System weaknesses?
- ????????

4. What about the Science Committees?

- Do we need them? If so, for what?
- Are there too many or too few or does it matter?
- What "organizing principle" do you suggest (by discipline, ecosystem, societal issue, whatever creates interest)?
- How should they relate to Expert Groups and to ConC?
- How should membership be decided?
- How should they operate (e.g., annual meetings at ASC, more frequent meetings, *ad hoc* meetings, virtual/electronic meetings)?

5. If you were "King or Queen?" how would you improve the system?

- Fine tuning or big changes?
- Structural changes?
- Changes in roles and responsibilities?
- Changes in procedures?
- Changes in membership and participation?

Be creative but also realistic!

6. Finally, what's the role of the Delegates in making your vision of the system successful?

- Take control or get out of the way?
- Match commitments to resources?
- Help to broaden participation?
- Be mentors for young scientists?
- ?????

Annex 3: Subgroup A

Participants

Robin Law (MCWG), Paul Connolly (MCAP), Einar Eg Nielsen (WGAGFM), Paul Keizer (ACME), Francis O'Beirn (WGEIM), Pierre Pepin (PUB), Heye Rumohr (MHC), Mike Sissenwine (President), Paddy Walker (WGEKO, ACE), Christopher Zimmermann (SGMID, ACFM, subgroup chair), Gerd Hubold (ICES), Alan W. Edwards (DG Research), Vivian Piil (ICES, rapporteur)

Summary/Plenary Presentation by Chris Zimmermann

Subgroup A considers the **present system appropriate**, but with a **need for some changes**. While the advisory groups usually receive well-defined tasks from the clients, channelled through MCAP and Advisory Committees, the current system in the science line allows for top-down and bottom-up approaches. This is considered an important benefit of the present system, as it gives some flexibility to the choice of research tasks, and is attractive especially for non-governmental scientists. Changes in the current structure are however needed with a focus on:

- **improving communication:** there is apparently too little communication vertically (from Expert Groups through Science Committees to ConC) and horizontally (between Expert Groups and between the Science line and the Advisory line);
- creating structures allowing for **prioritisation of tasks** in the framework of the ICES strategic plan;
- **creating incentives** for scientists to actively participate in and chair Expert Groups, and for national labs/Delegates to support their national chairs in conducting their tasks. While financial constraints are certainly important, personal commitment is irreplaceable.

These changes would not require a major restructuring of the system, but rather “fine tuning” at various levels. The group agreed on a number of suggestions:

- the **Science Committees (SciCom) should consist of all Expert Group chairs** under this committee (with a full vote), plus one national representative if needed. This would be an incentive for chairs, but also for Delegates, as the national influence could be increased with a higher number of chairs. It would assure that Expert Group chairs would meet at the ASC (SciCom meetings would then resemble the AMAWGC meeting in the advisory line) and horizontal communication would be improved;
- **SciComs should be given more responsibilities:** they should define their Expert Groups ToRs, which would then only be channelled through ConC and Council. SciCom chairs should make ConC aware of ToRs which are important with respect to the strategic plan, amendments should in principle be done prior to the ConC meeting;
- Time saved at the ConC meetings by this procedure should be spent on **strategic planning**. ConC should increasingly act as bridge between the science and the advisory line and give a clearer feedback to Expert Groups on prioritisation of tasks, to spend limited resources more coordinated;
- **Expert Groups should be able to choose their parent committee** – this would increase the flexibility and the competition between SciComs, Expert Groups could move to SciComs which better reflect their topics (*example: survey groups spread over a variety of SciComs, genetics groups dealing mainly with stock separation issues currently under MCC*). Some SciComs might be dissolved when they become under-critical;

- **The structure of SciComs should be critically reviewed:** some committees could be merged, which would improve the horizontal communication, even if those larger groups might then have to split up for part of the sessions to remain manageable. Again this would increase the flexibility. **Temporary SciComs** should be formed to address specific tasks, and could “borrow” Expert Groups from other SciComs for a certain period if needed. *Example: A “Multispecies Modelling Committee” could contain different methods/modelling groups, data groups and workshops and work until the models are ready to be fed back into the advisory/assessment groups. Presently, the Baltic Multispecies Expert Group is placed under BCC, the North Sea Multispecies WG under RMC, etc.*
- Horizontal communication could be enhanced by means of specific webpages, sharepoint systems and agreed structures in reports (e.g. an obligatory one-page executive summary).

In addition to structures and funding problems, ICES needs to develop a working environment fostering creativity and attracting skilled scientists also from the non-governmental sector.

Notes from the Subgroup meeting

Do we need major changes or fine tuning? Subgroup A likes the system as it is (highly flexible, functions very well), but there is a need for fine-tuning. Communication is a problem – mostly between groups (horizontally). This might be an operational problem, rather than structural. The Subgroup emphasised that it is important to focus on your strategic role before you review the structure.

Role of Science Committees

Science Committees are subcommittees to ConC. Two representatives per ICES Member Country are nominated to all Science Committees. The background for having national representation is to enable the committees to elect members for ConC.

Suggestions to:

- Restructure Science Committees and merge them into bigger groups. However, if groups become too big they will be unmanageable, making it difficult to have proper discussions. Subgroups could be a solution and provide more flexibility (subgroups would then not be as permanent as SciComs are);
- Flexibility in the structure of Expert Groups and Science Committees. Fixed life-time for Science Committees?
- Should Expert Groups be allowed to choose their parent/Science Committee?

Which roles need to be fulfilled? Science Committees oversee the work of the Expert Groups within their committee. Committees should focus on the key points of the reports, not on the entire reports. The committees should provide ConC with the main points.

How important is national representation? Without national representation the committees tend to become old boys’ clubs. There has to be a mechanism for adding new members to groups. Science Committees should also consist of Expert Group chairs. In addition there could be one or two nominated members from each of the ICES Member Countries. If national representatives are appointed in addition to Expert Group Chairs, the number could be open.

The group agreed to support the idea of EG chairs becoming full members of their SciComs. One vote per member country, plus one Chair vote.

Role of ConC

ConC is the Science/Advice interface but is too busy taking care of the planning of the ASC.

The subgroup considered the idea of national representation in ConC. This would imply a funding problem. In this scenario it would not be necessary for the Council to approve ToRs. With regard to the composition of ConC – if there are only three Committee Chairs, the representation in ConC will not cover a wide enough area. It would be healthy to supplement ConC with experts for a specific task. Science Committees should be more involved and ConC should have a monitoring role, not spending so much time on ToRs.

ConC and review/approval of draft resolutions

To communicate ICES Strategy to every level someone (i.e. ConC) must be given the task of assessing the yearly priorities. A very dynamic subgroup structure is needed. While ConC is overwhelmed by assessing terms of reference, MCAP has more time now to do strategic thinking.

Advice is top-down driven, would also like to see something coming up from Science.

There should be a consistency in the message – if a group does not address Integrated Advice it sends a bad message. There should be consistency in terms of the strategy.

ConC should communicate and delegate tasks to the Science Committees.

Dealing with the draft resolutions should be delegated down in the organisation and be dealt with by an experienced ConC sub-group consisting of science managers. Note: ConC Chair needs to be prepared to present the ToRs to the Council.

Communication

How can we improve the horizontal communication/information flux?

- EGs should set up their own webpages with ToRs, lists of members, and highlight their findings;
- Annual meeting for Science Committee chairs (not needed if SciComs consist of those chairs and meet at the ASC);
- Better Executive Summaries;
- Expert Group reports should follow a generic structure;
- Suggestion to create a forum at the ASC where people can find each other;
- Suggestion to change characterisation of ASC Committee days into Expert Group discussions. An AMAWCG approach for Science Committee EGs. The scope of AMAWCG was widened this year to incorporate more groups. Survey groups (mainly science) are working for Assessment groups – communication is essential;
- Lack of communication can be improved by having joint sessions of Science Committees.

Funding

The role of the EG chair is going to be much stronger and more funding will be needed from the national institutes. These are important chores; this should be communicated to the national Delegates.

If EG chairs become members of Science Committees, their role should be phrased in a way that implies that the funding is in place.

Some experts are overworked, for some there is a lack of commitment. Lack of expertise (no time for this subgroup to address this). More active recruitment. Hard to find suitable chairs and participants for the EG meetings.

Annex 4: Subgroup B

Participants

Einar Svendsen (OCC Chair, subgroup chair), Louise Scharff (ICES, rapporteur), Antonio Bode (SGGOOS), Robin Cook, (ICES Delegate), Cornelius Hammer (BCC Chair), François Gerlotto (FTC Chair), Martin Pastoors (ACFM Chair), Carmela Porteiro (ICES Delegate), Elisabeth Sahlsten (STGQAC), John Simmonds (SGMAS), Søren Anker Pedersen (ICES), Adi Kellermann (ICES).

The Challenge

ICES has committed itself to the Ecosystem Approach to Management. By adopting it ICES may have “bitten off more than we can chew”. By thinking about what we expect ICES to deliver we should also start thinking about new and flexible structures that are suited to produce the deliverables. Communication or motivation/commitment alone will not be enough, more is needed.

There has been a lack of strategic thinking. This issue is also addressed in the paper tabled by the UK delegates. ICES needs a forum for strategic science discussions. That should be a structure that stimulates innovation and networking. It could be a body at the level of ConC, i.e. a Strategic Science Committee. This body can be approached from different angles by different projects. A strong network is already in place.

The Science Committees have been criticised for lack of attendance. Another suggestion has been to include all Expert Group Chairs in the Committee meetings. However, if all the committee members show up at the ASC and if all Expert Group Chairs participate, the ASC would see a minimum of more than 400 participants stemming from just the Committee meetings. This would kill the ASC. Science is the focus. The ASC is still the place to introduce new science to ICES and for networking among the scientific community. This part of the communication needs to be strengthened.

Needs for a new structure

It is important to identify the problems now. A set of criteria for a new system needs to be identified and a process to be suggested by which we can redesign a structure. It is also important not simply to re-badge and start over. The time is ripe for a new structure. There is a development towards regional advice, Regional Assessment Committees are in place, and a new research framework will be released by the European Commission as well as new perspectives for a Marine Policy in the European Oceans. And what science is needed to meet the demands of the clients?

The Science Committees need to restructure; however, we should be careful adapting a new structure to specific issues which would make them too inflexible. A new structure may be designed in a matrix structure, consisting of the “scientist level” (Expert Groups, to remain more or less unchanged) and a vertical thematic structure to be expanded to a three-dimensional matrix by horizontal, project-oriented horizontal structures. Projects would bring people together. This matrix could better meet the requirements of the Ecosystem Approach which has multiple dimensions. So far, ICES has been good at responding to single requests, but the old structure is not working for the new questions. We need to design a system that can be adapted to any issue – in five years’ time it might be something completely different from today, e.g., the rapidly developing issue of climate change and its dynamics and impacts.

There is still a need for regional Expert Groups to deal with problems at appropriate scales. Concomitantly, common problems need to be identified for all ecosystems to be dealt with at a more general scientific level under more strategic aspects.

Although the level of Expert Groups is undisputed, one might consider giving them a shorter life span (similar to Study Groups) to allow for more flexibility. However, continuity is an important feature in ICES and is part of the “corporate memory” and “corporate knowledge”. So we must be careful not to question the EGs, but instead make better use of them.

The Ecosystem Approach to Management demands a range of new quantified knowledge of the dynamics (trends and variability) of the ecosystem, from physics, primary and secondary production, to overlap between prey and predators and between contaminants and physiology. It's a huge challenge to produce this knowledge retrospectively up to the present time and to make predictions. Such information needs to be made operational for management purposes and it needs to have high resolution in space and time. This can be achieved by integration of mathematical models and observations from ships or buoys or autonomous vehicles, surveys, and remote sensing.

Questions to deal with

How well does the system work?

Communication works well between people, but not across Committees. There is a serious lack of cross-disciplinary communication, especially between fisheries and environmental sciences. The current structure divides rather than integrates.

The current ICES Science Programme should take more account of and may be more aligned to science priorities of individual Member Countries. This would also lead to a prioritization of themes in ICES and it would require reconciliation with the Strategic Goals of ICES.

Are SciComs responsive to needs?

The questions from Advisory Committees are often too broad and general to be properly answered by the Science Committees, the latter need to better understand the general requirements of Advisory work. There is at present no mechanism to ensure dialogue between the two.

Underlying causes

Lack of funds is only part of the problem. Committees currently do not provide the right incentive. Lack of commitment or content is an indicator and shows that there is no real interest in participation which ultimately points to the lack of the right science contents in the Committees. There is no point in having Committees that no one is interested in being a part of. It is therefore important to find a committee structure that gives incentive and whets people's appetite. The “Organizing principle” should be open. Expert Groups need to be able to organize around any of them. Networking should be encouraged!

If you were King or Queen?

Structural changes are to be made, spanning from membership changes (we question the necessity of national membership and add Expert Group Chair membership) to having only one Committee commissioning Expert Groups on demand. There should be small and big changes, and a process of re-structuring should start with the small and easy steps and envisage the big steps down the road.

Role of Delegates

Delegates should better acknowledge their responsibility and mission. Such a commitment would be easier for them to match with resources if a strategic science plan was put in place. The current Strategic Goals more or less envisage that ICES will do everything.

Annex 5: Subgroup C

Participants

Fritz Köster (ICES Delegate, subgroup chair), Görel Kjeldsen (ICES, rapporteur), Ian Bricknell (MCC Chair), David Cross (WGSTAL), Wolfgang Fennel (SGBEM), Simon Jennings (ACE Chair), Harald Loeng (ConC Chair), Dave Reid (LRC Chair, ConC Vice-Chair), Helge Sagen (WGMDM), Luis Valdés (ICES Delegate), Doug Wilson (WGFS), Hans Lassen (ICES).

From the four subjects to be addressed, the group decided to focus on the performance of Expert Groups and Science Committees as well as the role of the Consultative Committee. It did not address in detail the organisation of the Annual Science Conference; however, it acknowledges that the ASC is not in all cases the best platform for the annual Science Committee meetings (e.g. there is no real scientific environment for the Mariculture Committee), and alternative meeting venues and dates may be considered.

To simplify the task further, the group shortly discussed the role of the Delegates though they were not at the center of attention in the present discussion. It was felt important to state that the lack of scientific overview and detailed knowledge on science activities at the Delegate level is a problem for any change to the system, as the Delegates are not only the highest decision council in ICES, but important for providing the resources at a national level to enable the change and conduct the science.

The conclusions on problems with the present system from the ConC meeting at the ASC 2005 were extended by a series of short-comings, namely that there is:

- insufficient representation in specific science fields (e.g. Mariculture);
- repetition of work already conducted outside of ICES, including lack of prioritization and coordination of contributions by ICES scientists often within ICES groups to FP5 and FP6 projects;
- lack of feedback from ConC to Science Committees and Expert Groups on direction and priorities, because of work overload within ConC;
- receivers of science products are often unclear or missing and communication of results to other groups and committees within ICES is limited;
- overlap between committees, but also isolation of Science Committees in the ICES system.

The group was also able to outline a series of positive aspects of the present system, e.g. being open for bottom-up initiatives, but it did not enter into a closer specification due to time constraints.

The statement of ConC that Expert Groups were in general conducting good work was mostly agreed upon, but quality was also considered to be heterogeneous and an evaluation against agreed criteria was suggested. This evaluation needs to take into account whether the groups are producing mostly scientific output or partly input into the advisory process.

In any case, conducting excellent science does not necessarily mean that a group really addresses strategic issues of interest and mapping of ToRs against the action plan as started by ConC should be finalised.

With respect to question 2 **How well does the system match science priorities** with advisory system needs, the group discussed the first part of the question (in bold) separately, starting with the question whose science priorities should actually be matched, the ones put forward by

the national laboratories, by specific large-scale research programmes (e.g. GLOBEC), or by single visionary scientists?

The strategic plan gives some answers; it touches in total three times on prioritisation, under:

Evolution of ICES, the past and present

Responsibility for overseeing the production of scientific information rests with the Consultative Committee, which coordinates and sets priorities for the work of the seven Science Committees.

From this statement it is clear that ConC is supposed to coordinate and set priorities for the work of the Science Committees.

Added value

To continue to be effective, ICES must carry out and coordinate programmes in the most economical manner practicable, maintain and further develop a modern infrastructure, set priorities to achieve goals within budget constraints, and attract additional resources to support ICES programmes.

From this statement it is clear that priorities should also allow to attract additional resources to support ICES.

Finally, priorities are mentioned in relation to the needs and expectations of Member Countries.

Keep abreast of the needs and expectations of ICES Member Countries

Encourage Delegates to establish arrangements for gathering broad input (i.e., going beyond the organisations that have traditionally had an interest in ICES) for the identification of national needs and priorities.

From this statement it is clear that priorities should be set also with respect to the needs of Member Countries.

If considering the second half of the question “**How well does the system match science priorities with advisory system needs?**” the situation gets even more complex as interests of clients have to be considered as well.

It is evident, that science is performed under the auspices of both the advisory and the Science Committees and that it is not helpful to divide between research and advisory needs as the advice should be based on the best science available. However, priorities for Expert Groups working under a science or Advisory Committee are set differently; groups which conduct cutting-edge science (and they exist) are organizationally largely independent, while science feeding into advice gets its direction more in a top-down controlled way.

The cutting-edge science groups normally create their own ToRs and work plans independently, whether their output is requested or even used within the ICES system. If the output is scientifically rewarding, this procedure is satisfying and self-sustaining. However, if it is more advice-related output than production without application, it is often frustrating.

Even if output from Expert Groups producing high quality science is not used directly within ICES at present, it may very well be needed for the implementation of the ecosystem approach. Additionally, one should be aware that advice encompasses as well a suggestion of research priorities (reference to GD Research).

To ensure that the science is at a high level, the group felt that criteria of excellence (e.g. publications, resulting research projects, improvement of assessment and advisory procedures) need to be defined.

These criteria should be used by the longer-lasting working groups in a self-evaluation process checking for i) progress according to a road map, ii) coverage of ToRs in relation to goals, and iii) communication of results and linkage of work to scientific fora and users within and outside of ICES.

Apart from this self-evaluation process of working groups, the Science Committees and ConC should evaluate especially the performance of shorter-term Expert Groups and evaluate whether the longer-term groups sufficiently address the strategic and action plans. In this respect, especially the Science Committees should foster communication among Expert Groups and between Science Committees to minimize double work and maximize synergies.

To enable the Science Committees to adequately perform this role, it is suggested to change the set-up from national nomination to include the chairs of Expert Groups (who should be committed to participate), while allowing for participation of experienced scientists presently not in chair positions, i.e. being open to participation (which points to continue having the meetings of most Science Committees at the ASC). The Science Committees should have the means to change ToRs, modify and dissolve Expert Groups if not performing according to the agreed road map, enforce a stricter life-time for short-term groups, set up new scientific initiatives, and organize outlet of products (as already successfully done by some committees, e.g. FTC).

To enhance the role of ConC in this process as the committee having an overview of all science conducted under the umbrella of ICES and being the committee launching cross-cutting issues, a re-arrangement of the work tasks with more time for real prioritization and planning is required. This should be facilitated by an appropriate time schedule of meetings, i.e. having results and recommendations from Science Committees at hand and sufficient time to review them.

Whatever change of the system is implemented, the creativity of the bottom-up process needs to be kept and in fact strengthened. For this to happen requires chairs of Expert Groups to be innovative and specific in terms of scientific gains as well as focused and achievable ToRs, and for products to be produced which are considered scientifically valuable (e.g. peer-reviewed publications, Consolidated Progress Reports).

Given the present tendency for regionalisation of the scientific advice, it was considered to be an advantage that the scientific committees address generic issues across systems instead of focusing also on regional aspects. This may, however, change in a number of years and any system should be flexible enough to be adapted to changes in requirements. This flexibility should not only prevail in the larger-scale structures of the system, but also in the day-to-day operation of the future scientific committees and ConC.

Allocation of specific technical pre-requisites for successful science and advice, such as data management, needs to be clarified.

Annex 6: List of participants

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