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Minutes of the Advisory Committee Meeting (ACOM)

1–4 December 2008

ICES Headquarters
Copenhagen, Denmark



ICES

International Council for
the Exploration of the Sea

CIEM

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l'Exploration de la Mer

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1 Opening and welcome

The ACOM Chair, Michael Sissenwine welcomed the participants to the 2nd official ACOM meeting. In order to familiarise the participants a brief round-table presentation was made. The Chair noted that only one representative per country was invited to the meeting, but the rules of procedure allow ICES Delegates to attend as observers. This right can be delegated to a designee who will be present at ACOM on behalf of a Delegate. Thus there might be more than one person per country present, and he welcomed everyone that was in attendance. The Secretariat gave some practical information relevant for the meeting.

The list of participants is found in Annex 1.

The list of meeting documents is found in Annex 3.

2 Adoption of agenda

The Chair presented the agenda and noted that there would be some break-out groups during the meeting as indicated in the annotated agenda (Annex 2). The agenda was adopted with the following points added:

- Agenda point 8a: Reference points for fisheries and the precautionary approach
- Agenda point 8b: Presentation of the SGMAS outcome on evaluation of management plans.
- Agenda point 10: A formal process is needed for finalising the TORs of the EGs

3 Council discussion and decisions October

The Chair presented the documents: Minutes of the 2008 Council meeting and The ACOM Chair's report to the Council. He added a few comments as follows:

The Council appreciated the participation and efforts made by ACOM and expressed a sense of relief that the advisory activities had been run with no major failures even though the workload had been huge. The workload was discussed and a reduction could not be foreseen but it was certain that the workload could not have been handled under the old advisory structure. The Council discussed ICES being as a major player on the EU Marine Strategy Framework Directive (MSFD). It endorsed ICES involvement, although some members were concerned about the geographical scope. The Council appointed Carl O'Brien and Manuela Azevedo as ACOM Vice-chairs. The Council thanked Martin Pastoors for his efforts during the last three years. The meeting took note of the presentation of the Chair's report to Council and adopted the Minutes.

4 Review of performance of Advisory Services in 2008

4.1 Reports from Secretariat

Hans Lassen presented Document 7 prepared by the Secretariat.

The new system of preparing update assessments before the meeting of the Expert Group (EG) is intended to reduce the workload for an EG. For some stocks, it ap-

peared that the time between the survey and the assessment working group was too short to perform an update assessment. Thus, there should be more time between such two groups. This should be taken into account when developing the 2009 plan, although it may be difficult to work between the survey results being ready and the assessment deadlines.

ACOM noted that to some extent we have tested the ICES limits rather than saying “no” where we maybe should have done so. Management plans might be one such issue. Here we have set up a new co-operation with the STECF in order to try to rectify this problem. The fast track issue is another issue where a principal decision has to be taken (this is dealt with under Section 4.4).

It was mentioned that ecosystem and integration are still issues that need to be enhanced.

4.2 ACOM leadership perspective

The ACOM Chair made a presentation of the ACOM leadership perspective.

It was noted that Advice Drafting Groups (ADGs) sometimes had overlaps with EGs which kept the discussion much on the same level as in the EG. **ACOM felt** that in future it is necessary to secure diverse membership of ADGs. ACOM needs to invest in and entrust ADGs. In some ADGs there were only 2 participants and in others 12. The ideal number is probably something in between. However, by Council decision ACOM is not entirely responsible for the make-up of ADGs as delegates have the right to nominate members. This has obvious budget implications as travel expense of ADG members are reimbursed by ICES. Most ADG members were nominated by ACOM members and in fact, nominations by delegates were rare in 2008. The issues of ADG participation should probably be discussed again with the Council. The general impression is that the Council have been supportive to ACOM and constructive cooperation is expected.

The ACOM Chair noted that in some cases ADGs were almost exclusively made up of members representing countries that had a high degree of industry and political interest in the advice being drafted. Sometimes these ADG members had also participated in the EG that provided input to the ADG. This tended to lead to revisiting issues that had already been debated by the EG. The Chair indicated that ACOM leadership is concerned about this situation, and believes that advice would benefit from diverse participation in ADGs including scientists with a fresh perspective. **The Chair will keep this point under observation and will if this remains a problem in 2009 raise it with ACOM again, and take it up with the Bureau/Council, if appropriate.**

The **Video Conferences** (VC) worked generally well. Participation from ACOM is good (60% to 90%) with a tendency to burnout towards the year-end. Late arrival of documents or too many in one go, was mentioned as a “killer” for participation, and in reality it means involvement of the people already familiar with the issue.

ACOM has functioned well and is much more than just a rubber-stamping structure. Often a lot of pre-activity took place before a VC. The advisory product is probably better now than as developed by the former ACFM/ACE/ACME, as more interactions can take place and more experts can take part.

Regarding presentations to RACs and other stakeholders, these have added to an increasing workload. Web presentation could be an alternative. This was tried in 2008 once but this turned out to be quite difficult. In part, the problem was that many of

the stakeholders did not understand English, and translation was awkward. Person and face recognition are important for the trust building between ICES and RAC/other-stakeholders.

Clarification of the different types of advice and services should be attempted. This relates to what is the responsibility between ACOM leadership and ACOM. **The Chair will develop** a formal guideline for ACOM's consideration. This could perhaps be integrated with the guidelines on acceptance of request.

Generally, the new advisory structure has worked well in 2008, and everybody who contributed to the process was commended for that. However, the large workload in 2008 is probably not sustainable. We need careful planning and a strategic approach. SCICOM and ACOM need to work together.

ACOM took note of Doc 7 presented at ACOM autumn meeting (in Halifax) on how many participants, grouped in appropriate ways we had in the ADGs in 2008. The Secretariat was asked to update this document for inclusion in the 2008 review paper.

Feedback from clients on how ICES has worked in 2008 would be interesting. The issue will be further discussed by the Subgroup on User Surveys. Within the EC the reactions to the time shift of the advice seem positive. In a few instances, a more relaxed time schedule was requested by ICES but these were quickly rejected by clients. There is even some pressure that the time schedule should be more compressed.

It was suggested that maybe a half year planning could also be considered in addition to the normal one year plan especially regarding the fast track advice.

Workload of ACOM Vice-chairs was high. There has not been enough time for the ACOM leadership to consider strategic issues in 2008 due to the Vice-chair's workload. The 2009 plan is to have ACOM members to take over some of the ADG chairing. Generally, ACOM members have been positive towards this.

Financing the Review Group's (RGs) rather than ADGs was suggested. The ICES strategic fund is supporting the ACOM work until 2010. During 2009 ACOM needs to consider the way forward from 2010 and onwards. For 2009 the procedures remain unchanged.

4.3 How do working group members see it?

The ICES secretariat presented a short "Scientist perspective" based on recent experience. The views expressed in the presentation should be regarded as illustrative, not necessarily representative since they were not the result of a scientifically valid survey.

Not all EG participants find the work of the EG rewarding or beneficial to career advancement. Some members of science EGs do not appreciate the work on advice, their main interest in attending ICES EG meeting is the scientific work and network, not the drafting of the advice.

ICES may lose some scientists that are no longer interested in coming to EGs to do update assessments only. The ecosystem integration should be developed in order to attract more scientists and from different fields. Additionally, EGs may identify issues during a group that can be developed in a peer review paper, during inter-sectional work. However, it is also important that the home institutions of the scientist appreciate the importance of contributing to advice and take it into account in performance evaluations, reward programmes and promotions. Another option that

was discussed is publishing EG reports or Working documents as scientific papers in order to make EG attendance more interesting for scientist.

In 2008, two EGs that had advice drafting in their ToRs were postponed or dissolved due to the lack of participants. This situation causes difficulties for the advisory process.

ACOM decided to establish a Subgroup to recommend steps to address dissatisfaction and communication problems. The result is to be sent to the Bureau and/or Council.

4.4 Has ICES Advisory Services become too responsive?

The Chair presented the example of a Special Request - the "French letter": this had two main parts:

- a) Management plan evaluation. ACOM was able to use a previously developed model that allowed a variety of options. EG chair and experts that had worked with the evaluation were involved in answering this request, as well as the participants from the ADG group that had dealt previously with this item.
- b) Revision of document on bycatch. The EG participant that was involved with the discard issue during the EG was not available so the by-catch document was revised by the secretariat.

ICES had very little time available to respond to the request. There is a practical and a political side to answering this request.

ICES needs a procedure when a member country makes a request that involves more than one country. There are policy implications when responding to a request from one member country without the knowledge of other member countries that may be involved in the request issue.

There are practical workload limits for dealing with requests similar to the "French letter". It is important for ICES to respond to requests in a flexible way, but it may not be possible to respond every time. At the moment, there is no process to reject requests. ACOM discussed the issue of accepting or rejecting a request: Who should say "no" to a requests from a client? We should consider more carefully whether we have sufficient time for all the elements in the advice, not just for drafting the advice. It is a trade-off between being fast but still following the ICES approach of quality, consensus etc.

Many of these types of requests are simple demands for extra calculations. **ACOM agreed** that in such cases, it is not necessary to establish a RG and ADG. For trivial issues, only ACOM leadership and the Secretariat should be involved. It is not necessary to involve all ACOM community.

ACOM agreed The ACOM Chair will draft a detailed protocol describing the types of products of Advisory Services and ground rules (i.e., decision path). A draft will be circulated for ACOM consideration by January 31.

5 Report of Subgroups

5.1 SUBFORMAT

SUBFORMAT Subgroup met in September at Halifax ACOM meeting. The format of the present advice is too complex

The SUBFORMAT group had two proposals for fisheries advice that were analysed by a breakout group.

Results of the SUBFORMAT breakout group:

A new proposal was presented that merges two earlier versions. It is a two page proposal for the single stock and an extra page for supplementary information. This two page document does not contain the single stock advice. The advice for a given stock is available in the fisheries overview section. ACOM needs to decide if the advice will be presented only in the overview section or also in the two pages single stock summary. The first page should be the most important and self explanatory.

The two pages are followed by Supplementary information with figures included in the text. The outlook table may be moved to the supplementary information, since it includes more than 5 management options.

More examples should be generated using the new proposed format (e.g. deep water shark, redfish and herring). These examples should be available for the WGCHAIRS to examine at their meeting in January. ACOM needs to prepare a text explaining the importance changing the advice format.

A key issue is the location of the advice. ACOM needs to decide if the advice should be in the two page summary or only in the overview section. If the advice is only in the overview, the information on a given species will be split in different places. If ICES is moving to ecosystem integration it is important to have the advice in the overview section. **ACOM decided** that the advice should be in the summary document.

It is important to have good plots visualizing the trade off between catch and biomass and the trade off between short and longer term forecast. **ACOM should develop** a proposal for the visualising the short term forecast and ask the clients if they understand the plots.

ACOM agreed that the Subgroup Chair (Martin Pastoors) will complete a report from the breakout group for consideration by WGCHAIRS. It will also be sent to users and stakeholders for comment. Based on feedback, a final proposal will be circulated to ACOM for approval, in time for 2009 advice if possible.

5.2 Results of the User Satisfaction subgroup

The Subgroup Chair Eugene Nixon presented a document and the results of a breakout group.

The group recommended that three different types of questionnaires are developed to canvass satisfaction with ICES advice/procedures from

- a) Advice producers
- b) Advice users
 - Council participants

- Delegate members (ACOM members were discussed but Delegates are better candidates)
- Clients
- c) Stakeholders
 - RACs
 - ICES observers
 - Other groups from outside EU

This survey should be carried out using the web (possibly the ICES website). The ICES Data Centre will be asked to develop the front end pages and a database for input and storage of responses.

The questionnaire should be simple, but people should be capable of elaborating answers. Furthermore, questions should aim for 'trend indicators' (better/same as/worse than last year) instead of point estimates (good, ok, bad) for comparison between years. It was mentioned that ACOM does not have expertise in designing questionnaires and that social scientists could be involved. **The secretariat** will start with setting up a basic web based survey.

Minutes from the User Satisfaction Subgroup are attached as Annex 4

ACOM agreed that the Subgroup Chair (Eugene Nixon) will finalize the report and questionnaires for circulation and approval by ACOM by 1 March. ACOM is looking for results by ASC in September 2009.

6 Status of ongoing work

6.1 Benchmark groups

Two documents were tabled; one on process since September and one on status of participation of external experts. 3 Benchmark groups and a Nephrops group dealing with underwater TV surveys are planned for 2009, external experts have been contacted to participate and most names are in place. Not all chairs have been confirmed yet. The Nephrops group has been moved and will take place in the beginning of March in Aberdeen.

Meetings are open to all including stakeholders. The Secretariat in cooperation with the ICES coordinators will solicit participation at the meetings to ensure that key experts will be available. **ACOM decided** that incoming Vice-chair Carl O'Brien will chair the benchmark 2010 planning group. Future planning for benchmarks will be discussed at the WGCHAIRS meeting. A report for ACOM approval will be circulated by 15 March.

For 2009, ACOM looked into the **North Sea sprat** as an addition to WKSHORT and agreed to add it if data and experts can be made available.

ACOM noted that if every stock needed a benchmark assessment every 3-4 years, the system would fail as there are ca 140 stocks. However, many of these stocks have rather simple assessments (e.g., survey trends). A full plan is required otherwise the process will be ad hoc and responsive only to urgent needs.

6.2 Special Requests (e.g., CFP Ecosystem Indicators)

A document containing a list of special requests for 2008 and 2009 and a status and review of the process and types of frequent requests was introduced by Hans Lassen.

The ecosystem indicators request is related to the new DCR and there are obvious overlaps with the Marine Strategy Framework Directive. ICES should aim to provide synergies between work on these issues.

A proposal for processing the ecosystem indicator request has been developed and sent to the Commission and ICES is currently waiting for acceptance. ICES can respond to the first 4 indicators by extracting data from the DATRAS database, a process for indicators 5-9 has not yet been determined, and indicator 10 on fuel is not an issue that ICES can deal with.

ACOM pointed out that ICES should not enter into discussion about the quality or value of the indicators as they have already been agreed on by the European Commission (EC). The Marine Strategy Framework Directive (MSFD) project is the framework for future improvements in indicators.

6.3 Marine Strategy Framework Directive

Claus Hagebro presented the status and plan for handling this work i.e. to identify Descriptors and criteria for good environmental status. ICES will provide logistic support for four independent Task Groups that will develop recommendations for criteria and methodological standards for four of the eleven descriptors of Good Environmental Status. Because the geographical scope is wider than the ICES area and therefore involves input from other organisations ICES has not established traditional ICES expert groups but rather task groups with a wider geographical representation. There was a range of clarifying questions; the involvement of regional conventions and other stakeholders, whether the Task Groups had to identify targets/thresholds (they do not), working process of the Task Groups, JRC membership of the Management group etc. The request is on the boundary between science and policy and the way ICES is going to handle the request is purely on the scientific/technical side. EC asks for an open and transparent process which the EC will facilitate by setting up a Marine Strategy Coordination group and the Working group on GES where Member States are represented and the political process is handled. As noted under item 6.2, there should be synergy between this request and that on ecosystem approach indicators. **The Secretariat** will keep ACOM informed of future progress.

ACOM agreed that any public product from this project that is identifiable as coming from ICES, it will be ACOM approved advice (as agreed by the Council). ACOM will be kept informed so that it can judge if its approval (of advice) is necessary or not.

6.4 Regional ecosystem overviews

Although one Client considers the ecosystem overview of little value, ACOM decided to maintain the ecosystem overviews as there may be other clients who want to use the reviews. The expertise needed to maintain the ecosystem overviews is found mainly in the Science groups and the task could be handed over to SCICOM. However, it was not considered feasible at this stage to approach the newly established SCICOM. It was suggested to give the task in future to benchmark groups which could use the overviews as "early warning systems". **ACOM concluded** that the Arctic and the Baltic (perhaps North Sea) Assessment groups should be asked to prepare updates. The remaining overviews will be kept as they are. ACOM will finalise the planning for ecosystem overviews after the first SCICOM meeting.

7 Strategic Action Plan

The Chair introduced Document 14 and outlined the themes and objectives. ACOM noted that the request on the MSFD will support ICES development towards providing integrated advice. The need for press/information action was mentioned. Some actions should be directed towards internal development in ICES. Many of the actions in the Plan are things we already do. The Chair concluded that the discussions formed a good basis for revision of the document. The revised document will be circulated to the EG chairs for comments (both advice and science EGs) so an update (draft version) can be presented to the Bureau 9–10 February. **ACOM will be consulted** a deadline for response of about 10 days.

8 Initiatives in 2009

8.1 Evaluation of management plans

Multi-annual management plans are important but also demanding. So far, processes for developing the plans and their evaluation have been ad hoc and inconsistent. Criteria for evaluation should be developed. The meeting and close cooperation with STECF was discussed. It was noted that while STECF was an EC organization, the issue of management plans was broadly important, and managers from non-EC countries need to help guide decisions on how to make plan development and evaluation more consistent and timely.

The current backlog of evaluation of plans is a major credibility issue for ICES and practical ways have to work through this backlog is needed.

The ACOM Chair presented the findings of a Breakout group on evaluating of management plans. Annex 5 gives a short report of the outcome of the Breakout group.

On this basis, **ACOM agreed** that:

- 1) ICES will seek agreement on future roles and responsibilities, evaluation criteria (including a “rethink of the precautionary approach”), and priorities to address the backlog of plans.
- 2) Technical considerations to make it feasible to rapidly evaluate plans (i.e., simple models) will also be considered.
- 3) One or more workshops will be held about March to evaluate priority plans in time for those that are accepted to be used for 2009 advice.
- 4) A more general workshop on reference points will be considered later

8.2 Spatial Planning facility including Natura 2000 sites

A breakout group on this subject examined three topics that arose from Document 17.

1) ICES data centre

Neil Holdsworth gave an overview of development of the data centre in relation to spatially-referenced marine data. GIS work is also done at EEA, Helcom and OSPAR (just starting up) so a link between these bodies and ICES should be ensured. **ACOM recommended** that the Secretariat might initiate discussions with these bodies on how to cooperate and avoid duplication of effort in terms of spatial data requirements and developments.

2) Review of fisheries management proposals in Natura 2000 (and other) protected areas

ICES is expecting tens of requests on fisheries management in Natura sites over the next five years. The breakout group agreed that it was appropriate for ICES to answer these requests. ICES delivers its advice generally in the form of technical review – DG Mare request to review a Spanish nomination for the El Cachucho Natura 2000 site was a typical case. This review was carried out against the Commission's suggestion of the eleven information items needed to support management requests.

From experience with the Irish and Spanish Natura 2000 proposals it is evident that the documentation provided is far from complete. The breakout group therefore proposes to have communication started between ICES and the EC on a suggestion to develop guidelines for member countries on how best to propose suitable fisheries management measures to meet the objectives of Natura 2000 sites. The group agreed later that these guidelines would be helpful for measures for any other protected site.

The breakout group proposed that a working group be established for dealing with future requests. This would operate in a different way to existing working groups. Its core would be a pool of 10–12 reviewers; when each proposal was received from the Commission, 3–4 reviewers would be drawn from the group to provide individual, independent reviews and a first draft of the advice. The reviewers should evaluate each proposal up against the guidelines. Thereafter the advice should go through an advice drafting group (likely with proposals in batches). The ADG should include the reviewers and be open to member states and stakeholders; finally the advice should pass ACOM either by correspondence (default) or by web conference (when difficulties arise).

The ICES Secretariat should consider including this advice under the next MoU (which is to be negotiated during 2009). The breakout group considered the issue of paying the reviewers an honorarium for their work and recommend that this be considered further.

3) VMS data

The breakout group felt that the most important spatial data that ICES needed good access to is fisheries effort (VMS) data. The group was not clear as to how the revised DCR would affect access to this. It was agreed that Terms of Reference (see below) would be drafted to ask WGDIM to report on this and other related questions.

ACOM concluded:

- 1) The Secretariat might initiate discussions with EEA, Helcom and OSPAR on how to cooperate and avoid duplication of effort in terms of spatial data requirements and developments.
- 2) that a draft new ToR that was developed by the subgroup for WGDIM be send to ICES Data Centre for further action Perhaps through WGDIM WGDIM should consider also whether a new technical group on protocol be established to ensure consistency between different spatial planning requests.
- 3) that a new group on spatial issues, including planning be established, that will lead with VMS data

8.3 Integrated advice – the next steps (Special request on CFP ecosystem indicators)

The Chair noted that this agenda item already had been or would be discussed under various other agenda points including 8d below.

8.4 ICES – DCR (Links between fisheries advice process and PGCCDBS and its workshops) [Doc 19]

Hans Lassen presented Document 19. There is a commitment for ICES in the MoU with the EU to report back to the Commission on problems regarding data delivery and quality. There is not always time enough for the expert group members to record all problems encountered.

How is ICES covering obligations regarding DCR data that are not covered by PGCCDBS, for example there is the new request from EC regarding ecosystem indicators? In addition to workshops set up under PGCCDBS, there is also coordination going on in the planning groups for surveys and also in the Regional Coordination Meetings (RCMs) under the EC.

The new Data Collection Regulation (DCR) is starting from beginning of 2009 and other groups more concerned with ecosystem issues and VMS data may take form after the new DCR is in place.

The workshops under PGCCDBS should be kept under scrutiny so workshops on a specific topic will not be repeated unnecessarily often. The resources should be used as efficient as possible.

ACOM emphasised that age calibration workshops are very important for the whole advisory process, so it not a question of not having these workshops but rather to make sure no workshop which is not needed is set up, and to make sure the most pertinent issues are dealt with first.

8.5 Pilot project for Review Groups

A Pilot project on undertake checks on routine stock assessment updates using students under the supervision of a senior scientist was proposed by the ACOM leadership to reduce workload for ICES scientists. This pilot project is only for to check routine update fish stock assessments, it will not cover environmental advice or benchmark workshops. The procedure is to task a senior scientist to supervise students to redo the calculations process, to demonstrate that numerical results are reproducible. The senior scientist will present the RG results at the ADG and be responsible for ensuring the checks are conducted properly. The senior scientist needs to have a good interaction with the students and students should be graduates.

The review quality should not be compromised and good assessment manuals (quality handbooks or stock annexes) are needed and kept updated. There are several cases where a supposed “update assessment” is not a true update. Stock coordinator/assessor makes few changes in assessment method or data and do not report in the stock annexes. This situation can compromise the reproducibility calculations.

ACOM asked the secretariat to evaluate the approach to help guide future consideration. The suggested approach will not be initiated until there is an evaluation of strengths and weaknesses and further decision by ACOM

9 The new Science structure

The SCICOM Chair presented the background and development of the new science structure. He presented the Science Plan and the three main themes:

- 1) Understanding the Ecosystem Functioning with 7 sub-issues,
- 2) Understanding Interactions of Human Activities with Ecosystems with 5 sub-issues and
- 3) Development of options for Sustainable Use of Ecosystems with 4 sub-issues.

Further, he described the structure of the Science Programme. The SCICOM (parallel to ACOM) will have a chair and one member per country (and one alternate). In addition there may be up to 5 additional members to cover disciplinary gaps in the committee's expertise. The existing science committees will cease to exist by the end of 2008 but to ensure the continuity the chairs has been encouraged to participate in SCICOM in 2009. Finally the functions of SCICOM were described. The first meeting will take place 6–8 January 2009 where among other issues mapping of expertise within the high priority research topics will be made as well as strategic discussions. The second meeting of SCICOM will be in May 2009 and here the future committee structure should be decided and research initiatives under ICES decided.

The meeting appreciated the presentation by the incoming SCICOM chair and had a few questions of clarification and the chair thanked the outgoing CONC chair for leading the science reform and the contribution to the advisory meeting during the past four years.

10 Work Plan 2009

ACOM was happy to see that the Workplan is in a very advanced stage in comparison with last year

The Workplan preparation started during the summer for a first presentation at the Halifax ACOM meeting. After this meeting, clients gave feedback. The Workplan will continue to evolve in the future and will include additional meetings for management plan evaluation.

Detailed questions on the Workplan were dealt in a breakout groups. Some ACOM members had remarks on EG dates, EG number of meeting days and RG members. The Workplan is a live document and for that reason it is not final, but ACOM agreed with the Workplan as it is now.

It was noted however that some countries cannot get formal approval for travel in short time (i.e. less than about 2 months) thus long term planning is important.

11 Review of Guidelines (Benchmarks, Data Compilation Workshops, Expert Groups, Review Groups, Advice Drafting Groups, ACOM) and access to data (INTERCATCH)

Paul Keizer reported on the breakout session on Guidelines for Expert, Review and Advice Drafting Groups, which were updated on SharePoint.

Some points were flagged:

In all documents: On **observers**, the Secretariat will make sure there is one section describing their tasks and rights.

For **RG Guidelines**: Decision on review group meeting place: who decides on whether meetings should take place by correspondence or face to face? So far the general philosophy has been that meetings are by correspondence (particularly for updates) unless the subject issue is too complicated. For environmental issues a face to face meeting of RGs was regarded important. In 2008, the ACOM leadership discussed requests with the Secretariat (monetary issues) and decided on this basis. **ACOM suggested** that maybe a more specific and quantitative review of the performance of the RG could be done. Students' involvement has been mentioned (agenda item 8e) and University professors could be involved. This could actually also benefit ICES by putting emphasis on the ICES review system.

On the Benchmark Guidelines, **ACOM agreed** to compile background material to guide consideration of reference points by Benchmark Workshops. The Guidelines will include consideration of regime shifts, although ACOM has yet to agree to a protocol for addressing regime shifts. This means that Benchmark Workshops have flexibility in how they address the possibilities that regime shifts need to be taken into account in setting reference points.

ACOM agreed that the leadership in consultation with the Secretariat decide on this, ACOM will be informed by the Secretariat on changes of the Workplan.

ACOM is asked to comment on the Guidelines before Christmas. **The Secretariat** will send the final texts to ACOM in the first week of January for approval in time for WGCHAIR.

12 MoUs 2010–2012 (EC, NASCO, NEAFC)

These have to be updated by 2010 and thus to be worked on during 2009.

The Secretariat will consult with ACOM when there is input from the Clients on what issues they want to be advanced for the new MOU.

13 Meetings where ICES will be represented

The representation of ICES at meetings has worked relative well in 2008. For 2009 again the intention is to split this work between the ACOM vice chairs as much as possible.

NEAFC has a PECMAS meeting in October and it might be more useful to give the technical presentation at this meeting and a more overview oriented presentation at the NEAFC Annual meeting. This will be discussed with NEAFC at MICC in spring 2009.

14 Agendas for WGCHAIRS, MIRAC, MICC

WGCHAIRS will have an important task on ecosystem integration, since some science group chairs will be invited. MSFD may need EGs consultation in the first part of the year. This item is incorporated on agenda point "Workplan and Group Guidelines" for the WGCHAIRS meeting. The drafting of the guidelines needs to be highlighted to the WG chairs. This item is also incorporated on the on agenda point Workplan and Group Guidelines.

ACOM agreed with the proposal from the breakout group on the agendas for WGCHAIRS, MIRAC and MICC

15 AOB

ICES/HELCOM Working Group on Integrated Assessments of the Baltic Sea (WGIAB). The Baltic Sea Review Group should have reviewed the report in 2008 according to the intention of ACOM, but did not manage to do it. It was agreed that this report should be reviewed and included into the line leading up to the Baltic advice in 2009.

Timing of combining WGIAB and WGBFAS review in order to integrate advice did not work in 2008. For 2009 a new science group is installed Transition Group of Integration Activities in the Baltic (TGBALT) to facilitate in the process of linking the results of both WG's.

ACOM agreed to integrate in the WGIAB and WGBFAS results in one RG in 2009. WGIAB Experts need to be invited for the RGS.

Annex 1: List of Participants

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Annex 2: Annotated agenda

Advisory Committee

Chair: Michael Sissenwine

ICES Headquarters, 1–4 December 2008

Draft Agenda

1. Opening and Welcome
2. Adoption of agenda [Docs 1-4, submit corrections to 3 and 4]
3. Council discussion and decisions October 2008 [Docs 5, 8], [0.5 hr]
4. Review of performance of Advisory Services in 2008 [Doc 6 FYI only], [1.5 hr]
 - a. Reports from Secretariat [Doc 7]
 - b. ACOM leadership perspective
 - c. How do working group members see it?
 - d. *New- Has advisory services become to responsive? Lessons learnt from French request on discards and management plan evaluations. Do we need to revisit ground rules for fast track advice.*
 - e. Feedback from ACOM members.
5. Report of Subgroups [1.0 hr]
 - a. SUBFORMAT [Doc 9], [breakout group 1]
 - b. User Satisfaction [Doc 10], [breakout group 2]
6. Status on ongoing work (for information) [1.0 hr]
 - a. Benchmarks groups (plan for 2010) [Doc 11], [breakout group 3]
 - b. Special Requests (e.g., CFP Ecosystem Indicators) [Docs 12, 13]
 - c. DG ENV Marine Strategy Framework Directive
 - d. *New- Regional reviews (life after WGRED)*
7. Strategic Action Plan (for comments and agreement the way forward) [Doc 14], [1 hr] [breakout group 4]
8. Initiatives in 2009 [Doc 15], [1.5 hours]
 - a. Evaluation of management plans (cooperation with STECF, plan for specific evaluations). *New-Include Report from SGMAS on plan evaluations* [Doc 16], [breakout group 5]
 - b. Spatial Planning facility including Natura 2000 sites (Mark Tasker to report) [Doc 17], [breakout group 6]
 - c. Integrated advice – the next steps (Special request on CFP ecosystem indicators) [Doc 18]
 - d. ICES – DCR (Links between fisheries advice process and PGCCDBS and its workshops) [Doc 19]

e. New- Pilot project on the review of routine stock assessment updates using students under the supervision of a senior scientist.

9. The new Science structure – ACOM initiatives for establish appropriate links – Science groups providing input to advice [Docs 20-21], [0.5 hr]
10. Work Plan 2009 (for adoption) Docs 22,23,24,25, 26], [0.5 hr] [breakout group 7]
11. Review of Guidelines (Benchmarks, Data Compilation Workshops, Expert Groups, Review Groups, Advice Drafting Groups, ACOM) and access to data (INTERCATCH) [Docs 27,28,29,30, 31,32,33], [1.5 hr] [breakout group 8]
12. MoUs 2010-2012 (EC, NASCO, NEAFC) [0.5 hr]
13. Meetings where ICES will be represented (for information) [Doc 34], [0.5 hr]
14. Agendas for WGCHAIRS, MIRAC, MICC [Docs 35, 336.37], [0.5 hr] [break-out groups 9]
15. AOB [1.0 hr]

16. Closing

Annex 3: List of meeting documents

DOCUMENT NO.	TITLE	AGENDA PT.
1.	Draft Agenda	2
2.	List of documents	2
3.	List of ACOM members	2
4.	Participants list	2
5.	Report of October Council meeting (Summary)	3
6.	Minutes from September ACOM consultations	4
7.	Review of performance from a secretariat perspective	4a
8.	ACOM chair report to Council	4b
9.	Report of SUBFORMAT sub-group	5a
10.	Report of User Satisfaction sub-group	5b
11a	Status report on the benchmark process	6a
11b	External experts in 2009 Benchmark Workshops	6a
12.	Status report on EC request on development of criteria and methodological standards for "Good Environmental Status" of the marine environment (MSFD)	6b
13a.	Review of special requests and list of new requests	6b
13b	Special requests 2008	6b
13c	Special requests 2009	6b
14.	Strategic Action Plan	7
15.	Initiatives in 2009	8
16.	Evaluation of Management Plans	8a
17.	Spatial planning facility	8b
18.	No document	
19.	ICES DCR links	8d
20.	New Science structure	9
21.	New Science plan	9
22.	Advisory workplan	10
23.	Fish stock assessment overview	10
24.	Draft 2009 ACOM ToRs	10
25.	Table of Contents of ICES Advice report 2009	10
26.	Stakeholder observers for 2009	10
27.	Guidelines EG	11
28.	Guidelines RG	11
29.	Guidelines ADG	11
30.	Guidelines Observers	11
31.	Guidelines Benchmark Groups including data compilation	11
32.	Guidelines ACOM	11
33.	Intercatch document	11
34.	Meetings where ICES will be represented	13
35.	MICC meeting agenda	14
36.	MIRAC meeting agenda	14
37.	WGCHAIRS agenda	14

Annex 4: Report from the ACOM Breakout Group on Client Satisfaction.

Participants: Alain Biseau, Ghislain Chouinard, Eric Jagtman, Johan Modin, Eugene Nixon, Erkki Ikonen, Mick Sissenwine, Bjorn Steinarsson, Javier Pereiro, Barbara Schoute and Claus Hagebro.

Two breakout sessions took place during the ACOM meeting to discuss and develop further the methods to monitor Client Satisfaction. The Report from the ACOM Subgroup on Client Satisfaction, ACOM Doc 10 was used as a starting point. Plenary discussions within ACOM also informed the process.

Two approaches would be used, a questionnaire to monitor the broad level of satisfaction with the ICES advisory services in general and a letter to Client Commissions and Member States asking for feedback on ICES advice.

The Group agreed that a web based questionnaire was a useful way to monitor the general level of, and trends in, satisfaction among users and generators of ICES advice as well as stakeholders affected by it. The questionnaire should use closed questions that can be coded and easily analysed and, if the responses are considered representative, used as an indicator of satisfaction with ICES Advisory Services. It is also considered important to establish a general profile of the respondent. The questions set out in Tables 1, 2 and 3 were agreed to be used but would require further refinement including, if possible, some feedback from Douglas Wilson (a sociologist who has previously worked with ICES). It would be helpful if a pilot survey was carried out to evaluate the effectiveness of the questions selected. It was also suggested that a short and long form of the questionnaire could be developed. The population to be surveyed would be drawn from the ICES Database contact list, ICES observers and ICES scientists. The number to be polled was not finalised. These people will be contacted by email and provided with a web link to a page containing the questionnaire and a three month period will be given for its completion. The Secretariat have kindly offered to assist in the development of the questionnaire using off-the-shelf software (e.g. Survey Monkey and others).

The questions to be included in a letter to Client Commissions and Member States will be developed by Client Satisfaction subgroup. This will seek a more detailed narrative type feedback and will be sent to the Delegates for them to identify the most appropriate people within the Member States, covering both fisheries and environmental issues, to complete the form. It will also be sent to the Commissions directly by the Secretariat or the ACOM Management Team (chair and vice chairs). The general areas to be covered by the questions include relevance, responsiveness, credibility, science content, suggestions for improvement, and an indication of satisfaction trend over time. A draft of a potential letter and questions is attached in Appendix I.

To identify trends the questionnaires and letters will be sent out on a regular basis, the frequency to be decided on after the first analyses is completed.

Action points:

- The Subgroup on Client Satisfaction will work further on this questionnaire and questions to be sent to the Client Commissions and Member States in accordance with the above report with a view to completing its work by end of March.

- A final proposal will be submitted to ACOM for approval by correspondence.
- Following ACOM approval, the survey will commence for a period of 3 months.
- Analyses of the results will be completed by the Subgroup by correspondence and a draft report prepared for the ACOM meeting at the ASC in September.

Draft set of questions for Questionnaire.

The first question will establish the category of the client responding and direct them to a specific questionnaire tailored to that category.

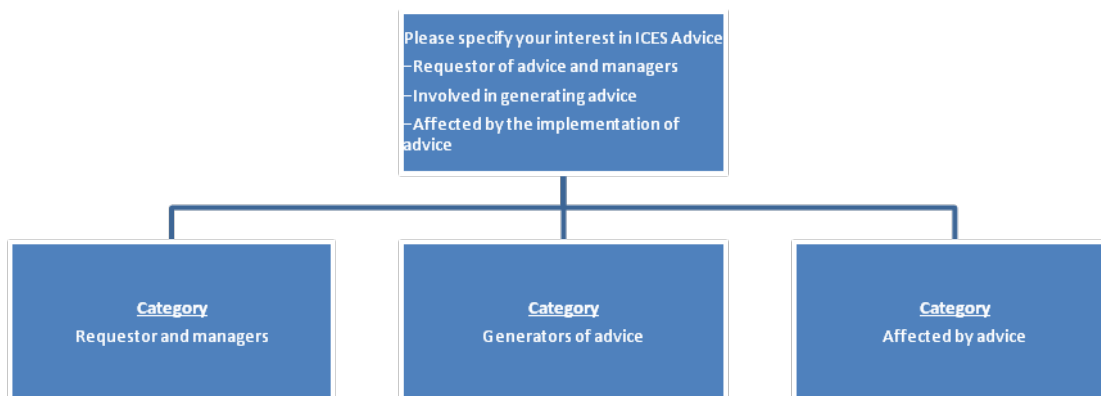


Table 1: Questions for Requestors and managers

Q. No	QUESTION	RES. 1	RES. 2	RES. 3	RES. 4	RES. 5
1	In general is advice received on time:-	Yes	No	If no - length of delay in days		
2	Does ICES advice properly address your question(s) or request for advice	Yes	No			
2.1	If not, in your opinion was this because	A lack of understanding of the question on behalf of ICES	Lack of science/data	Bad science/data	Bad drafting	Other please specify
3	Can you identify data/information gaps in the advice	If yes please specify				
3.1	Can you provide sources to solve gaps					
4	Do you consider ICES advice to be consistent	Over time	Over different geographical areas.	Use of sound science	Use of sound data	
5	How would you rate the presentation of the advice in terms of :-	Objectivity (Scale)	Clarity (Scale)	Comprehensiveness (Scale)	Structure (Scale)	
6	Do you consider it important to receive advice that incorporates ecosystem considerations	(Scale)				

6.1	How, in your opinion, can ICES advice better incorporate ecosystem considerations	Comment on how to improve				
7	What key changes in ICES advice would you recommend					
8	How would you rate your overall satisfaction with ICES advice	(Scale)				

Table 2: Questions for the people involved in preparing advice

Q. NO	QUESTION	RES. 1	RES. 2	RES. 3	RES. 4	RES. 5
1	Which type of meeting were you involved in:	Benchmark/Expert	Advice Drafting Group	Review Group	ACOM	Secretariat
2	Did you have sufficient notice to organise your attendance or to nominate a participant	Yes	No	If no how can this be resolved		
3	How would you rate the group in terms of	Expertise (Scale)	Objectivity (Scale)	Participation of all members (Scale)	Impartiality (Scale)	
4	How would you rate the management of the process / meeting	(Scale)	Suggestions to improve.			
5	Did you consider the ICES advice adequately addressed the questions or request	Yes	No			
5.1	If not, in your opinion was this because	A lack of understanding of the question on behalf of ICES	Lack of science/data	Bad science/data	Bad drafting	Other please specify
6	Can you identify data/information gaps in the advice	If yes please specify				
6.1	Can you provide sources to solve					

	gaps					
7	Did you consider the advice generated to be ecosystem based advice	(Scale)	Comment on how to improve			
8	What key changes in ICES advice would you recommend					
9	What key changes in the ICES advisory structure would you recommend					
10	How would you rate the overall quality of ICES advice	(scale)				

Table 3: Questions for the people affected by ICES advice

Q. No	QUESTION	RES. 1	RES. 2	RES. 3	RES. 4	RES. 5
1	Please indicate from the following the description that best suits your interests in ICES advice.	Fishing industry	Conservation	Tourism	Regulation	Other please specify
2	Does ICES advice properly address your concerns in relation to the issue addressed	Yes	No			
3	Can you identify data/information gaps in the advice	If yes please specify				
3.1	Can you provide sources to solve gaps					

4	Can you suggest ways that ICES advice could be modified to make it more practical to adhere to and / or implement	Comment				
5	Do you consider ICES advice to be consistent	Over time	Over different geographical areas.	Use of sound science	Use of sound data	
6	How would you rate the presentation of the advice in terms of :-	Objectivity (Scale)	Clarity (Scale)	Comprehensiveness (Scale)	Structure (Scale)	
7	Do you consider it important to receive advice that incorporates ecosystem considerations	(Scale)				
7.1	How, in your opinion, can ICES advice better incorporate ecosystem considerations	Comment on how to improve				
8	What key changes in ICES advice would you recommend					
9	How would you rate your overall satisfaction with ICES advice	(Scale)				

Appendix I : Suggested text of a letter to Client Commissions and Member States

Dear XX:

The International Council for the Exploration of the Sea (ICES) is the prime source of advice on the marine ecosystem to governments and international regulatory bodies that manage the North Atlantic Ocean and adjacent seas. While ICES realizes that the content of the advice often implies difficult decisions for the client, it is understood that the advice provided needs to be objective and well supported by data and analyses in order to be credible. ICES develops advice in response to a client request by having analyses conducted by Expert Groups. The results and conclusions of these Expert Group are reviewed and validated by an independent review groups and advice based on the conclusions is formulated to answer the client request.

In a constant effort to improve the quality, clarity and relevance of the advice provided, ICES is canvassing Client Commissions and Member States on their views regarding several aspects of the advice provided in the most recent year and is seeking suggestions for improvement. Your cooperation in responding to the few queries in this letter will help ICES improve the delivery of advisory services.

Questions:

- 1) In your experience, how would you rate (scale 1 (low) to 5 (high)) the **responsiveness** of ICES in addressing requests for advice. Please provide supporting statements for your response.
 - a) Considering that proper analyses need to be conducted in order to provide advice, what time period do you consider reasonable in providing a response to a request for advice ?
 - b) Do you have specific suggestions to improve the responsiveness of ICES to requests for advice ?
- 2) In your experience, how would you rate (scale 1 (low) to 5 (high)) the **relevance** of the advice provided by ICES in response to a question or request by a client. Please provide supporting statements for your response.
 - a) Does advice provided by ICES generally address the questions posed directly and fully ? Please provide supporting statements for your response.
 - b) Is the advice given with an understanding of the context and are assumptions made in providing advice generally correct ? Please provide supporting statements for your response.
- 3) In your experience, how would you rate (scale 1 (low) to 5 (high)) the **credibility** of the advice provided by ICES in response to a question or request by a client. Please provide supporting statements for your response.
 - a) Is the advice generally consistent with previous advice or with advice given in other similar situations ? Please provide supporting statements for your response.
 - b) Are differences in the current advice compared to that given previous previously given in similar situations explained ? Please provide supporting statements for your response.

- c) Is the advice given generally considered to be well thought through and to incorporate the full range of considerations ? Please provide supporting statements for your response.
 - d) In your view, is the advice provided based on the best scientific information available? Please provide supporting statements for your response.
- 4) In your experience, how would you rate (scale 1 (low) to 5 (high)) the **science content** of the advice provided by ICES in response to a question or request by a client. Please provide supporting statements for your response.
- a) Is the science content of the advice at the right level of complexity for the audience ? Please provide supporting statements for your response.
- 5) In your experience, how would you rate (scale 1 (low) to 5 (high)) the **clarity** of the advice provided by ICES in response to a question or request by a client. Please provide supporting statements for your response.
- a) Is there too much use of jargon in the advice provided ? Please provide supporting statements for your response.
 - b) Are the statements made in the advice provided ambiguous ? Please provide supporting statements for your response.
 - c) Is the level of details adequate ? Please provide supporting statements for your response.
- 6) Considering the above criteria how would you rate (scale 1 (worse) 0 (same) 5 (better)) the advice you received from ICES this year compared to previous years.
- 7) Please provide other comments and any suggestions that, in your view, would **improve** the overall quality of the advice provided by ICES.

Thank you for your collaboration.

Annex 5: Report of the ACOM Breakout Group on Management Plan Development and Evaluation

Multi-annual management plans are an important feature of the CFP and they are increasingly used by all ICES member countries and worldwide. However, the processes of developing and evaluating these plans have been ad hoc and inconsistent. There is a backlog of plans to be evaluated and several additional plans are under development or planned for development. Recently, ICES discussed this issue with STECF and it was agreed to hold a workshop 28-29 January to improve planning, co-ordination and consistency.

The workshop needs to address four topics:

1. Scope - current management plans are narrow in scope. They are primarily a HCR for setting TACs on a stock by stock basis. What about management plans for fisheries or management plans that address ecosystem concerns? How many plans are needed? What's their priority?

The breakout group agreed that ICES should advocate fishery based plans that evolve toward an ecosystem approach

2. Process- Most plans have been developed by managers with little interaction with independent scientists or stakeholders. Some plans have been initiated by stakeholders (i.e., RACs) with a lot of scientific input but relatively little formal involvement of managers. Recently, ICES has been asked to prepare management plans without guidance on roles and responsibilities of stakeholders, scientists and managers.

The breakout group concluded that the roles and responsibilities of scientists, stakeholders and managers need to be clarified, and that scientists should not be responsible for leading the process of developing a plan. ICES might provided service to facilitate the process (organize meetings) and it should provide scientific input.

3. Models- There are a wide range of evaluation models from relatively simple to complex models that incorporate a lot of realism and account for many sources of uncertainty. Unfortunately, the later type of models are very time consuming and managers and stakeholders may not know if their proposes will work until the end of a long development process.

While complex models are needed in research, there also need to be simpler models to evaluate options interactively with the plan development process. Simpler, less time consuming, models are also need to deal with the current backlog.

4. Evaluation criteria- ICES is usually asked to evaluate a management plan relative to the precautionary approach. However, the precautionary approach is not well specified in terms of acceptable risk and schedule of achieving objectives for most management plans. These specifications are a management responsibility. They are not up to scientists.

In the future, management plans should state objectives including risk levels. Without such information, ICES evaluation of management plans should describe the performance of the plan (a probabilistic description of expected outcomes) without judging if it is acceptable or not.

The four points above very important for getting the management plan development and evaluation process on track for the future. It is also necessary to address the current backlog of plans as soon as possible so that ICES advice in 2009 and beyond is consistent with management plans. ICES has a serious credibility problem if it continues to impose the HCR implicit in a lot of its precautionary advice (i.e., rebuild above Blim by the end of the next TAC year). Doing so, often results in advice that managers state is not useful (i.e, zero TAC) while management plans that might yield reasonable advice from both a conservation and industry perspective are not used because they have not been evaluated.

It was agreed that **ICES needs to set up one or more workshops to address the backlog of un-evaluated management plans.** The 28–29 January workshop should be used to set the stage by setting the priorities for plan evaluations, agreeing on criteria and considering modelling methods that could be applied expeditiously. To be in time for 2009 advice, the evaluation workshops should be in approximately March.

ICES should also use the 28–29 January workshop to get address interpretation of the precautionary approach. It is obvious that managers do not accept this interpretation. The specification of the precautionary approach is a management responsibility, and if they do not agree with the specification ICES is using, they need to accept responsibility for some other specification.

Management plan evaluations have three key component sub-models. One component describes the fish stock. The second component describes the assessment method used to derive the population size and fishing mortality rate estimates that are used in the HCR. The third component translates a legalistic HCR text into computer code. Recent experience has indicated that this third component is often problematic because HCRs are complex, and the legal text may not be clear. However, most HCRs have a similar structure, and this may make it feasible to create a relatively simple simulation approach for HCRs. It might also be helpful in prioritizing evaluations, with priority being given to older plans, those where stocks are in poor condition, and those with a HCR that is amenable to a relatively standardized simulation approach. A scheme for classifying HCRs is given below with a worked example for EC North Sea Cod.

For each plan

Name of Plan	EC North Sea cod
Year put forward for evaluation	2008
Assessment type	age structured
Simulation forecast available	yes
Bcur/Blim	less than 1.0
Conditional on SSB/biomass*	yes
Continuous function	no
Discrete (constant within zones)	yes
Number of zones	3
Ftarg	yes
Rate of change in F	no

Fixed schedule	no
Relative to F_{cur}	yes
Relative to running average	no
Number of years in running average	NA
TAC constraints	yes
Other measures to be evaluated	no

* The F_{targ} , Rate of change in F , and TAC constraint may be conditional on biomass. They may vary according to biomass zone (i.e., constant within zones, but different between zones; known as discrete conditional). They may also be conditional according to a continuous function (continuous conditional). If they are not conditional or continuously conditional, the number of biomass zones is 1.