



---

## CANADA ACHIEVES MAJOR REFORMS AT HISTORIC MEETING OF THE NORTHWEST ATLANTIC FISHERIES ORGANIZATION

SEPTEMBER 22, 2006

---

**OTTAWA** – The first annual general meeting of the Northwest Atlantic Fisheries Organization (NAFO) since the election of Canada's new government concluded today with parties agreeing to major changes in how the organization will deal with illegal fishing.

"I, like so many Canadians, got tired of hearing previous governments promise to take action, but never delivering," said the Honourable Loyola Hearn, Minister of Fisheries and Oceans. "After only seven months in office, today I am pleased to announce that NAFO will finally have tools to deal with those who jeopardize the health of the stocks, for short-term profit."

Thanks to leadership from Canada's delegation, and the collaborative efforts of all NAFO members, significant reforms to the monitoring, control and surveillance measures have been agreed to and will take effect starting January 1, 2007. These changes include:

- Vessels caught misreporting their catch will be directed to port for immediate inspection. Other serious infringements, including directing for moratoria species and repeat offences will lead to similar consequences.
- NAFO now has guidelines for sanctions when vessel owners are caught breaking the rules: countries will be obliged to impose a fine, suspend or withdraw a licence or catch quota, or seize fishing gear or the illegal catch.
- Captains on vessels that do not have 100% observer coverage will have to report their catches in real-time, so enforcement personnel can immediately detect at-sea patterns of misreporting and illegal fishing. NAFO will calculate catch data based on vessel monitoring system collection, lessening dependence on on-board observers.

In addition to these monitoring, control and surveillance measures, improvements were made to NAFO's decision-making process, especially regarding the objection procedure.

- Procedures for dispute settlement as outlined in the United Nations Fish Stocks Agreement will be made part of the NAFO Convention so countries that object to a NAFO decision cannot simply set out to fish a unilateral quota. They must enter a dispute settlement process with an impartial panel.
- NAFO's fisheries management process must now take into account the precautionary approach and the ecosystem approach. This means basing its decisions on science, and considering fish habitat and marine sensitive areas, closer in line with Canadian practices.

NAFO also decided to take action to better understand the effects of fishing on several seamounts in the Northwest Atlantic Ocean. This demonstrates, in practice, a shift in NAFO's management process to incorporate science and the ecosystem approach.

"While there will always be room for improvement, these changes go a long way towards giving NAFO the teeth it needs to fight overfishing," continued Minister Hearn. "The proof of political will on the part of Canada and our international partners will be evident in the coming months as we implement these changes. Ensuring that all countries and the vessels that fish under their flags play by the rules will continue to be my top priority as Minister of Fisheries and Oceans.

"Compliance is key. Should we find unwillingness by others to play by these new rules, Canada will continue to keep its options open in our fight against overfishing."