



news release

Date January 27, 1987.

No. 014

For release

CANADA AND FRANCE AGREE ON STEPS TO SETTLE MARITIME BOUNDARY DISPUTE

The Secretary of State for External Affairs, the Right Honourable Joe Clark, and the Minister of Fisheries and Oceans, the Honourable Tom Siddon announced today that Canada and France have agreed on a programme which should lead to the settlement of the dispute over the maritime boundary off the south coast of Newfoundland and St. Pierre and Miquelon and provide fishing quotas for France for 1988-1991 while the boundary is being determined.

Canada and France have agreed that the dispute be submitted for binding settlement by an international judicial tribunal, subject to the negotiation of a treaty before the end of 1987 on the composition of the tribunal and its terms of reference. The negotiations will start before March 15, 1987.

Canada and France have also undertaken to negotiate, before the end of 1987, interim fishing arrangements for French vessels in Canadian waters for the years 1988-1991, pending determination of the maritime boundary. These fisheries arrangements will be contingent on signature by the Parties of the treaty on terms of reference for international judicial settlement of the boundary dispute.

The two countries have agreed to a meeting of Canadian and French scientists as soon as possible, to undertake a joint assessment of the state of the cod stock off the south coast of Newfoundland (NAFO Division 3Ps) now being overfished by French vessels, and joint projections of what will happen to the stock if the current overfishing continues. The two Ministers noted that solid scientific information is the first step toward resolving the overfishing problem.

The rights of vessels from Metropolitan France to fish in the Gulf of St. Lawrence expired in May 1986 under the provisions of the 1972 Canada/France Fisheries Treaty. However, vessels registered in the French islands of St. Pierre and Miquelon off the south coast of Newfoundland continue to have fishing rights in the Gulf as part of that treaty.

.../2

For 1987, vessels registered in St. Pierre and Miquelon will be provided with a quota of 3,500 t of cod from the two major Gulf of St. Lawrence cod stocks. This quota is provided for in Canada's 1987 Atlantic Groundfish Management Plan. French vessels will also be allocated 3,000 t of surplus cod in NAFO Division 2GH off the northern Labrador coast. France already receives 200 t of this stock as part of the EEC's allocation under a separate Canada-EEC fisheries treaty. All these allocations were fully discussed during extensive consultations with the Newfoundland and other provincial governments and representatives from the fishing industry.

The French will also receive in 1987 fishing allocations in Canadian waters outside the Gulf in accordance with obligations under the 1972 Canada/France Treaty and under a separate fisheries treaty between Canada and the European Economic Community. These allocations are included in the 1987 Atlantic Groundfish Management Plan and total approximately 15,600 t of various species, the same as in 1986. They include the 6,400 t of cod in 3Ps that Canada has established as the French quota for this stock.

The level of the cod allocation for St. Pierre and Miquelon in the Gulf of St. Lawrence is an exception to the government's policy against non-surplus cod allocations to foreign fleets, as it is greater than what Canada's legal obligations require under the 1972 Canada-France treaty. This point has been made in writing to the French. The exception has been made in order to facilitate resolution of the boundary dispute.

"This agreement is a significant step toward resolution of longstanding differences between Canada and France over the maritime boundary off the south coast of Newfoundland and St. Pierre and Miquelon", Mr. Clark stated. "However, the serious problems still remain to be settled, including the fishing quotas for France from 1988 to 1991, and the French overfishing off the south coast of Newfoundland".

Mr. Siddon noted that while the scientific discussions on 3Ps should prove helpful, France has not agreed to reduce her unjustified fishing effort off the south coast of Newfoundland. "The problem", he said, "is that France claims most of this area

as her own economic zone. In 1984, the two countries agreed not to impose regulations upon each other in the disputed zone. Consequently, we cannot enforce Canadian conservation regulations in the area until the boundary is resolved by an international tribunal."

"Overfishing by France seriously hurts communities in both Newfoundland and St. Pierre and Miquelon. No way can this extensive overfishing of valuable cod stocks be permitted to continue. The steps we have undertaken underline our determination to resolve the boundary dispute through international arbitration."

Mr. Siddon also referred to an undertaking given by Canada to include some 2J+3KL cod in the French quotas to be negotiated for 1988 to 1991.

"This government understands the importance of the 2J+3KL cod stock to the Canadian fishing industry", Mr. Siddon said. "No way are we going to relinquish valuable cod stocks in 2J+3KL. However, very limited French access to that zone for 1988-1991 is a small price to pay to have the boundary issue resolved."

"This issue", Mr. Siddon said, "will be examined exhaustively with provincial and industry advisers. The government knows that the quotas that can be granted to France while the boundary issue is being resolved are very limited."