



news release

Date October 6, 1989.

No. 237

For release

CANADA ANNOUNCES PUBLIC INFORMATION CAMPAIGN

TO END EC OVERFISHING

The Secretary of State for External Affairs, the Right Honourable Joe Clark, International Trade Minister John C. Crosbie and the Honourable Tom Siddon, Minister of Fisheries and Oceans today outlined a comprehensive public awareness campaign to press the European Economic Community (EC) to end its overfishing on the "Nose" and "Tail" of the Grand Banks of Newfoundland.

"The Canadian government is committed to stopping foreign overfishing. All Northwest Atlantic Fisheries Organization (NAFO) members with the exception of the EC have agreed once again to abide by NAFO conservation decisions and quotas. Canada wants to persuade the EC to accept its environmental responsibility: it must manage its fishery in the Northwest Atlantic on a scientific basis by complying with NAFO decisions," stated Mr. Crosbie.

Mr. Siddon recalled that the 1987 World Commission on Environment and Development (the Brundtland Report) issued a warning on the dangerous effects of overfishing. He underlined the Report's conclusion that overexploitation threatens many stocks as economic resources, and the communities and the people who depend upon them.

Since 1986, the EC has consistently rejected NAFO conservation decisions and fished at levels far in excess of the quotas set by other NAFO members. The September 1989 annual meeting of NAFO adopted conservation decisions, including quotas for 1990, based on scientific advice. The EC abstained in voting on most decisions. It will instead decide by the end of December, whether it will accept NAFO decisions or set its own unilateral quotas. This overfishing is a major factor leading to the recent declines in key NAFO stocks.

.../2

In light of this situation, Mr. Crosbie will embark on a public awareness effort in a forthcoming visit to London, Bonn and Paris commencing October 12.

Europeans will be told about the damaging environmental consequences of overfishing, the seriousness with which Canada regards continued EC non-compliance with NAFO decisions, and the disastrous effect this overfishing has had on fishermen on both sides of the Atlantic.

The information campaign will be directed at European Fisheries Ministers, EC Commissioners, the EC Council, and the European Parliament and its subcommittees. Others who will be contacted directly include members of national parliaments, European industry leaders, European environmental organizations and European media.

The campaign will be carried out through a number of activities such as federal Ministerial visits, the active involvement of Canada's missions abroad, information kits, video presentations, direct mail letters and public speaking engagements.

Mr. Clark recently announced that Alan Beesley, Special Adviser on the Environment to the Secretary of State for External Affairs and an internationally known authority on Law of the Sea, has been appointed Ambassador for Marine Conservation to coordinate the federal government's efforts to end foreign overfishing.

In April 1989 the Cabinet established a foreign overfishing subcommittee responsible for efforts to address the problems being experienced by fishing communities in Newfoundland, Nova Scotia and elsewhere in the Atlantic provinces. The subcommittee is chaired by Mr. Clark with Mr. Crosbie and Mr. Siddon, as members.

-30-

FOR FURTHER INFORMATION, PLEASE CONTACT:

André LeBlanc
Media Relations Office
External Affairs and International Trade Canada
(613) 995-1874

Bonnie Mewdell
Communications
Department of Fisheries and Oceans
(613) 993-7533

NORTHWEST ATLANTIC FISHERY

BACKGROUND

Canada and the Fishery

The Canadian government is committed to a sound conservation policy for the Northwest Atlantic fishery. At stake is one of the world's most important fishing zones, the famous Grand Banks. International respect for scientific management decisions is critical to the survival of the fishery and the people who depend upon it.

Canada's commitment to conservation is implemented through the Northwest Atlantic Fisheries Organization (NAFO), the international body formed to manage the fishery in the Northwest Atlantic outside Canada's 200-mile fishing zone. NAFO establishes limits on total fish catches in accordance with a scientific management system which has been in place for more than a decade. The 12 member countries of NAFO are Bulgaria, Canada, Cuba, Denmark on behalf of the Faeroe Islands and Greenland, the European Economic Community (EC), the German Democratic Republic, Iceland, Japan, Norway, Poland, Romania and the Soviet Union.

The European Economic Community and the Fishery

Since its establishment, NAFO has adopted consistent conservation measures through consensus decisions which included the EC. These actions were successful in rebuilding NAFO-managed stocks in waters outside the 200-mile zone until 1986.

* After Spain and Portugal joined the EC in 1986, the EC ceased cooperating within the NAFO framework. The EC has since established unilateral quotas up to 12 times the level of NAFO quotas. The overfishing which followed has now led to the depletion of some key fish stocks.

NAFO has again reduced catch limits for 1990 in response to the depleted state of fish stocks in the Northwest Atlantic. It is clear that if the EC continues its recent fishing practices, the fishery will be severely damaged to the detriment of fishermen and fishing industries in all countries.

At the September 1989 NAFO annual meeting, the EC once again did not support the conservation decisions adopted by the majority. The EC delegation left unanswered the question of whether or not Community vessels would comply with NAFO decisions for 1990.

Canada's Special Concern

World-wide 200-mile national fishing zones cover almost all of the oceans' productive capacity. One of the few exceptions is the "Nose" and "Tail" of the Grand Banks of Newfoundland and the Flemish Cap area. These waters, regulated by NAFO, are adjacent to Canada's 200-mile zone, and are more than 4000 kilometers distant from the nearest EC country.

Canada is particularly concerned about what happens in NAFO regulated waters because fish do not respect international boundaries. While most NAFO-managed stocks are found primarily in the Canadian fishing zone, fish move between NAFO waters and Canadian waters during their seasonal migrations. Stock depletions in NAFO waters directly hurt the Canadian fishing industry as well as other NAFO members.

Following the declaration of the Canadian 200-mile fishing zone in 1977, the Canadian government set catch limits for its own fishing industry under a scientific management scheme. In 1989 quotas for the important northern cod stock were reduced within Canadian waters after new scientific evidence that the fish stock had not grown as fast as earlier expected. A review panel led by Dr. Leslie Harris was established to take a comprehensive look at the northern cod fishery.

As a result of a continuing deteriorating situation, Canada is continuing to press the EC to comply with NAFO quotas because a stable fishery in the Northwest Atlantic is in the best interests of Canada's fishermen and the fishermen from other members of NAFO.

**FISHING IN THE NORTHWEST ATLANTIC OCEAN
OFF CANADA'S EAST COAST**

CHRONOLOGY OF EVENTS

- 1970 -- Canada extends territorial sea limits from three miles to 12 miles from coast.
- 1977 -- Canada declares 200-mile fishing zone. Rebuilding of stocks inside the zone begins with strict regulations and quota controls for Canadian fishermen in support of conservation management measures.
- 1979 -- Formation of Northwest Atlantic Fisheries Organization (NAFO) formerly International Commission for Northwest Atlantic Fisheries (ICNAF), to manage the portions of the Grand Banks' fishing grounds outside the Canadian 200-mile zone (including the 'Nose' and 'Tail' of the Grand Banks and the Flemish Cap).
- 1982 -- International adoption of the United Nations Convention on the Law of the Sea.
- 1985 -- First signs of management difficulties in the NAFO area, due to increased catch effort by Spanish and Portuguese fishing fleets on the Nose and Tail of the Grand Banks.
- 1986 -- Spain and Portugal join the European Community.
- 1986 -- Using a procedure under the NAFO Convention, the
1988 European Community unilaterally adopts its own quotas for NAFO stocks, far above the quotas set by NAFO membership. EC catches far above its historical shares. Vessels from several non-NAFO countries began to fish routinely in the NAFO area despite having no quotas.
- January 1989 -- EC again sets unilateral quotas far above NAFO voted quotas. Scientific advice indicates serious stock declines in important fish stocks where overfishing has been significant in recent years (flounder, plaice, cod).
- Sept. 1989 -- NAFO confirms scientific advice on declining stocks and reduces several key TACs. EC abstains for first time on most votes at NAFO annual meeting. The EC has not yet indicated if it will again refuse to comply with NAFO conservation decisions by setting unilateral quotas.