



---

## 9<sup>TH</sup> MEETING OF THE SPRFMO COMMISSION

*Held virtually, 26 January to 05 February 2021 (NZDT)*

COMM 9 – Report ANNEX 8c  
Statement of the High Seas Fisheries Group



Good evening All

I would refer members to our information paper COMM 9 – Obs 02

SPRFMO (Art 2) states that:

*“The objective of this Convention is, through the application of the precautionary approach and an ecosystem approach to fisheries management, to ensure the long-term conservation and sustainable use of fishery resources and, in so doing, to safeguard the marine ecosystems in which these resources occur.”*

We continue to face a barrage of poorly defined terms such as “VMEs”, “SAIs” and similar that have been manipulated to now reflect the **hyper-precautionary** agenda of opponents to fishing. This opposition incorporates unfounded assumptions that the detrimental effects of fishing are significant and adverse; often based on minimal or no data whatsoever. Often in such cases opposition infers impacts and consequences by proxy from other fisheries often far removed geographically from ours, differing in management, and certainly not acknowledging the responsibility of SPRFMO fishers and their controlling Member States.

We are also concerned that the banner of science is often used by those opposed to fishing to confuse rather than enlighten. Science becomes a weapon to create uncertainty which than leads to more and more precaution. We have seen presentations claiming to show the probabilities of encountering particular types of habitat – no doubt estimated following a scientific method. But because the results presented depend explicitly on an arbitrarily chosen scale, the results have and can be manipulated to advance any required outcome. Change the scale – change the results!

Having followed the UNGA and FAO Guidelines to develop a spatial management approach, and after establishing there is low risk of Significant Adverse Impacts to VMEs in SPRFMO with the current bottom trawl fishery, we now have the view being promoted that if the risk is low, then the definition of VMEs needs to be changed to ensure the risk of fishing is seen as higher.

There is already more than sufficient science, data, and multiple models showing that the currently closed area of 99.81% provides more than adequate protection under UNGA resolutions; and that the approach to closures that this Commission has taken is hyper-precautionary and at variance with the sustainable use of fishery resources on the high seas managed by SPRFMO.

We ask Members to recall that over 70% of the world’s protein comes from the world’s wild fishery catches and with a world increasing in population food security is critical. We also ask you to remember those whose jobs and people whose very existence relies on fishing.

Thankyou