

# **DSCC Intervention to SPRFMO on Deepwater VME Measure**

## **Jan 28 2021**

*Thank you Chair. We will be brief.*

*We have some specific suggestions on this (CMM 03) rev3. We do thank Australia for their commitment to apply the UNGA resolutions and for their statement explaining their position.*

*Para 17bis Suggest delete “the level of protection” and replace with “measures”. Setting a level of protection other than the prevention of significant adverse impacts would be inconsistent with UNGA resolutions and we’ve addressed that in this session.*

*Para 28: We see that 1 NM is still the move on distance. We believe this is an easy and obvious matter to change to 5 NM. It is crucial that the area containing the VME is closed and the fishing vessel moves away from it. This would benefit from SC assessment.*

*Para 30: We are pleased to see notification expanded to all members and CNCPs but suggest this includes observers. This is an important point of transparency.*

*Para 33: we suggest deleting “the extent to which encounters are consistent or inconsistent with VME habitat suitability model predictions”. The test must be whether the vessel has encountered a VME. Consistency or inconsistency with the model is not a matter for assessing the encounter - this provision highlights a fundamental flaw in CMM-03 which is that it allows trawling on deepwater coral habitats and other VMEs in the first place. This needs to be corrected in the review of CMM-03 scheduled in 2022.*

*In 33(d) we suggest delete bioregion. This seems a hangover from previous text. Seems to be agreement that the relevant consideration is the fisheries management area.*

*In 34 we welcome the inclusion of consideration of closing some areas. All areas where VMEs are known or likely to occur should be closed to bottom fishing unless the management of the fishery in the area can be managed to prevent SAIs consistent with the commitments made by Members through the UNGA resolutions.*

*We welcome the review requirements in para 44.*

*On Annex 6A while there are some improvements, including the lower sponge threshold, the level of bycatch allowed is still high, especially in light of the estimates by CSIRO scientists of the very high level of impact even relatively small amounts of bycatch represent on the seabed.*

*Thank you*

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