

*КИТАЙ ПРИСОЕДИНИЛСЯ К ДИСКУССИИ ПО АРКТИЧЕСКОМУ РЫБОЛОВСТВУ*

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На минувшей неделе в университете Тонг Джи в Шанхае состоялась международная конференция, посвященная вопросам рыболовства в Арктике. Арктика становится доступной для рыболовства. В течение двух дней специалисты по международному праву и рыболовству из России,

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## **China joined the discussion on Arctic Fisheries.**

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Last week, an international conference on fisheries in the Arctic took place in Tong Ji University in Shanghai.

### **Arctic is becoming accessible for fisheries**

Over the course of two days, experts on international law and fisheries from Russia, Canada, United States, Iceland, China, and Greenland (Denmark) discussed the possibility that the increasing melting of polar ice could lead to unregulated commercial fishing in the international waters of the Central Arctic Ocean. This 2.8 million square km area of high seas located beyond the 200-mile exclusive economic zones of the Arctic coastal states has been gradually becoming available for commercial fishing.

A number of experts think that such polar species as polar cod, capelin and others could migrate into the areas becoming ice-free. In the future, this may lead to unregulated fishing, since fish stocks of this vast marine area have never been researched and any fisheries management rules are absent.

This current situation causes concern on the part of five Arctic coastal states, which is exacerbated by the interest in the enclave shown by China, South Korea, Japan and other countries.

### **Unregulated fishing is a threat to coastal areas**

At the conference, experts from Russia reminded the group about the problems that they had to face in the 1970-80s. At that time, under similar circumstances – absence of adequate information on stocks and of management rules – unregulated fishing by fleets from other countries undermined the fish resources in the enclaves of the Bering Sea, Sea of Okhotsk, and the Barents Sea. Both the marine ecosystem and the fishing industry suffered as a consequence of the unregulated overfishing.

The issue of how to avoid the recurrence of similar problems in the central part of the Arctic Ocean is particularly important to Russia emphasized Vyacheslav Zilanov, the Chairman of “SEVRYBA” (Northern Basin Fisheries Coordination Council). Zilanov pointed out that Russia has the longest maritime boundary with the Arctic international waters of any Arctic country. Russian commercial fishermen fish actively in the 200-mile exclusive economic zone and are not interested in having illegal fishing occurring in the neighboring waters.

“Research in this region should be performed by all interested countries including appropriate input from China” – said the head of “SEVRYBA”.

The presenters from Iceland and Canada expressed similar positions. A Canadian expert pointed out that excessive cod catches in the waters near Newfoundland and Labrador resulted in undermining the stock, which has not yet recovered up to the present day. Greenland in turn stated that the well-being of local people living along the coast, who do not fish far off shore, totally depends on the state of fish resources in the narrow zone of coastal waters.

In February 2014, representatives of the five countries bordering the high seas region of the Central Arctic Ocean – Russia, Norway, Greenland (Denmark), Canada and the United States - met in Nuuk in Greenland. As a result of negotiations, countries reached the consensus that commercial fishing would be undesirable in the enclave until adequate research is carried out and necessary management rules are developed. The participants of this meeting also suggested that non-Arctic countries should join in finding solution to this important issue.

### **Chinese interest in polar waters**

China has been showing growing interest in the Arctic and its resources in recent years. Chinese researchers at the meeting noted that it has a huge internal demand for fish products and has recently expanded its fishing fleet to operate efficiently in distant waters.

Chinese experts were mostly focused on the legal aspect of fishing in their presentations. They clearly emphasized the point that according to the UN Law of the Sea Convention all countries have the right to fish in the high seas regions of the ocean. However, they also pointed out China’s growing capacity to participate in the studies of the Arctic Ocean and in developing cooperation with the Arctic countries in the areas of science and environmental conservation.

The Chinese presenters noted that the Chinese government has not yet developed a policy on this emerging issue. But the interest shown in the issue from seven universities in China at the meeting may be an indication that we will soon learn if China agrees with the cooperative approach outlined by Arctic countries.

In May of 2013, China achieved formal “observer” status in the Arctic Council and, according to Dr. A.V. Zagorskiy, head of the department at the Institute of World Economy and International Relations with the Russian Academy of Sciences, China is one of those countries upon which the effectiveness of the discussed agreement on preventing unregulated fisheries in the international waters of the Central Arctic Ocean will depend.