The task of the XVII meeting of CCAMLR was simple: agree to effective measures that stop toothfish poaching.

It was clear from the start what these measures should be:
- compulsory VMS as a way to track vessels;
- Port controls that require port states to inspect all vessels with toothfish on board before coming into their own ports;
- Market controls that require market states to exclude all toothfish imports unless proven to be legally caught;
- TACs that protect fish stocks from collapse;
- A closed season for longline fishing that minimises Albatross bycatch.

Whatever measures CCAMLR XVII finally agrees, it is certain that they will be inadequate for all these purposes - in part because some countries and groups of countries have been obstructive but also because countries proposing measures have been far too timid from the outset.

FLAG STATE IRRESPONSIBILITY

At the heart of the problem is the now explicit acceptance by many CCAMLR delegations that agreed measures should only be based on the exercise of flag state responsibility - not port state or market state responsibilities. Advocates of this approach are simply setting CCAMLR up to fail and inviting poachers to enjoy the sanctuary of flags of convenience.

RUSSIA & UKRAINE SINK VMS?

After the concessions that Krill be exempt from a VMS measure, the road seemed clear for CCAMLR to nail this crucial plank in the coffin of the poachers. But Russia and the Ukraine (continued overleaf)
(from front page)

are still holding out on the last day
seeking refuge in the old Soviet tactic of
not having instructions to agree to
anything new. We wait to see whether
attempts to call home will help unblock
things.

MARKET CONTROLS
BACK TO
DRAWING BOARD

The proposal for a Certificate of Origin
by the US marks a positive effort to get a
Market Control into place during this
meeting. That the EU should be so keen
to 'kill' adoption of such an inoffensive
measure is an indication of the
reluctance of market states to close
down the illegal trade - commerce has
come to usurp conservation in CCAMLR
decision-making - perhaps it should be
renamed: the Commission for
Calculating and Apportioning
Minimum or Large Revenues.

To propose that the matter should be
deferred to an intersessional technical
workshop is a typically bureaucratic
delay by CCAMLR that fails to do
justice to the urgency of the issue.

EU CHOOSES TO
KILL SEABIRDS

The priorities of the European Union in
furthering Spanish fish trading interests
were as clear as ever at this meeting of
CCAMLR - even at the expense of
albatross survival. By limiting the
longline fisheries closed season to
September 15 - April 15 (instead of
31 August - 1 May as the scientists
recommend), CCAMLR is ensuring that
longliners will be killing albatrosses at
their most vulnerable - during part of the
breeding season in explicit contravention
of the CCAMLR Convention itself.