2. Any Contracting Party which invokes the procedure set out in paragraph 1 may at any time withdraw its notification of non-acceptance and become bound by the measure immediately if it is already in effect or at such time as it may come into effect under this article.

3. This article is without prejudice to the right of any Contracting Party to invoke the dispute settlement procedures set out in article 24 in respect of a dispute concerning the interpretation or application of this Convention, in the event that all other methods to settle the dispute, including the procedures set out in this article, have been exhausted.

Article 24. DISPUTE SETTLEMENT

1. The Contracting Parties shall cooperate in order to prevent disputes.

2. If any dispute arises between two or more Contracting Parties concerning the interpretation or implementation of this Convention, those Contracting Parties shall consult among themselves with a view to resolving the dispute, or to having the dispute resolved by negotiation, inquiry, mediation, conciliation, arbitration, judicial settlement or other peaceful means of their own choice.

3. In cases where a dispute between two or more Contracting Parties is of a technical nature, and the Contracting Parties are unable to resolve the dispute among themselves, they may refer the dispute to an *ad hoc* expert panel established in accordance with procedures adopted by the Commission at its first meeting. The panel shall confer with the Contracting Parties concerned and shall endeavour to resolve the dispute expeditiously without recourse to binding procedures for the settlement of disputes.

4. Where a dispute is not referred for settlement within a reasonable time of the consultations referred to in paragraph 2, or where a dispute is not resolved by recourse to other means referred to in this article within a reasonable time, such dispute shall, at the request of any party to the dispute, be submitted for binding decision in accordance with procedures for the settlement of disputes provided in Part XV of the 1982 Convention or, where the dispute concerns one or more straddling stocks, by provisions set out in Part VIII of the 1995 Agreement. The relevant part of the 1982 Convention and the 1995 Agreement shall apply whether or not the parties to the dispute are also Parties to these instruments.

5. A court, tribunal or panel to which any dispute has been submitted under this article shall apply the relevant provisions of this Convention, of the 1982 Convention, of the 1995 Agreement, as well as generally accepted standards for the conservation and management of living marine resources and other rules of international law, compatible with the 1982 Convention and the 1995 Agreement, with a view to ensuring the conservation of the fish stocks concerned.

Article 25. SIGNATURE, RATIFICATION, ACCEPTANCE AND APPROVAL

1. This Convention shall be open for signature on 20 April 2001 at Windhoek, Namibia, and subsequently at the headquarters of the Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations for one year from its adoption on 20 April 2001, by all States and regional economic integration organisations participating in the Conference on the South East Atlantic Fisheries Organisation held at Windhoek on 20 April 2001 and by all States and regional economic integration organisations whose vessels fish, or have fished in the Convention Area, for fishery resources covered by this Convention, in the four years preceding the adoption of the Convention.

2. This Convention shall be subject to ratification, acceptance or approval by the States and regional economic integration organisations referred to in paragraph 1. The instruments of ratification, acceptance or approval shall be deposited with the Director-General of the Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations, hereafter "the Depositary".

Article 26. ACCESSION

1. This Convention shall be open for accession by coastal States, and by all other States and regional economic integration organisations whose vessels fish in the Convention Area for fishery resources covered by this Convention.

2. This Convention shall be open for accession by regional economic integration organisations, other than that regional economic integration organisation that qualifies as a Contracting Party under article 25, which include among their member States one or more States which have transferred, in whole or in part, competence over matters covered by this Convention. The accession of such regional economic integration organisations shall be the subject of consultations within the Commission concerning the conditions for participation in the work of the Commission.

3. Instruments of accession shall be deposited with the Depositary. Accessions received by the Depositary prior to the date of entry into force of this Convention shall become effective 30 days after the date on which this Convention enters into force.

Article 27. ENTRY INTO FORCE

This Convention shall enter into force 60 days after the date of deposit with the Depositary of the third instrument of ratification, accession, acceptance or approval at least one of which has been deposited by a coastal State. For each State or regional economic integration organisation which, subsequent to the date of entry into force of this Convention, deposits an instrument of ratification or accession, this Convention shall enter into force on the thirtieth day following such deposit.

Article 28. RESERVATIONS AND EXCEPTIONS

No reservations or exceptions may be made to this Convention.

Article 29. DECLARATIONS AND STATEMENTS

Article 28 does not preclude a State or regional economic integration organisation, when signing, ratifying or acceding to this Convention, from making declarations or statements, however phrased or named, with a view, *inter alia*, to the harmonisation of its laws and regulations with the provisions of this Agreement, provided that such declarations or statements do not purport to exclude or to modify the legal effect of the provisions of this Convention in their application to that State or regional economic integration organisation.

Article 30. RELATION TO OTHER AGREEMENTS

This Convention shall not alter the rights and obligations of Contracting Parties which arise from the 1982 Convention and other agreements compatible with the 1982 Convention and which do not affect the enjoyment by other Contracting Parties of their rights or the performance of their obligations under this Convention.