

NAMMCO MANAGEMENT COMMITTEE AD HOC WORKING GROUP ON THE OBSERVATION SCHEME

REPORT OF MEETING IN COPENHAGEN - NOVEMBER 11, 1999

The Working Group met at the offices of the Greenland Home rule Government in Copenhagen on Thursday November 11, 1999. The meeting was attended by Egil Ole Øen (Chairman) and Kirsti Larsen (Norway); Kristján Loftsson and Kolbein Arnasson (Iceland); Amalie Jessen (Greenland); Jústines Olsen and Regin Jespersen (Faroe Islands); Tine Richardsen (Secretariat) and Grete Hovelsrud-Broda (General Secretary).

1. – 3. OPENING PROCEDURES

The Chairman of the Working Group, Egil Ole Øen, convened the meeting and welcomed the participants. He opened the meeting by pointing out that this was an *ad hoc* Working Group that would cease to exist at the end of the meeting.

At its annual meeting in Akureyri, on October 6 - 7 1999, the Management Committee agreed to task an *ad hoc* Working Group with the following mandate:

”To review the implementation of the Observation Scheme to examine practical and administrative matter requiring consideration and development, and seek better coordination of the observation activities.”

The Chairman stressed the importance of the principle of transparency of the Observation Scheme combined with the independence of the Secretariat in implementing the Scheme. [He pointed out that in principle the Secretariat must be able to operate the Scheme without intervention of the various authorities in the member countries.]

The General Secretary agreed to act as rapporteur, in collaboration with the Secretariat. The draft agenda, as amended and contained in Appendix 3, was adopted.

4. IMPLEMENTATION OF THE OBSERVATION SCHEME IN 1999

This heading includes Items 4.1 – 4.3 from the agenda.

Hovelsrud-Broda (Secretariat) reviewed the reports from this year’s observations (see NAMMCO/MC/9/6). Observation activities were reported to have been carried out in connection with pilot whale hunt drives in the Faroe Islands, whaling and sealing in Greenland, and whaling and sealing in Norway. These observations were carried out according to the Guidelines to Section B – the International Observation Scheme of the Joint NAMMCO Control Scheme for the hunting of Marine Mammals. Hovelsrud-Broda (Secretariat) presented the budget for the Observation Scheme to the Working Group.

The Secretariat outlined experiences in implementing the Scheme in 1999 in relation to the guidelines to section B of the Joint NAMMCO Control Scheme. A number of questions concerning the practical implementation and administrative procedures were raised and discussed. The Working Group decided to formulate a number of these concerns as recommendations (see Item 8). Other concerns were discussed and clarified during the meeting. Based on this year’s experiences the Secretariat pointed out that the practical implementation requires a certain amount of flexibility for the Scheme to be efficient. The Working Group agreed that better information from the local authorities to the Secretariat, and from the Secretariat to the observers, in addition to better communication between the involved parties would ensure such flexibility. The Working Group

noted that it would be beneficial if the observers were be able to consult with the Secretariat throughout the observation activities in order to deal with unexpected events.

The Working Group suggested changing the contract between the observers and NAMMCO to accommodate the need for flexibility. The change would allow the observer to extend the period of observation under unusual circumstances. The Secretariat should be contacted to approve the observers' suggestions.

The Secretariat initiated a discussion about the reports written by the observers. After two years of implementation, the reporting, although sufficient in all cases, varies from observer to observer. The Working Group emphasized the need for the reports to be short and concise, and only contain information about area, time, violations, and information on how the observation was carried out, and in accordance with the forms issued to the observers, by the Secretariat. The Working Group agreed that additional and general comments or information should be conveyed directly to the Secretariat and be kept separate from the actual reports. The Working Group agreed that it is the responsibility of the Secretariat to instruct the observers in how to use the forms properly.

The Working Group noted the importance of the Secretariat having independence from the local authorities in each member country in implementing the Scheme. The Secretariat is responsible for choosing the best location for the observations of sealing and whaling activities. The Working Group suggested that this could best be ensured through increased flow of information about hunting statistics, location of catches and time frames from the authorities in each country to the NAMMCO Secretariat (see also Item 8, Recommendations).

5. OBSERVATION ACTIVITIES IN 2000

Hovelsrud-Broda (Secretariat) presented the planned observation activities for 2000. The Working Group agreed that each country automatically forward the planned dates for the whaling- and sealing activities to the Secretariat to the extent that this is possible. In addition, the Working Group recommended that the authorities inform the Secretariat about appropriate hunting areas, optimum periods for observation and the schedule for inspector courses. In accordance with the Management Committee Report item 9.2 (see NAMMCO/9/9) the Working Group reviewed the implementation plans for 2000 as proposed by the Secretariat. The Working Group had no further comments to the plans.

6. COMMENTS AND SUGGESTIONS FOR THE IMPLEMENTATION OF THE OBSERVATION SCHEME, BY THE MEMBER COUNTRIES

6.1 Greenland

Jessen (Greenland) reviewed the implementation of the Scheme for 1999 in Greenland and stressed the importance of communication between the Secretariat and the local authorities, in particular prior to the arrival of the observer, but also during the activities. Jessen also pointed out that it is important to identify the relevant information, from both the Secretariat and the local authorities, that is needed by the observer in order to perform the tasks he/she are given.

6.1.2. Other

Hovelsrud-Broda (Secretariat) suggested that a general letter of information about the Observation Scheme be issued to the authorities in each member country. They are in turn responsible for having these letters translated and distributed. Jessen (Greenland) noted that it is important that the information about the Scheme is issued to the local authorities by the Secretariat, and not from the central authorities in the country in question. Jessen also stressed the importance of receiving information from the Secretariat, about the time frame and location involved, well in advance off the commencement of the activities in order to prepare the necessary materials for the observer.

Jústines Olsen (Faroe Islands) informed the Working Group that in the Faroe Islands a press release describing the Scheme is issued prior to the planned observation. Jessen (Greenland) suggested that such a letter or press release should be issued twice, once as general information and once closer to when the observations are taking place.

Under this item the Working Group also discussed how the observer should handle violations, even when these are not observed directly. The Working Group agreed that all violations, real or rumored, have to be investigated carefully before a report is filed. Jessen suggested that it would help the process of investigating violations to require the observers to date all observations made. The Working Group agreed that the Secretariat should send copies of the reports to the appropriate authorities in each NAMMCO member country.

6.2 THE FAROE ISLANDS

6.2.1 Place and time frame for Hunting Activities

This item was also covered under Item 4. The Faroe Islands reiterated that it is important for the Secretariat to have information on the most optimum time and place for hunting activities, in order to implement the Scheme the best way possible.

6.2.2 Evaluation of Observation Reports.

This item was covered under Item 4.

6.2.3 Administration

This item is in reference to the local administration of the observers. Olsen (Faroe Islands) reviewed the Scheme in the Faroe Islands. The *sysselmenn* [and the grinde formenn?] are informed about who and when the observer is arriving in the Faroe Islands. Olsen stressed the importance of the observer having a local contact person to assist in solving the practical questions. Jessen (Greenland) explained that in Greenland it would often be necessary for the observer to hire a skiff in order to observe hunting activities. It is necessary to establish a contact person in the local municipality who can assist the observer in finding a skiff.

The Working Group recommended that the Secretariat check the insurance policy for the possibilities of placing observers on boats.

6.2.3 Other

No other matters were discussed under item 6.2.

6.3 NORWAY

6.3.1 Information

In order to improve the implementation of the Observation Scheme Kirsti Larsen (Norway) suggested that the Secretariat prepare an information package to be distributed by the appropriate authorities in each country to the local authorities, to the hunters, to the national inspectors and to the people being observed. The package will include information about NAMMCO, the basis for the agreement, the objectives of the observation scheme and the background and competence of the observers.

In addition, Larsen (Norway) recommended that information about NAMMCO and the Observation Scheme is provided in conjunction with the courses for the whaling crew and the whaling vessel inspectors, and at the joint courses for the sealing crew and the sealing vessel inspectors. Norway further recommended that representatives from the Secretariat and the NAMMCO observers should participate in the inspector courses. It was also recommended that the same information be given to the regional offices, Statens næringsmiddeltilsyn, veterinarians and the whale and seals processing plants.

Jessen (Greenland) suggested that the information package should also include hunting statistics and time frames.

6.3.2 Other

There were no issues under this item.

6.4 ICELAND

There were no additional comments from Iceland.

7. OTHER

The Chairman suggested that the Working Group review Section B of the NAMMCO Joint Control Scheme. This was useful and led to productive discussions on many of the points in the Guidelines. Paragraphs B. 2.3 reporting of violations, and B.2.4 reports, were covered under items 6.1.2 and 4, respectively. The Working Group agreed that there were no problems associated with paragraphs B.2.5 and B.2.6. In connection with B.4.3, language competency of the observers, Jessen (Greenland) pointed out that it can be dangerous to have a person who do not speak the language, on board a vessel, in the event of an emergency.

8. RECOMMENDATIONS

The Working Group agreed to forward the following recommendations to the Management Committee:

1. The Working Group recommended that each member country provide the Secretariat with detailed information on hunting statistics, quotas, and time frames and places for the most optimum areas of observation.
2. The Working Group recommended that each member country provide the Secretariat with names of contact persons in each location, for the Secretariat and for the observers.
3. The Working Group recommended that general information about NAMMCO and about the Observation Scheme be given to the appropriate people and authorities in the member countries. This information should be translated to the local languages and distributed to local officials by the central authorities.
4. The Working Group recommended that the observation reports are short, concise and formal. They should only contain information on time frame, type of instruction prior to observation, area, violations, and the type of observation activity.
5. The Working Group recommended that the observers were made anonymous before the reports are published.
6. The Working Group recommended that comments by each member country to the respective reports must be received by the Secretariat within a month after the reports are issued.

9. ADOPTION OF REPORT

The report of the Working Group was adopted by correspondence after the meeting. The Chairman thanked the Working Group for participating and the Greenland Home Rule Government for providing the facilities and lunch.