



REPORT OF THE COMMITTEE ON HUNTING METHODS

Copenhagen, Denmark, 24 June 1998

The Committee met in the Copenhagen offices of the Greenland Home Rule Government on 24 June 1998. Attending the meeting were: Amalie Jessen, Greenland (Chairman); Jústines Olsen, Faroe Islands; Kristín Haraldsdóttir, Iceland; Kristján Loftsson, Iceland (on the telephone); Egil Ole Øen, Norway; and Kate Sanderson and Tine Richardsen from the Secretariat.

1. and 2. OPENING PROCEDURES

The Chairman of the Committee, Amalie Jessen, welcomed Committee members to the meeting. She noted that it had now been two years since the Committee had last met (in January 1996). It was noted that in 1997, Committee members had agreed to meet again prior to the next meeting of the Council in 1998. The present meeting was called in order both to deal with procedural matters, as well as to review updated information from member countries related to the development and regulation of hunting methods.

The draft agenda was adopted and the General Secretary, Kate Sanderson, functioned as rapporteur.

In connection with the agenda, the Secretary pointed out that in order to be consistent with its Rules of Procedure, the group should be referred to as the Committee on Hunting Methods, rather than the Working Group on Hunting Methods, as it has previously been called.

3. UPDATES ON HUNTING METHODS IN MEMBER COUNTRIES

The Chairman invited members of the Committee to provide updated information on developments with respect to hunting methods in their respective areas and types of hunting. An updated list of laws and regulations in member countries, as well as a list of references on hunting methods, were circulated as NAMMCO/HM/doc-1 and NAMMCO/HM/doc-2, and some additions to these were made during the meeting. Updated versions are contained in Appendices 1 and 2.

Faroe Islands

Olsen (Faroe Islands) reported that a new executive order on pilot whaling (no. 46 of 8 April 1998) had replaced the previous order no. 55 from 16 May 1995. The new executive order now also recognises the newly developed blunt hook for securing whales as official whaling equipment. Drive hunts of all small whale species in the Faroe Islands (with the exception of harbour porpoises) are now subject to regulations for the distribution of catches. In addition, the new order also allows district authorities to decide the most appropriate way of compiling lists of people to whom the resident shares of catches should be distributed. Traditionally, local distribution lists have been based on the registry of residents in the district concerned, while experience suggests that distribution in some areas, such as the capital Tórshavn, may be more effective based on lists confined to those people who actively register themselves for shares of a catch.

Other than these formal amendments to the executive order on pilot whaling, Olsen also reported that plans are now under way to have the new blunt hook produced on a larger scale, either nation-wide, or in the individual municipalities.

Monitoring of times-to-death in pilot whaling continues, with times taken in most whale drives in 1997, from a total of 213 animals.

Olsen also informed the Committee that the methodology of the whale hunt is now a common part of instruction in many lower secondary schools in the Faroe Islands. Some schools have received whale carcasses from hunts with which to practice butchering methods, while the general biology of pilot whales and the killing methods used in the hunt are also commonly discussed at 9th or 10th grade level.

In connection with plans to attach satellite tags to pilot whales to monitor their distribution, a new executive order (no. 126 of 23 June 1997) has been implemented which bans the hunting of tagged animals, or schools in which tagged animals occur.

Norway

Øen (Norway) informed the Committee that there had been no major changes to regulations in Norway concerning the hunting of minke whales and seals.

The shooter's course is still a requirement each year for whalers, and all whaling vessels have inspectors on board. In addition, samples for genetic analysis are being collected this year from each whale caught.

A prototype of the so-called "black box"- the instrument for automatically recording hunting activities on board whaling vessels - is intended to be tested on two boats taking part in this year's minke whaling.

Øen also reported that a new penthrite grenade, which he developed in collaboration with the Norwegian Defence Research Institute (*Forsvarets Forskningsinstitutt*), is being used this year on all whaling vessels. Whalers and inspectors are required to fill out reports on the function of this new grenade, and conclusions on its efficacy in large-scale use await the review of these reports at the end of the whaling season.

The reasons for developing a new model are related to a number of factors. The pre-existing version is technically complicated and expensive to produce, probably costing between 5 and 6 thousand Norwegian kroner in future production, while the new version costs the whaler much less. Unlike the pre-existing version, which could not be fired more than once due to its security mechanism, the new version can be re-fired if the first shot misses the target. In addition, the weight of the new version has been reduced by approximately 40%, in order to improve the balance on the harpoon gun. The explosives in the new version are slightly increased in quantity (from 22g to 30 g) and concentrated to a approximately 2 cm area.

Iceland

Haraldsdóttir (Iceland) reported that no new regulations related to the hunting of marine mammals in Iceland had been introduced since the last meeting of the Committee.

Greenland

Jessen (Greenland) reported in detail on the recent developments in Greenland.

The most significant recent change has been the introduction of tighter controls on the inspection and use of the explosive grenade for the hunting of minke and fin whales. Hunters must now show proof of purchase and the serial number of grenades in connection with their hunting reports. Newly purchased harpoon guns shall also be checked by the vessel inspection agency (KIS) before being approved. In connection with the actual catch, hunters must also indicate on a figure where the animal was struck. If whales killed with explosive grenades have taken more than 30 minutes to die, hunters must report on this and provide an explanation.

In 1997, various technical and operational problems with harpoon guns purchased from Kongsberg Small Arms in Norway led to a number of cases of functional failure and in one instance an accident causing damages to people and property. As a result, the Greenland Home Rule Government implemented an executive order requiring all harpoon guns to be inspected by the vessel inspection agency (KIS) before being approved for hunting. This order is withdrawn as all harpoon guns have now been inspected. Some of them will require further renovation due to faulty handling.

All harpoon guns, with the exception of 8 in Disko Bay, have been overhauled, and no further technical problems have been reported. The Greenland Home Rule Government subsidises 2/3 of the cost of overhauling harpoons guns, and this support is available for the last time in 1998. From next year, hunters will have to bear all costs for the further maintenance of their equipment.

Jessen provided the Committee with some background information related to the use of the explosive grenade in 1997 and 1998. In 1990 the Greenland Home Rule Government purchased 100 grenades to introduce this new equipment. In 1991 it became obligatory by law to use the explosive grenade in the hunting of minke and fin whales (with the exception of the rifle hunt of minke whales). Since then, the regulations have also been tightened a number of times. Until 1997, hunters bore the full costs of the equipment, but in 1997 a government subsidy of 3,000 kroner per license was issued, whether or not a successful strike was made. In Greenland, an explosive grenade costs 6,450 kroner from the Greenland Trade Company (KNI Pilersuisoq).

Due to the high price of the grenade, it seems that some hunters had chosen to breach the regulations in 1997 and hunt large whales without using the explosive grenade. At least 7 criminal cases have been raised in connection with the use of illegal equipment.

KNAPK (the Greenland Hunters' and Fishermen's Organisation) has for several years been demanding economic support for the purchase of explosive grenades, although until 1997 these demands have not been met by the Government due to the fact that large subsidies for equipment maintenance were already being provided. The Greenland Trade Company (KNI) is unwilling to lower the price of the grenade, which is approximately 7,000 kroner, due to their own expenses related to purchasing, transport and storage.

KNI reported that only 17 minke whale grenades were purchased in 1997 and 6 fin whale grenades. The exact number of explosive grenades actually used is not known, and some hunters claim they have had also used grenades left over from previous years.

As a result of these developments, and in order to stabilise the situation and ensure better use of explosive grenades, the Greenland Home Rule Government has increased its subsidy for the purchase of grenades from 3000 to 3400 kroner for each grenade used, upon the provision of proof of purchase and the serial number of each grenade used. New figures on numbers of grenades sold in 1998 show that more grenades were purchased in May this year than were purchased in 1997.

No training courses have been held since 1994, although 1 or 2 courses were planned for 1998 but had to be postponed. If the revised form of explosive grenade (as described by Øen) were to replace the type currently used in Greenland, this may require further training of hunters in its use. The authorities plan to hold courses in 1999 and in subsequent years.

With regard to the rifle hunt of minke whales, Jessen informed the Committee that the Greenland Home Rule Government has decided not to increase the level of this form of minke whaling. Rather, after the division of the higher total quota of minke whales (175 per year), the proportion of animals which can be killed by rifle (55) is lower than previously, when the total annual quota was 147, of which 52 could be hunted with rifles. The general policy is to continue to reduce the proportion of the total quota of minke whales hunted with rifles in Greenland.

Jessen concluded by noting that the authorities in Greenland recognised the need to maintain a balance between the implementation of measures designed to further improve the efficiency of hunting methods, and the practical and economic concerns of hunters.

Øen (Norway) thanked Jessen for her thorough presentation of developments in relation to the hunting of large whales in Greenland. He commended the efforts made by the Greenland authorities and by Jessen herself, over the past eight years to arrange for improvements in hunting methods in Greenland. He noted that measures were being taken to deal with the problems that had recently been experienced with regard to the use of explosive grenades, as well as to reduce the level of rifle hunting of minke whales. Despite the possible discrepancy between the numbers of grenades registered as purchased, and unused stock from previous years, Øen expressed his concern that illegal equipment was obviously being used to kill whales in Greenland.

Olsen (Faroe Islands) supported the comments and concerns expressed by Øen.

Haraldsdóttir (Iceland) agreed that it was regrettable to hear of illegal hunting methods being used, but stressed the need to understand the situation fully.

Jessen requested advice on the calibre/type of ammunition for use in the wording of regulations in Greenland in relation to the hunting of marine mammals. The existing wording and references in the regulations have caused confusion among users and managers, and Greenland therefore sought advice on the issue.

Based on previous and on-going research in Norway, Øen recommended that only rifles with a calibre of 9.3mm or greater, with full-jacketed, round-nosed ammunition, should be used to hunt animals of the size of minke whales. Shots should be aimed at the brain, neck or, as a last resort, the heart. Rifle shots aimed at other parts of the body would not result in a quick death.

4. FUTURE WORK OF THE COMMITTEE

In considering plans for future work, the Committee discussed a suggestion by Øen (Norway) to arrange a workshop on hunting methods in NAMMCO member countries.

The Committee **agreed to recommend** to the Council that a NAMMCO Workshop on Hunting Methods should be held, preferably as early as possible in 1999 prior to the next meeting of the Council, with the following proposed terms of reference:

- to review existing marine mammal hunting methods in member countries, including technical developments with respect to equipment and methods, with the view to providing a technical evaluation of different methods of hunting (fin and minke whaling; hunting of small whales; seal and walrus hunting);
- to examine possibilities for technical innovation and further enhancement of efficiency and safety in hunting methods, with a view to providing recommendations for improvements, where relevant.

The Committee agreed that the Workshop should aim to provide a forum for the exchange of information between hunters, veterinary experts, and other relevant participants with first-hand experience and expertise related to the methodology and technology of marine mammal hunting.

It was envisaged that the members of the Committee on Hunting Methods would be responsible for the further planning of the Workshop, in collaboration with the Secretariat.

The Committee **agreed to seek guidance** from the Council on whether experts from non-member countries should also be invited to participate in such a Workshop.

5. RULES OF PROCEDURE

The Committee discussed a number of points in its Rules of Procedure which it felt required some minor adjustment. It was agreed to recommend to the Council the following amendments (deleted text shown as strikethrough; suggested new text in square brackets):

Article 4.1: The Committee shall meet ~~at least~~ once a year, preferably prior to the annual meeting of the Council, unless otherwise decided by the Council. Additional meetings may be held when judged necessary by the Committee and approved by the Chairman of the Council.

Article 5.2: The report of the Committee on Hunting Methods shall be made available by the Secretariat to anyone who so wishes, according to guidelines ~~set by the Committee and subject to approval~~ [approved] by the Council.

The revised text of the Rules of Procedure, as amended by the Committee for the approval of the Council, is attached as Appendix 3.

6. ELECTION OF CHAIRMAN AND VICE-CHAIRMAN

Jústines Olsen (Faroe Islands) was elected chairman of the Committee for the next two years.
Egil Ole Øen (Norway) was elected Vice Chairman of the Committee for the next two years.

7. ANY OTHER BUSINESS

Øen (Norway), with the endorsement of Committee members from Iceland and the Faroe Islands, expressed sincere gratitude and appreciation to the outgoing Chairman, Amalie Jessen, for her dedicated and effective leadership of the Committee since its establishment in 1994.

8. ADOPTION OF REPORT

The final report of the meeting was adopted by correspondence.