

REPORT OF THE MEETING OF THE COMMITTEE ON INSPECTION AND OBSERVATION

The Committee on Inspection and Observation met at the Faroese Representation in Copenhagen on 25 January and 27 January. Present were Jústines Olsen (Faroe Islands) Chair, Nette Levermann and Egil Tofte Bjørvik (Greenland), Eyþór Björnsson (Iceland), Egil Ole Øen and Hild Ynnesdal (Norway), Christina Lockyer and Charlotte Winsnes from the Secretariat. Kristjan Loftsson (Iceland) did not attend the meeting,

1. OPENING PROCEDURE

The acting Chair of the Committee, Jústines Olsen, welcomed the Committee members to the meeting. The draft agenda was adopted with the addition of agenda item 5 The 2011 season.

Due to weather problems in Greenland the meeting was rescheduled so that it was held partly on the 25th and partly on 27th. The Greenlandic representatives only participated on 27th. Charlotte Winsnes acted as rapporteur.

2. THE 2010 SEASON

Documents NAMMCO/I6O-January 2011-2 containing the report from the Secretariat of the Observation Scheme for 2010 and NAMMCO/I&O-January 2011-3 containing the confidential reports from the two observers active in 2010 were presented to the meeting.

The Icelandic minke and fin whale hunts had been the focus of the observation scheme in 2010. Two observers were contracted and no violations had been observed.

However based on one incident in the minke whale hunt observed where the animal did not die immediately, the observer commented that the manner in which the hunting activity was carried out gave great possibilities for improvements with respect to the alertness and preparedness when an animal do not die instantaneously.

The Committee discussed the reports, and emphasised especially the importance of training and education for hunters. As recommended in all workshops held over the years on various issues and aspects related to the hunting of marine mammals the importance of good training courses for hunters is vital to secure efficiency and proficiency in the hunt. The NAMMCO member countries have approached this aspect of the management of marine mammals differently – i.e. Norway used to organised mandatory courses for hunters before each season whereas in Iceland the hunters themselves are obliged to organise courses. The Committee also strongly underlined the need for training courses for beginners but also “refreshing” courses for hunters that have been active for a while. Changes and refinements to old equipment and the introduction of new equipment requires that hunters get the necessary updating and continued practise of for instance shooting skills cannot be valued enough.

The Committee furthermore emphasised the importance of having an operational national inspection scheme.

The Committee also commented on the process by which hunters order and receive the necessary hunting equipment. Especially with respect to the grenades, the time schedule is such that the producers need the orders for new grenades by November for the delivery to take place around

March the following year. Given the substantial cost of these grenades it is understandable that the hunters feel the need for a certain assurance that they will actually get the license to go hunting the following year before they place the order. In Norway the practise is that the authorities automatically gives a license to a boat for the next year if no violations of any kind has take place the previous season.

3. TRAINING COURSE FOR OBSERVER CANDIDATES

Document [NAMMCO/I&O-January/2011-4](#) a draft programme for a training course for observer candidates was presented to the meeting. The draft had been developed in cooperation with Hild Ynnesdal and Egil Ole Øen and was based on their experience with courses held by Norway for the national inspectors.

Attention was drawn to article B.4.1 with guidelines 12 and 13 regarding competence and training of observers in the Provisions of the Joint NAMMCO Control Scheme. Here it is clearly stated that it is the responsibility of NAMMCO to secure that observers receive adequate training before going out in the field. In previous years, when Norway had mandatory courses for inspectors, NAMMCO took advantage of this and sent the observers to participate in these courses. However after the introduction of the electronic monitoring system onboard Norwegian hunting vessels these courses have only been organised in connection with the hiring of new inspectors.

To adhere to the provisions and secure adequate training for potential observer candidates the Secretariat suggests to organise a training course in the beginning of 2012. To make it as cost effective as possible the idea is to hold a course in 2012 and then again when it is necessary due to the percentage of newcomers in the existing “pool” of observer candidates, i.e. not on an annual basis.

A prerequisite for the efficiency of such a system is that the NAMMCO member countries are able to identify at least 2 but hopefully more potential candidates that can participate in the course. These candidates would have to go through the normal nomination procedure as stipulated in the Provisions of the Joint NAMMCO Control Scheme.

The Committee supported the idea of organising a training course for observer candidates. The draft programme was discussed and commented upon – see appendix 1 for the final version. It is suggested that Iceland be the venue due to accessibility of hunting vessels and hunting equipment. Furthermore to encompass all hunting activities and species it was foreseen that 2, 5 to 3 days would be necessary.

The Secretariat will develop a budget for the training course for the consideration of FAC.

The Committee once again reiterated the necessity for member countries to put resources into the implementation of the Observation Scheme in order for it to be fully operational.

4. ELECTION OF OFFICERS

Eigil toft Bjørvik (Greenland) and Jústines Olsen (Faroe Islands) were both re-elected for the period 2011 and 2012.

5. The 2011 SEASON

The scope of the 2011 season is whaling in Greenland and Iceland. Upon request from Greenland the Secretariat informed about the role of the national authorities with respect to the implementation of the Scheme and also what was expected in relation to the observers in terms of practical arrangements while under contract.

Greenland informed the Committee that the hunting of fin whales started 1 January where as the hunt of minke, humpback and bowhead all starts 1 April. Narwhale and Beluga are hunted all year round. Walrus is hunted from 1 October until 30 June, but in one region, the hunt only last from 1 March until 30 April. Seals are hunted all year-round.

The Committee strongly recommends that as a rule all observers are equipped with survival suits – other alternatives – like floating vest's - only ensures that the body will be found should an accident occur. In cold temperatures like these waters a person will freeze to death within few minutes.

6. ADOPTION OF THE REPORT

The final report of the meeting was approved by correspondence on 12 February 2011.