



2.1

REPORT OF THE MEETING OF THE MANAGEMENT COMMITTEE FOR CETACEANS

3-4 September 2008, Sisimiut, Greenland

1. CHAIRMAN'S OPENING REMARKS

The Chair of the Management Committee, Halvard P. Johansen, welcomed delegations and observers to the meeting. Participants to the meeting are listed in Section 3.2 of the Annual Report. Documents available to the meeting are listed in Appendix 2.

The Chair opened the meeting with a statement of the role and duty of the Management Committees from the Agreement. He noted that NAMMCO had given specific management advice in the past, most recently to Iceland regarding the minke whales and fin whales.

2. ADOPTION OF AGENDA

The agenda, as contained in Appendix 1, was adopted.

3. APPOINTMENT OF RAPPORTEUR

The Secretariat was appointed as rapporteur for the meeting.

4. CONSERVATION AND MANAGEMENT MEASURES FOR WHALE STOCKS

The Chair summarised past proposals for conservation and management and responses with reference to document NAMMCO/17/MC 3 (Annex 1), and summarised past requests to the SC and responses with reference to document NAMMCO/17/MC 4 (Annex 2). All new recommendations to member countries on scientific research arising and approved by the Management Committee are contained in Appendix 5.

4.1 and 4.2 Beluga and Narwhal

Status of past proposals

In 2006, the Management Committee for Cetaceans, while commending Greenland for the recent introduction of quotas and reduction in the harvest, expressed serious concern that takes of beluga and narwhal in West Greenland, according to the advice of both the NAMMCO Scientific Committee and the Canada/Greenland Joint Commission on Conservation and Management of Narwhal and Beluga (JCNB) Scientific Working Group, were not sustainable and would lead to further depletion of the stocks. The Management Committee therefore strongly urged Greenland to take action to bring the removals of belugas and narwhals in West Greenland to sustainable levels.

Advice from the Scientific Committee

The Scientific Committee has been requested to provide an assessment in all areas of narwhal and beluga in West Greenland, and narwhal in East Greenland, as well as to provide advice on the effects of human disturbance, including noise and shipping activities, on the distribution, behaviour and conservation status of belugas, particularly in West Greenland.

With regard to surveys, it has also been recommended that future surveys for beluga and narwhal be planned using the international expertise available through the Scientific Committee of NAMMCO. In addition, if and when new survey methods are applied, they should be calibrated against previously used methods so that the validity of the survey series for determining trends in abundance is ensured.

The last assessment was carried out in 2005 and uncertainties with abundance estimates and stock structure remained. The Greenland Institute of Natural Resources (GINR) has since implemented a monitoring plan from 2007-2011, covering both wintering and summering aggregations, including stock identification of all major aggregations. New surveys were undertaken in 2006 and 2007 in West Greenland, including Melville Bay and Inglefield Bredning. More tags were deployed on narwhal in West and North Greenland in 2007. An aerial survey for narwhal was conducted in East Greenland in the summer of 2008.

The Scientific Committee now recommends an update of the assessment of both narwhal and beluga as new data warrant such an exercise. The NAMMCO /JCNB Joint Working Group should meet before March 2009, to allow the updated assessment to be available for setting the new quota series. Greenland should submit fully corrected estimates derived from the 2006, 2007 and 2008 surveys to the NAMMCO /JCNB Joint Working Group. Furthermore the Scientific Committee recommends, as in 2006, that advice be forwarded to the JCNB to be dealt with at their next meeting.

The Scientific Committee reported that plans for the 2007 narwhal and beluga surveys were not presented to the T-NASS Committee and had therefore not been reviewed by this Committee. No reports have been forwarded to the Scientific Committee, and it is unknown which methods have been applied.

The Management Committee noted that, as in 2005 and 2006, the Greenland quotas for narwhal and beluga remain much above the quota recommended by the Scientific Committee of 135 narwhals and 100 belugas for West Greenland. However, the Committee also recognizes that new preliminary data on abundance show higher estimates than previously.

Greenland noted that the 2007/08 quota for narwhal includes the quota for Melville Bay of 100 narwhals, for which there is no scientific recommendation on catch levels. Greenland would encourage their scientists to continue to submit their results on distribution studies. In commenting on the given quotas, Greenland reported that there had been a hunting seminar in the spring when scientists informed hunters that

numbers had increased since setting quotas. Greenland underlined that the knowledge and expertise of both biologists and hunters must be respected and taken into account.

Greenland also informed the Committee of an incident in August this year regarding a reported take of 48 narwhals in Rømer Fjord, Illoqqottormiit, from which only the blubber and tusks of the animals had been taken. However, an observer from the Greenland Institute of Natural Resources later delivered a field report counting 32 narwhals. Greenland reported that the matter was under police investigation.

In relation to the publication of the Greenland Red List 2007, in which the status of narwhals has been erroneously described as “in danger of imminent extinction” if hunting continues, Greenland also reported that scientists at the GINR had been urged to ensure the accuracy of information provided as a basis for such publications.

Requests for advice

The Committee agreed to recommend that the Scientific Committee update the assessment of both narwhal and beluga, noting that new data warrant such an exercise. The NAMMCO /JCNB Joint Working Group should meet before March 2009, to allow the updated assessment to be available for setting the new quota series. Greenland should submit fully corrected estimates derived from the 2006, 2007 and 2008 surveys to the joint Working Group. In addition, as in 2006, advice should also be forwarded to the JCNB.

4.3 Fin whales

Advice from the Scientific Committee

In 2007 the Scientific Committee was requested to complete an assessment for the Northeast Atlantic stocks as a next step in the process of assessing fin whale stocks in the areas of interest to NAMMCO countries.

There have been five assessments since 1999, the last in 2006, and work is outstanding with regard to abundance estimates and stock structure. More recent genetic studies still support a lack of genetic divergence across the North Atlantic. The final genetic results for the Faroese biopsies, which are crucial since preliminary results pointed to a different stock, are still not available.

New abundance estimates deriving from T-NASS include:

1. Iceland-Faroe Islands: the new estimate was presented to the NAMMCO SC WG on Abundance Estimate; the subsequent revised analysis was later endorsed by the International Whaling Commission (IWC) SC;
2. Norway: an estimate from the cycle 2002-2007 will be available in 2009;
3. Greenland: the new estimate from T-NASS has still to be finally accepted;
4. Results from Canada, SNESSA and CODA should become available soon;
5. Some changes occurred in distribution, but are to be investigated further.

Requests for advice

The Management Committee reiterated its recommendation to request the Scientific

Committee to complete an assessment of fin whales in the North Atlantic and also to include an estimation of sustainable catch levels in the Central North Atlantic. This work should be initiated as soon as all estimates become available and before the next meeting of the Scientific Committee.

4.4 Minke whales

Advice from the Scientific Committee

An assessment of the Central minke whale stock had been carried out in 1998 and 2003, with some uncertainties regarding stock delineation remaining. Newer genetic studies indicate little variability in the Northeast Atlantic and North Atlantic. The Icelandic Research Programme has been completed and results will be available by 2010. The results from SCANS 1995 and 2005 showed changes in spatial distribution. There are new estimates from T-NASS, with the Icelandic coastal stock representing 24% of the 2001 estimate. This change in occurrence of minke whales may be explained by any or all of the following: population decrease; changes in spatial distribution; possible seasonal changes in migration. However, catches are too small to be a likely cause of population reduction of this scale.

Recommendations for scientific research

The Scientific Committee recommends that the sighting rate for the T-NASS Extension survey in the Norwegian Sea be calculated and used for comparison with the other T-NASS areas and previous estimates in this area. In addition, a spatial analysis of both the historical and present survey data, including the Norwegian data, should be done in order to check whether the lower occurrence of whales could be predicted to be in the areas not covered by T-NASS. Analyses of all minke data from the Greenlandic aerial and shipboard, Icelandic-Faroes shipboard and T-NASS Extension should be carried out as soon as possible. An investigation of potential changes in the ecosystem within the framework of the SC WG on Marine Mammals and Fisheries Interactions is also recommended, and body condition indices in the Barents Sea and Iceland survey data should be published when available.

The Scientific Committee underlined the importance of synoptic surveys in interpreting distribution shifts.

Greenland reported that there had been problems in catching the quota in East Greenland, which may confirm the decline of the local population, despite many fin whales. It was suggested that surveys for minke be conducted in more northern areas off West Greenland, with a further assessment in the northern part of the area which was not surveyed under T-NASS. There are presently no plans for new Greenlandic surveys, but there is a need for abundance estimates for the Upernavik-North area.

The Scientific Committee Chair recommended that hunter's knowledge and experience be incorporated into the planning of such surveys.

Iceland noted that, according to the results from T-NASS, abundance of common minke whales on the Icelandic continental shelf area was considerably lower in 2007 than in previous surveys in the area. A partial survey conducted in 2008 showed much

higher densities than in 2007. These densities were similar to those from previous surveys, indicating that the year 2007 was very unusual in this respect. For this reason, a full scale aerial survey will be conducted in the summer of 2009.

Russia reported an increase number of minke whales in the Barents Sea area following surveys last year. This might be a redistribution of the whales due to climatic changes and does not necessarily mean a reduction of the population elsewhere.

Requests for advice

The Management Committee recommended that the Scientific Committee be requested to conduct a full assessment, including long-term sustainability of catches, of common minke whales in the Central North Atlantic once results from the 2009 survey become available. In the meantime the Scientific Committee is requested to assess the short-term (2-5 year) effects of the following total annual catches: 0, 100, 200, 400.

4.5 Sei whales

Advice from the Scientific Committee

NAMMCO 16 requested the Scientific Committee to investigate the status of sei whales in East and West Greenland waters, and provide estimates of sustainable yield.

Last year, it was noted that sei whales have not been harvested in any area of the North Atlantic since the 1980's. Although some estimates of abundance are available from the NASS, with the exception of the 1989 survey, they did not have an appropriate seasonal/spatial coverage for this species.

The Scientific Committee reported that this species is generally distributed in a more southerly range than the NAMMCO area, with unpredictable northern incursions. Very few sightings during T-NASS were recorded. More sightings were made by CODA.

In order to best address the outstanding request, the Scientific Committee recommends combining T-NASS and CODA data for analysis and that the SC Fin Whale Assessment Working Group makes a state of the art study of the existing and missing information on sei whales, as a first step to an assessment. All 2007 and older estimates should be made available to that Working Group meeting.

The Management Committee endorsed the Scientific Committee's recommendations for how it plans to proceed in addressing the outstanding request to provide advice on the status of sei whales in East and West Greenland and estimates of sustainable yield.

4.6 Northern bottlenose whales

Advice from the Scientific Committee

The Scientific Committee last completed an assessment of northern bottlenose whales in 1993 and 1995. A lack of information on abundance estimates, catch data, stock structure and ecology were identified. No progress has been made since. Abundance surveys have been carried out since that time, however these do not provide a reliable

basis for the estimation of total abundance, as visual survey methods are not effective for this deep diving species. New distributional data may be available from T-NASS and CODA.

The Faroe Islands noted that older data, as well as some new data on the diet of bottlenose whales stranded in the Faroe Islands were being analysed. Iceland reported that their diet data had been analysed but not yet reported.

Recommendations for scientific research

The Management Committee endorsed the recommendation of the Scientific Committee that analyses of data on the diet of bottlenose whales be published as soon as possible.

4.7 Long-finned pilot whales

Advice from the Scientific Committee

Bearing in mind that T-NASS in 2007 was expected to provide a better basis for an updated abundance estimate for pilot whales in the North Atlantic, the Scientific Committee had last year been requested to ensure that both the methodology and the coverage of T-NASS take into account the need for reliable estimates for pilot whales. In addition, priority should be given to the analysis of data on pilot whales after the completion of T-NASS. Noting that it has been over 10 years since the Scientific Committee concluded its assessment of pilot whales, the Scientific Committee had also been requested to develop a proposal for the details of a cost-effective scientific monitoring programme for pilot whales in the Faroe Islands.

The last full assessment was in 1996. It had since not been possible to follow up on all the research recommendations in the Faroe Islands nor implement a full monitoring programme. There have been decreasing abundance estimates since 1987/89 (in 1995 and 2002), although these need qualification as the survey areas have been smaller and not strictly comparable.

The methodology employed in T-NASS was designed for pilot whales as well as other key species, and the survey coverage (+CODA) is sufficient for an estimate of this species. T-NASS was planned to cover the area of the 1989 survey. The success of its implementation on each vessel is being checked during the analysis. The Faroe Islands have taken the lead in the analyses of all pilot whale data and the analysis should be available late in 2008.

The Scientific Committee convened a Working Group to develop a monitoring plan, which had worked both by correspondence and had held two meetings, the reports of which had been reviewed and endorsed by the Scientific Committee.

The main recommendations from this Working Group are outlined in a proposed Monitoring Plan to assess the continued sustainability of the Faroese catch and to include both a long-term and short-term monitoring plan to this effect (Appendix 6).

The Scientific Committee Chair explained the relative importance of the items in the monitoring plan, emphasizing that the Commission requests were a priority. However, for relatively little extra cost and effort, additional topics could supply a wealth of extra data. Finally, she noted that supporting activities were not essential but would provide wider scope to the programme.

The Scientific Committee recommended to continue the official logging of all catches (numbers of animals, sex and length) and add length at age as a new parameter; to conduct regular surveys for abundance estimates at approx. 6 yr intervals; that new abundance estimates be prioritized using T-NASS and CODA data, and that analyses of indices of abundance for all NASS/T-NASS surveys be undertaken as proposed by the Working Group; that new analyses and re-analyses of catch statistics be undertaken as a priority; that a new assessment be made when the new estimates become available; that all survey plans, assessments, data analyses of catch and biological studies be routinely presented to the NAMMCO Scientific Committee for evaluation; that an intensive short-term catch sampling programme of sex and age distribution over a 3-year period to assess variability within and between years and compare to 1986-88 sampling programme be undertaken as soon as possible; and that a standing Working Group on pilot whales be established, that would meet periodically (e.g. every few years) to examine the information.

Recommendations for scientific research

The Management Committee endorsed the Scientific Committee recommendations relating to future monitoring of pilot whales in the Faroe Islands. It was, however, considered premature to establish a standing SC Working Group on Pilot Whales, before further data analysis was completed and more regular and detailed monitoring in line with the proposed programme had been established.

The Faroe Islands thanked the Scientific Committee for developing an extremely useful and pragmatic tool for the further development of sampling and monitoring of pilot whales in the Faroe Islands, not least with its clearly identified priorities and associated costs. With reference to the intensive international scientific sampling programme carried out in 1986 and 1987, it was pointed out that limited human and financial resources in the Faroe Islands do not allow for such a comprehensive undertaking on the same scale at regular intervals. A focussed 3-year programme would, however, be given serious consideration. T-NASS estimates are a first priority for the immediate future. It was also noted that it was important to continue the ongoing monitoring of pollutants in pilot whales, since pilot whales caught in the Faroe Islands are one of very few species or stocks of cetaceans with a long history of contaminant sampling, and such a study was supportive of the NAMMCO focus on environmental issues.

The Faroe Islands informed the Committee that they would report back on plans and developments as soon as possible. It was noted that there had been no catches of pilot whale drives at all so far in 2008, although there have been several off-shore observations of large schools in the area during the year.

4.8 Harbour porpoise

In 2007 the Management Committee recommended that member countries conduct surveys to produce reliable estimates of abundance for harbour porpoises in their areas. In addition the Management Committee recommended that member countries provide reliable estimates of total removals, including by-catch, for this species. Once this information is available for any area, the sustainability of removals can be assessed by the Scientific Committee. This was considered particularly urgent for Greenland, where directed catches are in the low thousands annually.

Advice from the Scientific Committee

In 1997, the Council (NAMMCO 7) noted that the harbour porpoise is common to all NAMMCO member countries, and that the extent of current research activities and expertise in member countries and elsewhere across the North Atlantic would provide an excellent basis for undertaking a comprehensive assessment of the species throughout its range. The Scientific Committee was therefore requested to perform such an assessment, which might include distribution and abundance, stock identity, biological parameters, ecological interaction, pollutants, removals and sustainability of removals.

In the planning of T-NASS in 2007, the Scientific Committee was requested to ensure that the coverage of the survey and the methodology would accommodate the need for estimates of harbour porpoise, especially in Icelandic waters.

In 1999 the Scientific Committee provided a general North Atlantic-wide assessment for this species through an international conference, which later led to the publication of volume 5 of the NAMMCO Scientific Publications on harbour porpoises. However this assessment was very general in nature and did not provide specific advice on sustainable harvest levels. In 2006, the Scientific Committee noted the urgent need for estimates of abundance from all areas other than those covered by SCANS-II. While records of recent directed catch are available from Greenland, there is no reliable estimate of by-catch from Iceland or Norway, although it may be considerable in these areas. Conducting an assessment requires both estimates of abundance and removals. Thus there was not at present a sufficient information base to provide advice on sustainable removals for this species for any of the NAMMCO member countries.

The SCANS 1994 and 2005 indicated the same overall abundance, but significant changes in distribution were apparent toward southern North and Celtic seas in 2005. There is a plan for satellite tagging and survey on the Faroese plateau in the Faroe Islands.

Estimates of abundance and removals are still needed in all areas for conducting an assessment. The T-NASS survey will provide an estimate for the coastal area around Iceland, and possibly also Greenland but not for other areas. Iceland implemented a special porpoise survey design and included a porpoise observer in its team. Greenland did not implement a special design but included a porpoise observer in its aerial team.

Recommendations for scientific research

The Management Committee endorsed the Scientific Committee recommendations that Iceland and Greenland co-ordinate their analyses of the 2007 data with regard to this species, that any survey undertaken in the Faroe Islands should be designed to be compatible with the SCANS surveys, and that there should be adequate monitoring of by-catches in all areas.

Iceland underlined that harbour porpoises were included in the 2007 survey and analyses will be presented to the next Scientific Committee meeting in 2009. This will provide the first reliable abundance estimate in the Icelandic coastal area.

Greenland informed the Management Committee that a new executive government order on small cetaceans is being prepared that will include harbour porpoises, pilot whales and dolphins.

Norway reported that porpoise by-catch data will be available after validation of their by-catch monitoring programme.

4.9 White-beaked, white-sided and bottlenose dolphins

Advice from the Scientific Committee

The Scientific Committee has been working under a long-standing request, dating from 2001 and reiterated in 2004 (NAMMCO 10 and 13), to provide an assessment of white-sided, white-beaked and bottlenose dolphins in the North Atlantic, including direct and indirect interactions with fisheries.

Abundance estimates and stock structure information are lacking. Numerous sightings exist only for white-beaked dolphins, and occurred during T-NASS, mainly off Iceland, West Greenland, and Canada. No work has been done in Greenland, and there is little progress in Iceland and the Faroe Islands.

The Faroe Islands reported that there had been no catches in recent years.

The Management Committee noted that scientific information is still insufficient to allow for a full assessment, and reiterated its recommendation that the Scientific Committee should address the standing request as new data becomes available.

4.10 Humpback whales

Advice from the Scientific Committee

There has been an ongoing request for a formal assessment following the completion of the T-NASS, as well as for an investigation of the relationship between the humpback whales summering in West Greenland and other areas in order to incorporate this knowledge into estimates of sustainable yields of West Greenland humpback whales.

In addition, the Scientific Committee has been requested to assess the long-term effects of annual removals of 0, 2, 5, 10 and 20 whales off West Greenland.

The 2007 estimate and older estimates have been reviewed and accepted by the IWC and have been reported to NAMMCO. The 2007 estimate, although not finally endorsed by the NAMMCO Scientific Committee, was higher than the 2005 estimate. A new estimate from T-NASS Iceland-Faroe Islands will be available in March 2009.

In 2006, the Scientific Committee advised that removals, including by-catch, of up to 10 animals per year would not harm the stock in the short or medium term. The advice which was endorsed by the Management Committee, was interim in nature, and should have been revisited once the 2005 estimate was revised and a new estimate was available for 2007. The estimate from 2007, although not final, is higher than the estimate of 2005 on which the advice was based. The Scientific Committee concluded that there was no reason to revise this interim advice until a full assessment is conducted.

Requests for advice

The Management Committee reiterated the previous recommendation that the Scientific Committee be requested to assess the long-term effects of catches of 0, 2, 5, 10, 20 humpback whales off West Greenland and estimate sustainable yields for other stocks, as well as to conduct a formal assessment following the completion of the T-NASS. In addition, the relationship between the humpback whales summering in West Greenland and other areas should be investigated and this knowledge incorporated into the estimate of sustainable yields of West Greenland humpback whales.

The Management Committee endorsed the Scientific Committee's recommendation that the humpback and sei whales be included under the Terms of Reference for the SC Fin Whale Assessment Working Group.

Proposals for conservation and management

The Management Committee noted that in 2008, the Scientific Committee reconsidered its interim advice from 2006 for West Greenland humpbacks on the basis of the estimate of the survey conducted in 2007, noting that the abundance estimate was higher than that of the 2005 survey, on which the 2006 interim advice was based.

The Management Committee recommended that the total quota of humpbacks in West Greenland in 2009, including by-catches, should not exceed 10 animals.

4.11 Killer whales

Advice from the Scientific Committee

The Scientific Committee has a standing request for an assessment of killer whales (NAMMCO 13), including to review knowledge on the abundance, stock structure, migration and feeding ecology of killer whales in the North Atlantic, and to provide advice on research needs to improve this knowledge. Priority should be given to killer whales in the West Greenland – Eastern Canada area.

The SC Working Group to address this request last met in 1995 and concluded that while considerable progress will likely be made in the next few years, available information was still not sufficient to conduct the requested assessment. Since then,

there have been changes in distribution in Norway following changing in the winter distribution of herring. A few T-NASS sightings have been reported (Iceland coastal and Norwegian Sea). There are ongoing studies in photo ID and genetics in Iceland, Norway and Scotland. In 2007, the IWC review for assessment concluded there was insufficient data for assessment of this species.

The Management Committee noted that information is still insufficient to allow for a full assessment and reiterated its recommendation that the Scientific Committee should address the standing request as new data becomes available.

5. PROCEDURES FOR DECISION-MAKING ON CONSERVATION AND MANAGEMENT MEASURES

Greenland raised the issue of procedures within NAMMCO for making decisions on conservation and management measures, in particular with regard to the setting and allocating of catch limits for large whales. These questions were in part prompted by Greenland's dissatisfaction with the decision-making process within the IWC, where Greenland's request for a limited "aboriginal subsistence" quota of humpback whales was recently rejected. Greenland therefore urged a discussion on how to develop appropriate processes within NAMMCO for setting quotas, and proposed that the Management Committee examine existing procedures to see if any revisions or updates are necessary.

Other delegations noted that the NAMMCO Agreement was clear with respect to the mandate of Management Committees to make recommendations to their members for conservation and management measures based on the consensus of members present in the respective Committee (NAMMCO Agreement, Article 5).

It was further noted in the discussion that the way in which conservation and management measures are developed in NAMMCO is related to the nature of the utilisation of the stock in question. For example, in 1997 the Management Committee concluded that the catch of pilot whales in the Faroe Islands was sustainable, but did not propose a specific quota, as the nature of the drive hunt of pilot whales in the Faroe Islands does not warrant such a measure and the stock is only subject to direct catches in the Faroe Islands. Over all sustainable catch limits for minke and fin whales in Iceland, and bottlenose whales in the Faroe Islands, based on advice from the Scientific Committee, had also been recommended by the Management Committee in previous years. Whether and how individual member countries choose to base their national management measures on these recommendations is a sovereign decision for the country in question.

Allocation of shared stocks was, however, an issue that had not yet been fully addressed in the NAMMCO context. It was pointed out that in international fisheries cooperation, allocation is commonly negotiated through bilateral or multilateral consultations among the coastal states in whose waters the shared resources are utilised. This could no doubt also serve as a model for NAMMCO, based on total

sustainable catch limits for specific stocks agreed on by the relevant Management Committee.

In summary it was concluded that there was no need to make changes to the Agreement in order for NAMMCO to recommend total quotas for stocks of large whales or any other marine mammal species.

It was, however, noted that it will take considerable time for the Scientific Committee to complete work requested on methods for producing quota advice for stocks of baleen whales (see below) and that given Greenland's interest in receiving such advice in the short term, NAMMCO might consider further methods for producing interim advice on precautionary quotas, such as that already recommended for humpback whales in West Greenland (see under 4.10). The Scientific Committee Chair noted that guidelines on the duration of assessment validity and frequency of updated abundance estimates would also be required.

Requests for advice

The Management Committee recommended that the Scientific Committee be requested to study general models for conservation and management of baleen whales, inter alia based on Norwegian studies presented to the Scientific Committee of the IWC.

6. RELATED MANAGEMENT ISSUES

6.1 Role of marine mammals in the marine ecosystem

Incorporating:

- Marine mammal - fisheries interactions
- Economic aspects of marine mammal – fisheries interactions
- Multi-species approaches to management

Advice from the Scientific Committee

There is an ongoing request to the Scientific Committee to monitor progress made in multi-species modelling and in the collection of input data and to decide when enough progress has been made to warrant further efforts in this area. In addition, the Scientific Committee has been requested to review the results of the Icelandic programme on the feeding ecology of minke whales and multi-species modelling as soon as these become available.

The Scientific Committee has organised a number of Working Groups and Workshops over the years to address these standing requests (1999, 2000, 2001 and 2002), although the development of ecosystem modelling has taken considerable time and still requires much further work. There were new developments in ecosystem modelling in Japan and Norway. In July 2007 FAO organised a Workshop on Ecosystem Approach to Fisheries, and a forthcoming NAFO-ICES-NAMMCO sponsored Symposium, “The Role of Marine Mammals in the Ecosystem in the 21st century”, 29 September – 1 October 2008 was expected to provide an overview of

latest knowledge and research findings. Results from the Icelandic programme on the feeding ecology of minke whales were also expected in the near future.

The Management Committee encouraged countries and institutes undertaking such studies to continue this important work.

Greenland stressed the importance of ecosystem-based management (EBM), noting that many changes recently observed of occurrence of marine mammal and fish stocks. It is therefore very important for effective management to have a better understanding of the relationship between predators and prey and their role in the ecosystem. The Faroe Islands agreed with Greenland's comments, and noted that there was a need for stronger scientific collaboration between fisheries and marine mammal scientists.

Requests for advice

The Management Committee agreed to recommend that, in addressing the standing requests on ecosystem modeling and marine mammal fisheries interaction, the Scientific Committee should extend the focus to include all areas under NAMMCO jurisdiction. In the light of the distributional shifts seen under T-NASS 2007, the Scientific Committee should investigate dynamic changes in spatial distribution due to ecosystem changes and functional responses.

6.2 By-catch data and monitoring

Advice from the Scientific Committee

The Scientific Committee reported that by-catch of marine mammals likely constitutes an appreciable proportion of total removals of coastal seals, porpoises and dolphins in all areas, although there is no estimate of total by-catch (nor abundance) for many species and stocks. There has been no progress for monitoring by-catch in the Faroes, Iceland and Greenland, but by-catches are also reported as direct catch, although not systematically. In 2006, Norway implemented a by-catch monitoring system, based on reporting by selected vessels, which is presently being evaluated.

The Management Committee noted the recommendation of the Scientific Committee to organise a workshop to review the use and applicability of by-catch monitoring systems in use in different organizations, including the Norwegian monitoring system as well as to seek contact with other organizations dealing with by-catch monitoring to initiate. It was also recommended that Iceland proceeds in implementing a monitoring programme for its fleet.

The Management Committee agreed that there was need for further guidance from the Council in relation to the priority of requests and the workload of the Scientific Committee, before it could endorse the recommendation for a review of by-catch systems.

Greenland informed the Committee that by-catches of large whales and beluga and narwhals are reported. For harbour porpoises it is less certain whether the by-catches are reported as catches because the reporting of by-catch is not obligatory for this

species. However, this will be dealt with in the new executive government order.

6.3 User Knowledge in Management Decision-making

The Management Committee agreed that the issue of user knowledge in management decision-making, while also being a general item on the Council agenda, should be included on future agendas of the Committee to allow for the presentation of relevant new information from member countries and discussion in relation to the management of specific species and stocks.

7. ELECTION OF OFFICERS

Ásta Einarsdottir, Iceland was elected as Chair of the Committee. Ulla S. Wang, Faroe Islands, was elected as Vice-Chair of the Committee.

Thanks were extended to the outgoing Chair, Halvard Johansen, for his able and consistent chairing of this Committee, and its predecessor, the General Management Committee, for the past 4 years.

8. ANY OTHER BUSINESS

Norway made an intervention on trade issues noting that cooperation through NAMMCO is based on the principle of sustainable utilisation. Economic considerations and the generation of revenues through trade in marine mammal products are an essential part of this principle. However, trade has been disrupted because of anti-whaling and anti-sealing lobbies and politically motivated trade bans, such as in relation to seal products in the EU. NAMMCO has a role to play in this situation, and member countries should continue to work actively together, as well as to be consistent in their own trade policies. The statement by Norway is contained in Appendix 3. The ICC also submitted a statement on its position regarding whaling and the IWC, which is placed in Appendix 4.

Delegations agreed that there is no valid conservation or management distinction between different types of sustainable whaling and sealing and there should be no artificial restrictions in terms of what can or cannot be traded. International trade in marine resources, including marine mammals is vital to the economies of all NAMMCO member countries.

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 - Status of past proposals
 - Requests by Council for advice from the Scientific Committee
 - Responses by the Scientific Committee
 - New proposals and recommendations for scientific research
 - Proposals for conservation and management
- 4.9 White-beaked, white-sided and bottlenose dolphins
 - Status of past proposals
 - Requests by Council for advice from the Scientific Committee
 - Responses by the Scientific Committee
 - New proposals and recommendations for scientific research
 - Proposals for conservation and management
- 4.10 Humpback whales
 - Greenland
 - Status of past proposals
 - Requests by Council for advice from the Scientific Committee
 - Responses by the Scientific Committee
 - New proposals and recommendations for scientific research
 - Proposals for conservation and management
- 4.11 Killer whales
 - Status of past proposals
 - Requests by Council for advice from the Scientific Committee
 - Responses by the Scientific Committee
 - New proposals and recommendations for scientific research
 - Proposals for conservation and management
- 5. Procedures for decision-making on conservation and management measures
- 6. Related management issues
 - 6.1 Role of marine mammals in the marine ecosystem
 - 6.2 By-catch data and monitoring
 - 6.3 User Knowledge in Management Decision-making
- 7. Election of officers
- 8. Any other business

List of Documents

NAMMCO/17/CMC/1	Agenda
NAMMCO/17/CMC/2	List of Documents
NAMMCO/17/MC/3	Status of past proposals for conservation and management
NAMMCO/17/MC/4	Summary of requests by NAMMCO Council to the Scientific Committee, and responses by the Scientific Committee

National Progress Reports:

NAMMCO/17/NPR-F	National Progress Report – Faroe Islands
NAMMCO/17/NPR-G	National Progress Report – Greenland
NAMMCO/17/NPR-I	National Progress Report – Iceland
NAMMCO/17/NPR-N	National Progress Report – Norway
NAMMCO/17/NPR-C	National Progress Report – Canada
NAMMCO/17/NPR-R	National Progress Report – Russian Federation
NAMMCO/17/5	Report of the Fifteenth NAMMCO Scientific Committee
NAMMCO/17/5 Addendum	Report of the NAMMCO Working Group on Pilot Whales, July 2008.

NAMMCO – TRADE ISSUES
STATEMENT BY ODD GUNNAR SKAGESTAD ON BEHALF OF THE
NORWEGIAN DELEGATION

NAMMCO was founded on the principle of *sustainable use* of renewable natural resources: not only in the biological or ecological sense. The harvesting of marine living resources should also be *economically sustainable*. The industry should be viable and contribute to positive value creation. This means that *trade*, including international trade in whale products and seal products – as with regard to the products of other legitimate industries – should be allowed and encouraged.

That is, at least *in principle*. In reality there are certain unfortunate facts that we have to take into account.

In the International Whaling Commission (IWC) there is a tendency to distinguish between *viz.* “commercial” and so-called “aboriginal subsistence” whaling. The 1946 International Convention on the Regulation of Whaling does not recognize such a distinction – apart from its provisions (Article VIII) concerning scientific permits, the Convention recognizes only one kind of whaling – the sustainable kind. Nevertheless in the IWC “Commercial” whaling is condemned as a sinful activity, while “subsistence” whaling is seen as somewhat more acceptable. The point of this distinction is that no commercialism i.e. no *trade* is supposed to be involved. One may of course *pretend* that it makes a difference in the moral sense if the hunter kills the animal and consumes it on the spot instead of trading the products with other people, but this is hypocritical and absurd. Such a distinction is artificial and dangerous, and should not be accepted. In my view, such a distinction between commercial and aboriginal subsistence whaling is simply wrong. In both cases we deal with human beings legitimately making a living from utilizing natural resources. What counts is whether we deal with sustainable harvesting of nature’s surplus or unsustainable exploitation of these resources.

Thus, *trade* is a legitimate and indeed necessary component of the sustainable use of whale resources. So, what is the problem?

The problem is that international trade has been disrupted and virtually destroyed for political reasons, as a result of the destructive activities of well-organized and articulate interest-groups – so-called environmentalists and “animal-rights” fanatics who have succeeded in creating an unholy alliance between the anti-whaling majority of the IWC and the anti-trade forces that dominate the Convention on International Trade in Endangered Species of Wild Fauna and Flora – CITES.

I do not think I need to say more with regard to the situation concerning international trade in whale products – this sad history is well known to everybody present here. But we also know that the attacks on trade in products from marine mammals are not confined to the trade in whale products. Powerful forces are also out to destroy the sealing industry. We are especially concerned at the developments in the European

Union – the EU. The EU Commission has recently submitted a proposal to ban all trade in seal products – with two exceptions: (1) Products from Inuit seal hunts; and (2) Products where it can be ascertained that the hunt is conducted in a way that fulfils very strict and comprehensive condition *i.e.* to ensure that humane killing methods are applied, with a minimum of suffering on the part of the animal.

How these requirements are going to be implemented or practiced, we do not yet know. Obviously, we all agree that humane hunting method should be use. But we maintain that the proposed ban is in clear violation of international trade agreements, such as the GATT and WTO regulations. And there is no doubt that the ultimate aim of the trade ban is to destroy the sealing industry completely by destroying the trade. Why do I say all these things which are well known to us all?

I think it is important to underline these problems because NAMMCO *has a role to play*.

NAMMCO should be in the forefront of opposing any moves to introduce further restrictions on international trade in marine mammal products. We should do this as a body and as individual member countries. We should follow a clear and consistent policy in this regard wherever and whenever we encounter this problem – in global and international for a (such as the IWC and the CITES) as well as in regional fora, in our dealings with regional bodies such as the EU, and in our dealings with individual countries.

But in order to be credible, we cannot restrict ourselves to criticizing the behavior of others. If we are serious in demanding of others that they allow free and unrestricted trade in whale and seal products, we must be equally consistent in our own practices. We cannot afford to apply double standards. So, in conclusion, I would like to remind all and every one of us to take a hard look on our own policies, and do our utmost to promote international trade in whale and seal products, bearing in mind that such trade is vitally important for the whaling and sealing industries to survive in the modern world.

STATEMENT BY AQQALUK LYNGE, PRESIDENT OF ICC-GREENLAND

- The existing management regimes in the world, in regards to hunting wildlife, especially IWC, base their quota in aboriginal and non-aboriginal whaling.
- Aboriginal subsistence hunting is based on the assumption that there is no commercial connection with the distribution of the catch.
- From the Greenlandic experience that distinction is too narrow, since our distribution system is more like the other North Atlantic coastal communities than those of Inuit in Canada and especially Alaska, who still practice their traditional subsistence “economy”.
- ICC fully support the desire of the Greenlandic Government for a new management regime replacing IWC. The idea of NAMMCO taking over the management is also interesting to elaborate on.
- The world opinion on whaling and the sealing is however based on symbolic values more than the issues. To say it clearly, the animal rights movements care about the symbolic values and certainly not the Indigenous Peoples Rights. Through the IWC they have effectively divided whaling into commercial and subsistence whaling and certainly not sustainable use of renewable resources.
- There is an exemption clause about whaling in the IWC, the Aboriginal Subsistence Whaling and the same clause can be found in the US Marine Mammal Protection Act.
- There is a tendency in the international fora to accept the notion that only the indigenous peoples will have hunting rights as opposed to commercial hunting.
- This means for many indigenous peoples that subsistence rights and commercial hunting activities are two different issues.
- For ICC and indigenous peoples’ organizations in the world it is important that governments, scientists and management organizations recognize the importance of indigenous knowledge in those issues, whether IWC continue to manage whaling or another international forum is taking over.

RECOMMENDATIONS TO MEMBER COUNTRIES

Narwhal and Beluga

Greenland

The Scientific Committee **urged** Greenland to submit fully corrected estimates derived from the March 2006, August 2007 and 2008 surveys to the next meeting of the joint NAMMCO / JCNB WG.

Norway

Norway has for several years tried to get funding for a joint Norwegian-Russian genetics and satellite tracking study of belugas without any success. The Scientific Committee highly **recommended** that this project be funded.

Fin whale

All countries

The Scientific Committee **recommended** that recent indications of changes in distribution (i.e. spatial dynamics) related to environmental changes be taken into account when designing future surveys.

Faroes

The Scientific Committee noted that there had been no progress since the 2006 fin whale Working Group meeting in genetic analyses of the Faroese fin whale biopsy samples taken in 2000-2001. In the light of previous indications that Faroese fin whales may be very different from other N. Atlantic fin whales, the Scientific Committee **urged** rapid completion of the genetic analysis of these samples using techniques compatible with those used currently on Icelandic samples.

Iceland

The Scientific Committee welcomed the new T-NASS estimate, that it considered still as “preliminary”. It **recommended** that the revision and analysis identified be carried out as soon as possible.

NAMMCO Secretariat

The Scientific Committee **requested** the Secretariat to find out the outcome of the meeting of the IUCN special group meeting regarding fin whales and their status.

Minke whale

All Countries

The Scientific Committee **recommended** that a spatial analysis of both the historical and present survey data, including the Norwegian data, be initiated to check whether the missing whales could be predicted to be in the areas not covered by the T-NASS survey.

Greenland, Iceland and NAMMCO Secretariat

The Scientific Committee also **recommended** that the analysis of all the minke whale data from the Greenlandic (aerial and shipboard), T-NASS Extension and Icelandic (shipboard) surveys be analysed as soon as possible.

Iceland and Norway

The Scientific Committee **recommended** that body condition indices in the Barents Sea and Iceland be published when available.

NAMMCO Secretariat

The Scientific Committee **recommended** that sighting rate for the T-NASS Extension survey in the Norwegian Sea be calculated and used for comparison with the other T-NASS areas and previous estimates in this area.

Sei whale

All countries

The Scientific Committee **recommended** that T-NASS sei whale data be combined with CODA sei whale data for analysis.

The Scientific Committee **recommended** making all sei whale survey data available to the fin whale assessment group.

Bottlenose whale

Faroese and Icelandic

The Scientific Committee **strongly recommended** that the Faroese and Icelandic data on bottlenose whale feeding be made available as soon as possible.

Long-finned Pilot whales

Faroese

The Scientific Committee **recommended** that data from both aerial and shipboard surveys should be included in the analysis for pilot whales after being grouped and validated. The Faroese should take the lead for this analysis.

The Scientific Committee **recommended** that calculation of new abundance estimates using T-NASS and CODA data be prioritized.

The Scientific Committee **recommended** that work that could be started immediately before a final programme be detailed and approved, be initiated:

- Calculation of indices of abundances from previous NASS surveys – 1987 and 1989, 1995 and 2001, as well as 2007.
- Full documentation and statistical analysis of historic and present catch series – including length / *skinn* composition and sex ratio of pods. This should be undertaken as a priority

The Scientific Committee **recommended** that all survey plans, assessments, data analyses of catch and biological studies be routinely presented to the NAMMCO Scientific Committee for evaluation.

Harbour porpoise

All countries

With regards to conducting an assessment (NAMMCO 7), estimates of abundance and removals **are still needed** in all areas. The T-NASS survey will provide an estimate for the coastal area around Iceland, and maybe Greenland but will not do so for other areas.

Faroese

The Scientific Committee **recommended** that the planned survey for harbour porpoise be designed to be compatible with SCANS II and other harbour porpoise surveys. The Scientific Committee **suggested** that a double platform setup similar to the SNESSA survey also be used. There were also suggestions to investigate the possibility to employ an aerial survey.

Greenland and Icelandic

The Scientific Committee **recommended** that Greenland and Iceland coordinate the analysis of harbour porpoise data from the T-NASS surveys.

White-beaked, white-sided and bottlenose dolphins

Greenland and Norway

The Scientific Committee **recommended** that white-beaked dolphin data from the Greenlandic aerial survey and the Norwegian shipboard survey be analysed.

Icelandic

The Scientific Committee **recommended** that white-sided dolphin data from T-NASS be analysed.

Humpback whale

All countries

The Scientific Committee **recommended** that biopsies and photo-ID data from all the areas be analyzed before the initiation of a new assessment.

Scientific Committee also **recommended** that abundance estimates for humpback whale from all surveys (2007 and older) be made available to the fin whale assessment group.

Killer whale

All countries

The Scientific Committee **recommended** that pictures taken during the T-NASS survey be made available for a cooperative study involving photo-ID and genetics, and initiated

by the Marine Research Institute in Reykjavik, the University of Aberdeen and Dr Tiu Similä.

By-catch of Marine Mammals

Iceland

The Scientific Committee **recommended** that Iceland proceed in implementing a monitoring programme for its fleet.

T-NASS

All countries

The Scientific Committee **recommends** the analysis of sperm whale T-NASS acoustic data.

The Scientific Committee **encouraged** the participants in the T-NASS surveys to prepare and make available feedback on progress in this project to the Secretariat for drafting a common press release and for updating the T-NASS web space.

The Scientific Committee **recommended** that the publication pertaining to the general distribution of all cetaceans species throughout the entire survey area be given a high priority by all countries and that all participants forward the needed data to the Secretariat in a timely fashion.

The Scientific Committee **recommended** that T-NASS data be transformed in a format similar to the one employed by the IWC and be archived at the NAMMCO Secretariat with the necessary clauses for use restrictions.

**PROPOSED ACTIVITIES OF A MONITORING PROGRAMME FOR LONG-FINNED
PILOT WHALES IN THE FAROE ISLANDS FROM NAMMCO/17/5 ADDENDUM**

	Monitoring	Research
Commission request	A. Abundance (Surveys) B. Catch numbers, ages by sex C. Reporting	A.1. Review analysis of past surveys (abundance indices for trends) A.2. Development of survey methods specifically for pilot whales A.3. Area of stock distribution (tagging, population structure) B.1. Analysis of existing catch series B.2. Short-term intensive sampling of sex and age distribution data over a 3-year period to analyse variability in support of a cost effective long-term monitoring plan
Additional topics	D. Catch: length at age E. Contaminants F. Reproductive status G. Health H. Condition	A.4. Genetics A.5. Life table E-F.1. Effect of contaminants on reproduction G.1. Health (what parameters to monitor and their meaning) H.1. Spatial analysis
Supporting activities	I. Data to be collected in case of strandings elsewhere than Faroes J. Review of tissues banks K. Review of management plans for small cetaceans under exploitation	