

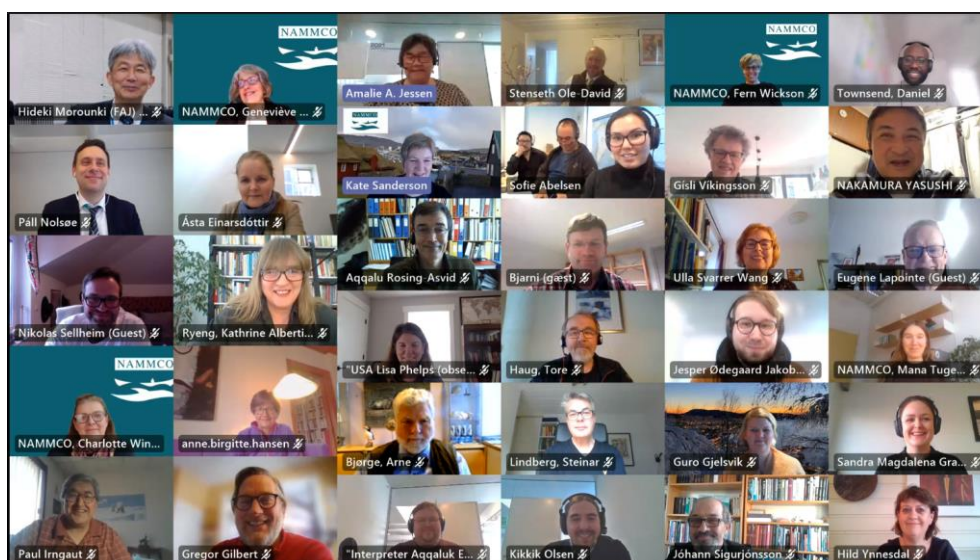


28th MEETING OF THE COUNCIL

22–25 March 2021

Online

COUNCIL REPORT



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1. OPENING PROCEDURES

1.1 WELCOME ADDRESS

The Chair of Council, Kate Sanderson (Faroe Islands), welcomed all the participants (Appendix 1: List of Participants) to the 28th meeting of the Council of NAMMCO.

She noted that this was the first, and the last time, she would be chairing a full meeting of the Council since she took up the position as Chair two years ago. The COVID-19 pandemic led to the postponement of the meeting in 2020 and was the reason for having to meet online this year.

The Chair underlined that the COVID-19 pandemic has changed lives and the way work is conducted – and this was equally true for NAMMCO. The course of NAMMCO work had been seriously constrained by not being able to meet in person, but the number of meetings had not been reduced as a result. The overview for 2020 showed that there were more than 20 online meetings in different NAMMCO configurations since March last year.

The Chair used this opportunity to extend her thanks to the Secretariat for all their efforts over the past year, and the great job they had done in adapting the work of the Commission to the new realities of working entirely online, supporting the various Committees and the Council, and helping to keep the cooperation active and dynamic under very challenging circumstances.

The Chair noted that the continued high level of focussed activity showed quite clearly that, despite the upheavals, NAMMCO Members were as committed as ever to the fundamentals of NAMMCO cooperation and its value – namely the common goal to contribute through regional consultation and cooperation to the conservation, rational management and study of marine mammals in the North Atlantic. If nothing else, the pandemic had certainly underlined the value of being resource efficient and self-sufficient. This could only help to underline and increase understanding for the importance of managing marine resources on a regional level, as close to the end user as possible.

1.2 ADMISSION OF OBSERVERS

On behalf of the Council, the Chair welcomed all the observers (Appendix 1: List of Participants), noting representatives from Canada, Denmark, Japan, the Russian Federation, the United States, the Makivik Corporation, Nunavut Nunavik Inc., the International Whaling Commission (IWC), the Conservation of Small Cetaceans of the Baltic, North East Atlantic, Irish and North Seas (ASCOBANS), the Northwest Atlantic Fisheries Organisation (NAFO), the North East Atlantic Fisheries Commission (NEAFC), the World Conservation Trust (IWMC) and Livelihood International (LIVIN).

Apologies were received from the European Commission and the North Atlantic Salmon Conservation Organisation (NASCO).

The Chair once again thanked the Observers from non-member governments, intergovernmental and non-governmental organisations for their interest in NAMMCO's work, and not least for their participation to this year Annual Meeting.

1.3 OPENING STATEMENTS

The Faroe Islands and Greenland, as well as Japan, the USA, Makivik Corporation, Nunavut Tunngavik Inc., the IWC and the IWMC provided opening statements. Due to time constraints, these were not delivered orally; they are, however, contained in Appendix 4: Opening Statements.

1.4 ADOPTION OF AGENDA

The agenda (NAMMCO/28/02, Appendix 2: Agenda) was adopted without amendments. Supporting documents to the meeting (NAMMCO/28/03) are listed in Appendix 3: List of Documents.

1.5 MEETING ARRANGEMENTS

The General Secretary, Geneviève Desportes, joined the Chair in welcoming all the participants to the online Annual Meeting. She pointed the participants to the meeting's schedule uploaded on the meeting site.

She also reminded participants that the Secretariat staff, supported by the IT advisers, were available during the meeting should anyone require assistance.

2. NATIONAL & ANNUAL PROGRESS REPORTS

Member Countries had submitted their National Progress Reports (NPR) for 2019 and 2020 in accordance with the deadline of 1 February for the previous year adopted by Council 25 (NAMMCO/28/NPR-FO-2020&2019, NAMMCO/28/NPR-GL 2020&2019, NAMMCO/28/NPR-IS 2020&2019, NAMMCO/28/NPR-NO 2020&2019, [link to NPR on NAMMCO website](#)).

NPRs were received from Canada (2019–2020) and Japan (2019–2020) and an Annual Progress Report had been received from Makivik Corporation (2019–2020). The Chair thanked the different delegations for their input.

3. FINANCIAL AND ADMINISTRATIVE ISSUES

3.1 REPORT OF THE FINANCE AND ADMINISTRATION COMMITTEE (FAC)

The Chair of the Finance and Administration Committee, Amalie Jessen (Greenland), presented the activities of the Committee since the Council-Heads of Delegation meeting in March 2020 (NAMMCO/28/04).

The main administrative issues of relevance to Council included the continued discussions regarding workload and priorities as well as involvement in outreach projects with the Secretariat, development of the internship programme, revision and update of the Staff Rules, and development of guidelines for handling requests of support from external projects. Financial issues included the accounts for 2020, the development of the draft budget 2021 (taking into account the financial implications of the COVID-19 pandemic) and developing the draft budget 2022 and forecast budget 2023.

The FAC made the following recommendations to the Council:

In general:

- Be conscious of the implications of its proposed priorities; the focus should be on core issues for the organisation.

Administrative issues:

- Task the FAC to continue:
 - discussing Secretariat staffing and priorities
 - progressing with the revision and update of the Staff Rules
 - finalising the development of consolidated Financial Rules.
- Allow the possibility of overlapping internship periods.
- Adopt the proposed principles and process for engaging with external research projects.

Observation activities:

- Approve the cancellation of observation activities in 2021.
- Approve the increase in observer remuneration from the 2022 season, as proposed by the CIO.
- Task the FAC to determine the level of allocation for observation activities in 2022 that is reasonable, taking into account the activities in other committees.

Financial issues:

- Approve the 2020 audited accounts.
- Approve the 2021 final budget.
- Task the FAC to discuss salary increments for the General and Deputy Secretaries, in association with the revision of the Staff Rules.
- Adopt the rule that the Secretariat staff should not receive payment for lectures, or presentations related to their work at NAMMCO.

Financing of the Super-Tag project:

- Consider the revised project description provided by the Scientific Committee and task the FAC to hold a dedicated meeting on the project to discuss financing.

COMMENTS AND DISCUSSION

The Chair thanked Jessen for her presentation and for chairing the Committee for the last two years.

The Council **endorsed** all the recommendations of the FAC and **tasked** the Committee to continue its work to finalise open issues.

Greenland recommended that the revision of the Staff Rules should be given priority in the near future.

3.2 AUDITED ACCOUNTS 2020

Jessen presented the audited accounts 2020 ([NAMMCO/28/05](#) and Appendix 5: Audited Accounts 2020).

Due to the COVID-19 pandemic, all physical meetings were either cancelled or held virtually. The NAMMCO budget for 2020, adopted by Council 27, was set at NOK 5,004,972 with expenditures projected to NOK 5,016,770, and an operating balance of NOK -11,798. Due to the travel restrictions, the 2020 accounts closed with a surplus of NOK 902, and the general reserve increased to NOK 1,182,214 compared to the budgeted NOK 137,661. Although the cost of transferring the pension scheme was carried over from 2019 to 2020 and should have impacted the results, the savings due to COVID-19 pandemic balanced the cost of the transfer.

COMMENTS AND DISCUSSION

The 2020 accounts were **approved** by the Council.

3.3 BUDGET 2021, DRAFT BUDGET 2022 AND FORECAST BUDGET 2023

3.3.1 Budget 2021

Jessen introduced the 2021 budget proposed by the FAC (NAMMCO/28/06 and Appendix 6: Budget 2021, Draft Budget 2022 and Forecast Budget 2023).

The draft 2021 budget was adopted on a provisional basis by the Council at the Council-HoDs meeting in March 2020 and was considered again by the FAC at a meeting in October 2020. It then became the basis for the request for membership contributions circulated by the Secretariat in January 2021.

FAC presented to the Council for endorsement a new draft 2021 budget that took into account the final results of 2020 and the expected actual expenditures in 2021 due to the pandemic related travel restrictions and cancellation of observation activities (see agenda item 7.3). It also included an allocation to the CHM Instruction-Video project (NOK 150,000, see agenda item 6.2) and to the NASS 2024 planning (NOK 100,000, see agenda item 5.2).

FAC recommended that the Council adopt the 2021 budget in its current form, but also that committees be advised to always consider the necessity of physical meetings, both from a financial and an environmental perspective.

The Council **endorsed** the 2021 budget (Appendix 6) and **recommended** that the necessity for physical meetings contra virtual meetings always be carefully weighed by committees and subsidiary bodies, both from a financial and an environmental perspective.

3.3.2 Draft budget 2022 and forecast budget 2023

The Chair of the FAC introduced the draft 2022 budget and the forecast 2023 budget (NAMMCO/28/06 and Appendix 6), which had been finalised after Council had considered the different committees' activities and work plans.

The draft 2022 budget included an allocation of NOK 431,000 for observation activities (see item 7.3) and NOK 120,000 for the Food Conference (see- agenda item 12.5). The adopted increase in the remuneration rates for observers will take effect from 2022 (see agenda item 7.1). Allocations to the NASS 2024 planning and the administration of the Super-Tag project were included in 2022 and 2023. It was noted that funding for organising committee meetings were included under *Meetings* and not under the committees themselves, while specific projects were itemised as such; this explains why the CHM, CIO and BYCELS were not allocated any specific funding at present.

COMMENTS AND DISCUSSION

The Council adopted the draft 2022 budget and approved the forecast 2023 budget (Appendix 6: Budget 2021, Draft Budget 2022 and Forecast Budget 2023).

The Council **agreed** that the necessity for holding physical meeting should be considered in all aspects of the administration of the Commission.

3.4 ADMINISTRATIVE REPORT 2019–2020

The General Secretary introduced the Administrative Report (NAMMCO/28/07) and noted that this represented a new type of document delivered to the Council, collating in a single document information that had previously been submitted separately. It represented an overview of the Commission's (Council, subsidiary bodies, Secretariat) activities of the past year. As other committees' reports, this year it covered information from both 2019 and 2020, as there had not been any general reporting at the restricted Council-HoDs meeting in March 2020.

NAMMCO, like other bodies, had been impacted by the COVID-19 pandemic, with (among others) the 28th Annual Meeting postponed to 2021 and a restricted Council-HoDs meeting in 2020 taking key decisions. NAMMCO adapted quickly and swiftly to the new virtual format, where most of the planned meetings in 2020 were held. There had, however, been no meetings of the Management Committees and observation activities had been cancelled in 2020 and 2021 due to travel & meeting restrictions and uncertainties. NAMMCO had been solution-oriented and shown adaptability and resilience to the new situation. The work had progressed in the different committees, with over 25 meetings organised since January 2020.

A major undertaking by all committees after Council 27 had been to respond to the requests of the Performance Review Working Group and to propose ways forward for following up on relevant recommendations from the Performance Review Panel. All committees had also had an increased focus on the website and on quality control of its content.

The internship programme continued at the Secretariat with four interns (from UK, DK, FO and FR) during this period. The programme provided the Secretariat with substantial additional human resources as well as expertise (particularly in technical and legal domains). It also brought life, ideas, energy, motivation, and a creative input to the otherwise small Secretariat. The programme was considered a positive experience for both the interns and the Secretariat.

COMMENTS AND DISCUSSION

The Chair thanked the General Secretary for her presentation and noted that information on External Relations and Communication and Outreach would be reported under items 11 and 12, respectively. She commended the report and the new approach to compiling an overview of activities and administrative matters in a single document.

Norway thanked the Secretariat for collating the document, which represented a useful format and tool for presenting a complete overview of all the Commission activities. Norway recommended that this be continued, and this was supported by other Members.

3.5 OTHER BUSINESS

The Chair and the FAC thanked Jessen (GL) for her able chairing during her two-year term. Ásta Einarsdóttir (Iceland) was elected as the new Chair of the FAC and Páll Nolsøe (Faroe Islands) as Vice-Chair.

Jessen thanked the Chair for her energetic and dynamic interaction with the FAC.

4. AD HOC WORKING GROUP ON PERFORMANCE REVIEW

The Chair of the *ad hoc* Working Group on Performance Review (PRWG), Sanderson (FO), presented the report and conclusion of the WG (NAMMCO/28/15).

At its 25th meeting in 2017, the Council agreed to undertake a Performance Review (PR) of the organisation, with special emphasis on the objective of the Commission as reflected in the NAMMCO Agreement “*Contribute through regional consultation and cooperation to the conservation, rational management and study of marine mammals in the North Atlantic*”.

The Performance Review Panel was composed of external experts who were neither nationals nor residents of any NAMMCO member country. Nominations were received from the Food and Agriculture Organization (UN FAO), the International Whaling Commission (IWC, Chair of the Panel) and the Northwest Atlantic Fisheries Organization (NAFO). The Panel started its work in January 2018 and presented its report to the 27th meeting of the Council in 2019.

At its 27th meeting in 2019, the Council agreed to establish an *ad hoc* Working Group (PRWG) led by the Chair of Council to review the recommendations introduced in the Performance Review report. The PRWG was tasked with seeking the views of NAMMCO Committees and Working Groups on the recommendations specific to their areas of work. Based on this input, the PRWG would discuss the cross-cutting and overarching aspects of the Performance Review’s conclusions and recommendations, with a view to proposing to the Council any relevant follow up actions.

The PRWG held two face-to-face meetings. It considered each recommendation, forwarded them to the relevant committee(s) and requested that the committees present their views on the relevance of the recommendations and possible ways forward (where appropriate). After reviewing the responses from the committees, the PRWG formulated recommendations to the Council with a set of identified follow-up actions.

The PRWG noted that the general conclusions of the Panel were positive. According to the Panel, the Commission was meeting its overall objective to “contribute through regional consultation and cooperation to the conservation, rational management and study of marine mammals in the North Atlantic”. NAMMCO had attained credibility among other organisations involved with Arctic issues and marine mammal conservation. The outputs from the Scientific Committee and the Committee on Hunting Methods were substantive and substantial. With respect to these and to recommended conservation measures pertaining to the sustainable management of marine mammals across the North Atlantic, NAMMCO’s work was valued, relied upon and sought after. NAMMCO had become a preeminent and credible forum for discussions on conservation and management of marine mammals in the North Atlantic region.

The PRWG noted the emphasis given by the Panel to the recommendation for NAMMCO to develop a strategic plan as a tool for identifying and implementing priorities. The PRWG concluded, however, that such a formal bureaucratic tool was not necessary in the NAMMCO context. Based on a more general discussion of NAMMCO policies and principles, noting the over-arching recommendations from the Performance Review Panel, the PRWG identified five issues, which could benefit from greater attention as priority matters for NAMMCO, with the aim of further strengthening and improving the work of the organisation, both in the shorter and longer terms. These were:

- 1) Data quality and reliability to ensure high quality science, which is at the core of NAMMCO management,
- 2) Follow up on the scientific, conservation and management advice provided by the Committees,
- 3) Transparency in work processes,
- 4) Precautionary approach in management,
- 5) Communication efforts.

The overarching response of the committees to the request from the PRWG was to underline the importance of and need for: a) the website to serve as a hub of reliable information (for both internal use and for the public), b) reliable data reporting from Member Countries, c) a standardised manner of reporting all data requests, and d) the safe storage of data on a suitable platform to ensure standardisation, continuity, and accessibility.

The PRWG concluded that the Performance Review had been a positive process for assessing the progress and priorities of the organisation. It had confirmed that NAMMCO outputs were substantial and substantive and made it a credible forum for discussion of the conservation and management of marine mammals in the Arctic and North Atlantic regions. After considering the answers of the committees, the PRWG recommended Council adopt a set of follow up actions for each of the five priority issues identified for NAMMCO, which could benefit from greater attention and focus. These are presented in the Table 1 below.

COMMENTS AND DISCUSSION

Members thanked Sanderson for having chaired the PRWG. A lot of work had been put into this by the Member Countries and the committees, and it had allowed the Members to discuss and clarify NAMMCO priorities.

Norway pointed to the issue of institutional culture and the way people and members interact and relate to each other in NAMMCO as one aspect that had not been touched upon by the Panel. The added value of this culture, consisting of a will to respect and understand the national differences and ways of life, builds a platform of trust that enables constructive discussions far broader than is often the case in other international organisations. It was noted that the added value of NAMMCO as a meeting place had been further strengthened by the Performance Review process.

Iceland endorsed the recommendations and underlined the good work that had been conducted, of which the organisation could be proud.

Greenland welcomed the follow up on the recommendations from the performance review. It did however caution that NAMMCO should be aware of the workload and administrative burdens this could entail for all or some Member Countries. Greenland hunts nearly every kind of marine mammal and is therefore obliged to report on all takes and is also required to report on nearly the same issues to 3 organisations – the IWC, the Joint Commission on beluga and narwhal and NAMMCO. Greenland supported the recommendations of the PRWG, although expressed a reservation regarding those tasks that could place too high a burden on the limited resources available.

The Faroe Islands considered the process as very useful and rewarding and supported the adoption of the recommendations. It thanked all involved in the process.

TABLE 1: LIST OF RECOMMENDATIONS FROM THE PERFORMANCE REVIEW WORKING GROUP

Priorities defined by the PRWG	Recommended actions proposed by the PRWG	Responsible	Supporting ongoing activities
Data quality and reliability	Strong attention be given to data quality, reliability, safe storage and accessibility	Committees / Members	Committee and members implementing the use of a single standardised reporting format
		Members	Reporting of validated data, better reporting of struck and lost
		Secretariat	Searchable NAMMCO catch database
	Complete overview documents on endorsed abundance estimates, removal levels, assessment status	Secretariat, Committees	Overview documents being prepared by the Secretariat
Follow up on the scientific, conservation and management recommendations provided by the committees	Continue developing overview documents following up the responses to proposals from committees for advice on stock status and hunting activities	Secretariat / Committees / Members	Secretariat's implementation since NAMMCO 26 of a standardised follow up process for all committees
	A new sequence of annual meetings, following SC recommendation, with the SC annual meeting held two months prior to the Commission Annual Meeting.	FAC / SC	Implemented in 2021
Transparency in work processes	Basis for specific advice better articulated by the SC and the MCs, in particular where MC decisions differ from the advice provided by the SC.	MCs / SC	The SC is presently reviewing its assessment procedures
	Revisions of MCs and SC RoPs to clarify responsibilities		
	Better define the workflow of the NAMMCO advisory process	MCs & Secretariat	Graphic visualisations being prepared by the Secretariat
	Members to provide information to the relevant MCs on their management objectives, framework and plans, so the SC has a clear overview	Members / Secretariat	Overview conservation status and management framework being prepared by the Secretariat in cooperation with Members
	Continue and increase the use of the website as a public information portal	Secretariat / organisation	Uploading of NAMMCO documents online for open access
	Develop a document consolidating NAMMCO financial rules and practices	Secretariat / FAC	Document being prepared by Secretariat for review/approval by the FAC
Precautionary approach in management	MCs to more clearly define how the precautionary approach is applied in NAMMCO conservation and management, with focus on rebuilding depleted stocks	MCs / SC	New request on this articulated at Council 28
	To not postpone the 2021 ringed seal WG	SC	Ongoing studies in Greenland and Norway, in SC workplan for 2022
	MCs to consider prioritising assessment effort, based on the SC overview of stock status	MCs / SC	SC developing list of NAMMCO Management Areas with assessment status overview
Communication efforts	Website to be the focus of communication and outreach efforts; completion and update priority for Secretariat Regular review of content by Committees following the process recommended by the FAC.	Secretariat, Committees	Secretariat update of population abundance and assessments on species pages and last species prepared and uploaded The review of the website content by the Cs was implemented in 2020 and all the Cs are progressing with the quality check of the website content

The Council **endorsed** the recommendations proposed by the PRWG. The Chair concluded by noting that the whole process, from the Performance Review itself to the adoption of these recommendations by the Council, had been a valuable and useful exercise for the organisation.

5. SCIENTIFIC COMMITTEE

5.1 REPORT OF THE SCIENTIFIC COMMITTEE

The Chair of the Scientific Committee (SC), Bjarni Mikkelsen (FO), presented the activities of the SC (NAMMCO/28/08) since the last meeting of the Council (April 2019). Mikkelsen focused on the general components of the SC report, as the content related to specific cetacean and pinniped species (including proposals for conservation and management) would be reported to the Management Committees (NAMMCO/28/FI13-15).

5.1.1 Overall work in 2019-2020

The 26th meeting of the SC was held in Torshavn in 2019, while the 27th meeting was held online in 2021. There had been no SC meeting in 2020 due to the decision to change the timeline of NAMMCO meetings, with the SC meeting moved to the spring. This decision was then implemented in 2021.

The SC activities that have taken place since the last Council meeting, including international workshops and working group meetings, are:

Workshops

- Joint NAMCO-IMR International Workshop on the Status of Harbour Porpoise in the North Atlantic
- Joint NAMMCO-ICES International Workshop on Seal Modelling

Working Group Meetings

2019

- Harbour Porpoise Working Group
- ICES-NAFO-NAMMCO Working Group on Harp and Hooded Seals
- *Ad hoc* Working Group on Narwhal in East Greenland
- Abundance Estimates Working Group

2020

- By-catch Working Group
- NAMMCO-JCNB Joint Working Group on Narwhal and Beluga

2021

- Coastal Seals Working Group

Since the last Council meeting, the SC has also responded to the recommendations from the Performance Review Panel and provided its response to the PRWG. This response can be found in the SC26 report (Appendix 5 of document NAMMCO/28/08).

Mikkelsen also presented updates on two SC projects—the Super-Tag and NASS 2024 – see agenda item 5.1.2 and 5.1.3. respectively for details and discussion.

5.1.2 Super-Tag project

Mikkelsen outlined the collaborative project (the “Super-Tag project”) that the SC had proposed in 2019 and asked Council to consider the update provided (see document NAMMCO/28/19). The proposal involved scientists from all four Member Countries and would be administered by the Secretariat. The Super-Tag project focused on developing new satellite tag technology that was able

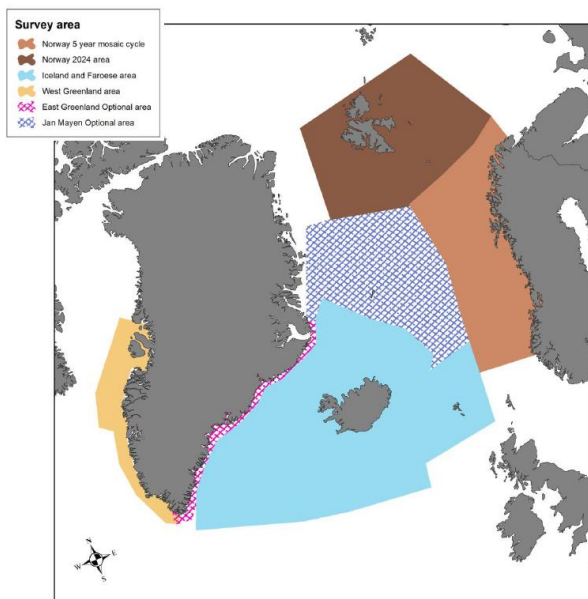
to be used on some of the cetaceans of most interest to NAMMCO (i.e., minke whales, fin whales and pilot whales) and for which logistical and behavioural issues had so far precluded the possibility of long-term tracking. The aim was to develop a smaller and lighter tag that could be deployed remotely from a distance of up to 25m and be retained for up to 12 months on fast-moving species, submitting data around 4 times a day. In-kind funding from the national research institutes of the Member Countries over the proposed 5-year project period represented over NOK 13 million. In addition to this, the SC was requesting NOK 7,650,000 for the project. This sum represented costs related to engineering the tag, purchasing 200 tags over a 3-year period for testing and research, and project administration, including contract management, data management, outreach and reporting. The currently proposed timeframe for the project was from 2021–2025, with tag development taking place in 2021 and 2022, fieldwork with tag deployment taking place in 2023 and 2024, and finalisation of the project in 2025.

Mikkelsen also noted that the SC was willing to open the project to participation from interested parties outside the NAMMCO Member Countries.

5.1.3 Next North Atlantic Sightings Survey: NASS 2024

Mikkelsen then presented the SC plans for a new NASS survey. Due to delays in national surveys associated with the COVID-19 pandemic, the SC was now proposing that the next coordinated survey take place in 2024. The objective of NASS was to obtain fully corrected abundance estimates for predefined target species in all areas of importance for management. The specific objectives and target species for NASS-2024 were to obtain robust unbiased abundance estimates of: i) pilot whales around the Faroe Islands and in the North Atlantic, ii) minke whales in West and East Greenland, around Iceland, Jan Mayen, Svalbard and the central Norwegian sea, iii) fin whales in the Central North Atlantic (around Iceland, off East Greenland, Faroe Islands and Jan Mayen) and in West Greenland, iv) humpback whales in West Greenland. The planned survey areas were presented, showing both the area that will be covered by national surveys and the additional areas that need to be addressed to ensure complete coverage of the whole NAMMCO area.

The budget was presented for both the planned national surveys and the additional funding required to supplement these efforts under NASS-2024 and provide coherent coverage of the NAMMCO area. The latter was estimated to NOK 10 million, which was slightly less than the budget NAMMCO provided for T-NASS 2015.



The SC also requested the Member Countries to clarify their position on whether survey data could be held in open access data repositories and archives. At its meeting in 2019, the SC had expressed its general support that *NAMMCO Scientific Publications* (NSP) operate as an open access journal and work to become fully compliant with the requirements of Plan S. Plan S is an initiative taken by research funding bodies to advance full open access to scientific research, which enters into operation in 2021 (more information available here: <https://www.coalition-s.org/>). While the SC was supportive in general, it was unsure whether the Member Countries would support survey data being held in open access data archives. An answer on this was required to be able to develop the data policy of the NSP.

5.1.4 Proposed workplan for 2021–2022

The Chair of the SC then presented the future workplans of the SC for 2021–2022, which is available and further discussed in section 5.2. The workplan for 2021 is detailed below.

Ad hoc WG on Narwhals in East Greenland in autumn 2021. The Chair would be Rod Hobbs (USA), with Rikke Hansen (Greenland) as convener. External experts will be invited from various organisations, including Fisheries and Oceans Canada (DFO).

NAMMCO-JCNB Joint WG on Narwhal and Beluga under the co-chairmanship of NAMMCO and the JCNB, and with Hobbs as NAMMCO Chair and Cortney Watt as JCNB Chair.

By-Catch Working Group under the Chair of Kimberley Murray (NOAA, USA), and with Desportes (Secretariat) as convener.

Joint ICES/NAFO/NAMMCO Benchmark kick off meeting to happen online to prepare for the Joint ICES/NAFO/NAMMCO WG on harp and hooded seals (WGHARP), chaired by the joint Chairs of WGHARP, Sophie Smout (SMRU, UK), and Martin Biuw (IMR, NO)

The SC would also continue the planning of the NASS-2024 and engage in the development of the Super-Tag project if it receives approval by the Council and can be funded.

The **annual SC meeting** would be hosted by Greenland at the end of January (24–28) 2022.

5.1.5 Other business

Finally, Mikkelsen noted that two SC members who had been members of the SC since its inception had now left the committee - Thorvaldur Gunnlaugsson (IS) in 2019 and Tore Haug (NO) in 2021. The SC acknowledged the contributions and work of these retiring SC members and expressed its gratitude to them. A new member joined the SC in 2020, Biuw (NO).

COMMENTS & DISCUSSION TO 5.1

The Chair thanked the Chair of the SC for its report and thanked the Committee for its work. The Chair reminded participants that under agenda item 3, the Council had agreed that a dedicated meeting of the FAC would be held on the Super-Tag project.

On behalf of the Council, the Chair thanked Gunnlaugsson and Haug for their long-term contributions to the work of the Scientific Committee over the years, indeed since its establishment in 1993.

Norway expressed its support for the Super-Tag project, for holding a dedicated meeting to move the project forward, as well as its willingness to contribute with funding. It noted that developing a Super-Tag for deployment on the fast-moving rorquals such as minke and fin whales would open up new research possibilities and provide essential knowledge for the sound management of whales. It would also lay the ground for global collaboration with scientists not normally engaged in NAMMCO research.

The Faroe Islands also expressed their support for the project and the willingness to investigate possible sources of funding; they were also open to participation from external partners.

Greenland and Iceland expressed their support for the project and noted that in-kind contributions would be made through the active involvement of their scientists.

Council **concluded** that there was support for the revised Super-Tag project among all Member Countries and a willingness to open the project to non-NAMMCO members. It **tasked** the FAC with holding a dedicated meeting to discuss the financing of the project in the near future.

Japan commended the hard work of the NAMMCO SC, which contributed a great deal to the conservation and management of marine mammals. Japan noted that it had conducted experiments in satellite tagging and reiterated its interest in collaborating with the NAMMCO SC on the development of this new satellite tag focused on smaller baleen whales such as the minke whale. Japan was willing to contribute both technically and financially to the project and expressed its interest in

participating in the dedicated funding meeting to be held by NAMMCO. Japan underlined its general interest in the various activities of the NAMMCO SC and its appreciation of being able to follow the SC meeting as observers, which strengthened the collaboration between Japanese and NAMMCO scientists. Japan also reiterated its general interest in cooperating with NAMMCO on research projects aimed at improving the management of marine mammals, especially cetaceans.

The Chair thanked Japan for its expression of support and its interest in participating in the Super-Tag research project.

Regarding NASS-2024, Norway expressed its willingness to endorse the plans for a coordinated survey as proposed by the SC, emphasising the value of the long-term data series provided by NASS. Iceland also expressed its willingness to endorse the plans for NASS-2024 and asked whether it might be possible to include cetacean experts on vessels surveying mackerel in the same area as a way to reduce the additional funding required. Greenland also expressed its support for NASS-2024 but noted that it had no mandate to discuss the possibility of using fish survey vessels. The Faroe Islands also endorsed the plans of the SC for NASS-2024 and noted that options for financing would need to be considered further, including the suggestion from Iceland to combine efforts with existing fish surveys. The General Secretary noted that fish survey vessels (Redfish surveys in the Irminger Sea) had been used in previous NASS, however, some specific conditions needed to be fulfilled by fish surveys to be useful for whale survey.

The Council concluded that there was general support for NASS-2024 among Member Countries. It noted that the estimated costs for the planning of NASS-2024 should be included in the NAMMCO budget for the coming years. It **requested** the SC to further look into the feasibility of including fish surveys as observation platforms.

Regarding the question of open access to the survey data, Norway expressed its general support for having open access data and noted that this was already implemented in its dealings with the IWC. Greenland asked for further clarification regarding ownership of the data and any publications that may stem from use of data in an open archive. The Council **requested** the Secretariat to continue developing a draft data policy for the NSP and to circulate this to Member Countries to consider and comment on in more detail at a later stage.

5.2 ADOPTION OF PRIORITIES AND WORK PLAN 2021-2023

Following the presentation of the reports of the Management Committees and budget consideration, the Council **endorsed** the following workplan for the SC in 2021, 2022 and 2023.

2021	2022	2023
Working Groups: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Narwhal in East Greenland - NAMMCO-JCNB JWG on Narwhal and Beluga - By-catch Other: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Harp & Hooded Seals Benchmark kick off (online) - NASS Planning (online) - <i>(Super-tag: Development)</i> 	Working Groups: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Bearded Seal - Ringed Seal - Harbour Porpoise - Coastal Seals - Pilot Whale Other: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Harp & Hooded Seals Benchmark Meeting - NASS Planning - <i>(Super-tag: Testing)</i> 	Working Groups: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Harp & Hooded Seals - Dolphins Other: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - NASS Planning - <i>(Super-tag: Research)</i>

5.3 OTHER BUSINESS

Norway encouraged all Member Countries to appoint their allocated number of members to the Scientific Committee to ensure its full capacity.

6. COMMITTEE ON HUNTING METHODS

The Chair of the Committee on Hunting Methods (CHM), Kathrine Albertine Ryeng (NO), presented the activities of the CHM since Council 27 (2019).

6.1 REPORT OF THE COMMITTEE ON HUNTING METHODS

Ryeng drew attention to the following:

Workshop (WS)/Expert group meeting (EGM)

The Council 27 had endorsed the proposal to convene two events:

- An Expert Group Meeting (EGM) on hunting efficiency of small cetaceans as a follow up to the 2011 EGM
- A Workshop (WS) or EGM on methods where the harpoon and rifle are not used as a combined weapon

The CHM decided to combine the two events and to focus on methods to improve animal welfare in hunts for all marine mammals where harpoon and rifle are not used as a combined weapon, i.e., all small cetaceans, minke whales and seals. Because of its focus, the EGM/WS would have been predominantly concerned with Greenlandic issues and therefore dependent on a comprehensive input from Greenland, both in terms of data collection and analyses. The planning work continued through 2019 and up to September 2020 when Greenland informed that due to personnel changes and the pandemic, it would not be able to allocate the required resources to obtain the necessary information. The Heads of Delegations (September 2020 meeting) agreed to postpone the event for the time being.

In relation with the planning of the EGM/WS, the CHM had agreed to forward to the Council the following recommendations:

- Greenland finalises the analysis of TTD data for beluga and narwhal
- The Faroe Islands focuses on the killing method for dolphins and develop a spinal lance blade that will improve the dolphin hunt.

Instruction videos for marine mammal hunters

Inspired by the Greenlandic animation video on the penthrite grenade, the CHM discussed extending and strengthening the instruction manuals developed in 2013 by producing a series of short training videos for hunters.

The CHM presented a proposal to produce a series of short professional training videos for hunters for easy access on the NAMMCO website. All videos would have an English version as well as versions in the native language of the hunters. They would illustrate technical information regarding the weapons and their use and maintenance, including optimal target sites and shooting angles, in a clear and engaging manner. It was envisaged to use a combination of animation, illustrations, and filmed footage.

The CHM also saw the possibility of extending this project to include other hunting countries in line with the importance NAMMCO puts on cooperation and knowledge sharing not only between, but also beyond its Member Countries.

As a first step, the CHM recommended making an instruction video in 2021 on the safe handling of the whaling gun (cannon) with shell (cartridge), the harpoon and the explosive grenade. The proposed budget was NOK 150,000 and filming would take place during the upcoming whaling season in Norway, while the equipment was mounted and in place on board the boats. The CHM considered this as potentially the first of a series, bearing in mind that a series of videos would be a longer-term endeavour, where the content and financial implications of future videos would be discussed and forwarded to Council for approval as appropriate.

Presentations from hunters in meeting of the CHM

The CHM recognised that the online meeting platform represents an interesting new avenue for acquiring information and conducting meetings. Reports from workshops and expert groups contain a wealth of information on hunting practices. However, the CHM agreed that it might be valuable, especially for new members, to learn how hunts are being carried out directly from hunters through a video meeting.

Taking advantage of online platforms, the CHM had agreed to invite hunters to participate in designated online committee meetings to share their expertise on hunts. As a first step in this approach, Norway was tasked with identifying a hunter to present either sealing or whaling operations.

Recommendations and members follow up from Workshops and Expert Group meetings

The CHM concluded a review of all recommendations to Member Countries and their responses dating back to 1999, identifying those recommendations that were completed/closed and those that were still active. Recognising that several of the active recommendations dealt with similar issues, the next step is to classify the recommendations into categories, to get a more structured compilation. Examples of categories include struck and lost issues, the municipal rifle hunt in Greenland, and training/education and safety issues for hunters.

COMMENTS AND DISCUSSION

The Chair thanked the Chair of the CHM for a very encompassing and thorough report of the committee's comprehensive work.

The Council **endorsed** the two recommendations addressed by the CHM to Greenland and the Faroe Islands.

Greenland informed that, given the current priorities and available resources in the Ministry, analysis of the time to death (TTD) data for beluga and narwhal could not be carried out within the next couple of years. With respect to the postponement of the EGM, Greenland noted that they would return with a proposal on timing for such a meeting.

The Faroe Islands commended the work of the committee. They noted that the work on developing a spinal lance for the dolphin hunt had already started and was encouraged and supported by the Faroese Government.

All Member Countries expressed their general support for the video productions and especially for the proposed first instruction video on the whaling gun, noting the importance of ensuring the safety of the hunters.

Japan expressed its continued interest in the work of the CHM. The work on the spinal lance and the possibility of cooperation between Japanese and Faroese experts was underlined. Japan also expressed interest in the proposed video productions and noted that this could represent opportunities for consideration of financial support.

The Council **approved** the general idea of producing a series of videos for training purposes and especially the proposed instruction video on the whaling cannon. Subsequently, the Council **approved** a budget allocation of NOK 150,000 towards producing the video in 2021.

The Chair also **underlined** the continued value of collaborating with hunters through their participation and dedicated presentations in committee meetings.

6.2 ADOPTION OF PRIORITIES AND WORK PLAN 2021–2022

2021

- Continue the review and classification of the active recommendations
- Produce the instruction video on safe handling of the whaling gun (cannon)

2022

- Monitor annual reporting from Member Countries
- Identify possible new video projects to present to Council

COMMENTS AND DISCUSSION

The Council **endorsed** the proposed workplan for the CHM.

7. COMMITTEE ON INSPECTION AND OBSERVATION (CIO)

The Chair of the Committee on Inspection and Observation (CIO), Guðni Magnús Eiríksson (IS), presented the activities of the CIO since Council 27 (2019).

7.1 REPORT OF THE COMMITTEE ON INSPECTION AND OBSERVATION

Attention was drawn to the following:

Evaluation of the Observation Scheme

The Observation Scheme states that it should “provide a mechanism for NAMMCO to oversee whether recommendations made by NAMMCO are implemented and national regulations are adhered to”. To investigate whether this objective had been met, the CIO decided to review the compliance of Member Countries to recommendations made by NAMMCO.

Observer training course

The CIO organised a training course for all observer candidates 5–7 February 2020. The CIO evaluation of the course was that it had been more dynamic and interactive compared to previous ones due to efforts to overcome language issues and activities organised to strengthen group affiliation and openness. Discussing the cost/benefit of similar courses, the CIO recommended reconsidering the format, while keeping in mind that the language barrier remains the main challenge.

The CIO had agreed to organise regular annual online meetings with the observers to give updates on new developments and activities in NAMMCO. The first meeting was held 12 November 2020.

Amendment of text of the Observation Scheme

To streamline the text of the Observation Scheme, including the guidelines, the CIO recommended that paragraph 5 be amended as follows:

“NAMMCO/~~the Council~~ decides ~~annually~~ the scope of observation priorities ~~for the coming year~~”.

Approval of observer candidates to the corps

Observers were previously nominated and approved on an annual basis, following a very formal and bureaucratic procedure. For the observation year 2021, the Council had approved all nominated observer candidates in October 2020. To minimise administration and make implementation procedures more efficient (see revised guidelines, agenda item 7.2.2), the CIO recommended the establishment of a corps of observers, and that the Council extend the 2021 approval of the observers to be an approval for membership to the observation corps.

Remuneration rates for observers

The rates for observers were revised in 2008 based on the rates for national inspectors in the Member Countries at that time. The CIO recommended that these be adjusted for the Norwegian inflation rate since 2008.

Terms of Reference (ToR) for the CIO

Following the adoption of the new Observation Scheme, the ToR of the CIO, described in its Rules of Procedure (RoP), needed to be adjusted accordingly. In addition, the CIO recommended that the ToR be amended to include reference to national inspection schemes, see agenda item 7.2.1.

The proposed text (see Appendix 7: Guidelines to the NAMMCO Observation Scheme) was forwarded to the Council for its consideration.

COMMENTS AND DISCUSSION

The Chair thanked the Chair of the CIO for the thorough report of the committee's comprehensive work.

The Council **adopted** the amendment to paragraph 5 of the Observation Scheme, **adopted** the new remuneration rates for observers and **approved** the appointment of the 2021 observer candidates to an observer corp.

The Chair also noted that the proposal to amend the CIO ToR had now been received by the Council and that it would be considered either by correspondence or at the next meeting in accordance with the deadlines for amending Rules of Procedure.

7.2 REVISIONS TO THE INSPECTION AND OBSERVATION SCHEME

The provisions of the Joint NAMMCO Control Scheme for the hunting of marine mammals consisted of Section A and Section B with appendices. When the Council 27 endorsed the new Observation Scheme, it also asked the CIO to review Section A dealing with common elements for national inspection schemes.

7.2.1 Section A

While reviewing Section A, the CIO found that the guidelines were outdated as most of the elements were *de facto* incorporated in the existing national inspection schemes for the hunts in question (hunting with whaling cannon). The Committee also noted that national inspection systems normally build on international fisheries standards, making it redundant to duplicate the work.

Section A was developed and designed to allow for inspectors to collect scientific data. Experience, however, had demonstrated that data identified as important for the work of the Scientific Committee and other committees have been collected through other channels. The CIO therefore recommended that Section A should be considered redundant. The Committee also did not find it necessary to develop common elements for Member Countries' national inspection schemes of other hunts.

7.2.2 Section B

The Provisions of Section B—International Observation Scheme with guidelines—was adopted by the Council 27. Some administrative and procedural issues (embedded in the guidelines) were not finalised at the time of the adoption, and the CIO has since developed revised guidelines. The revised guidelines build on the following conclusions and recommendations:

- As a general principle, Member Countries are responsible for nominating observer candidates that meet the agreed requirements related to safety courses and certificates.
- The qualification requirements, including requirements for safety training and a health certificate, have been described in the CV templates for observer candidates.
- The nomination and appointment procedure has been revised to reflect the establishment of a corps of observers. The appointment of an observer continues until he/she withdraws from the task either for personal reasons or as a request from the (nominating) Member Country.
- The new agreed procedure for identifying and approving the scope.

- Clarifications on how the reporting of the observer should be done, including how the hunt specific checklists should be developed.

COMMENTS AND DISCUSSION

The Council **adopted** the recommendation to delete Section A and **adopted** the revised guidelines as given in Appendix 7: Guidelines to the NAMMCO Observation Scheme.

Closing this agenda item, the Chair noted that the Provisions of the Joint NAMMCO Control Scheme for the hunting of marine mammals was now an historic document replaced by the NAMMCO Observation Scheme.

7.3 OBSERVATION ACTIVITIES IN 2021 AND 2022

Due to the COVID-19 pandemic, all planned observation activities for both 2020 and 2021 were cancelled. The Council (Council-HoD meeting March 2020) allocated NOK 300,000 for observation activities in 2021, under the condition that the CIO returned with a detailed plan for the scope of activities and its subsequent approval by the Council.

The CIO submitted a proposal to the FAC in October 2020 requesting that the 2021 planned activities be cancelled due to the pandemic-related uncertainties and that the NOK 300,000 be transferred to 2022. Furthermore, the CIO asked for an allocation of an additional NOK 200,000 for 2022 arguing that the total allocation would represent the total cost had the scheme been operative in the years 2018–2022. The CIO was requested to provide more details on the added value that this supplementary allocation would generate.

A higher budget increases the probability of observing hunts, as the observers spend more days in the field. It was also argued that a higher budget would confirm the continued support and high importance that the organisation and its Member Countries give to the observation scheme.

For any budget and scope, the aim is to maximise the outcome in terms of days of observation. This entails identifying locations and times of the year that will give the highest probability of observing the targeted hunt(s).

The observation budget is driven by two elements, the number of observers and the duration of assignments. The CIO presented an overview of 17 different budget scenarios and recommended that option 12 (NOK 431,000 rounded, with 3 observers contracted for a maximum of 13 weeks) be retained.

The CIO had developed criteria to help identify the scope. These included factors like hunting level and frequency, season, and location of hunting grounds, in addition to considerations of the existence of national inspections and whether the NAMMCO committees sought more information on the specific hunts. For the 2022 season, the CIO recommended observing walrus, narwhal and beluga hunts in West Greenland carried out with rifle and handheld harpoons from dinghies or small boats. These hunts had never been targeted before by the Observation Scheme and the hunting method had been identified by NAMMCO as of concern due to reported times to death and lack of struck and lost information.

COMMENTS AND DISCUSSION

The Chair opened the floor by formally **confirming** the cancellation of observation activities in 2021. The Member Countries expressed their general support for the proposed scope of observation activities in 2022. The Council **agreed** to the scope of the observation activities in 2022 and to the proposed Option 12 – and **allocated** NOK 431,000 to the observation activities in 2022.

7.4 WORKPLAN 2021–2022

2021

- Start the implementation process for the 2022 observation activities.
- Begin work on defining a proposal for scope and range of observation activities for 2023.
- Organise the annual online meeting of the observer corps.

2022

- Review submitted data from 2021.
- Finalise outstanding issues for the 2022 observation activities.
- Finalise the proposal for scope and range of observer activities for 2023.
- Organise the annual online meeting of the observer corps.

COMMENTS AND DISCUSSION

The Council **endorsed** the proposed workplan for the CIO.

8. WORKING GROUP ON BY-CATCH, ENTANGLEMENTS AND LIVE STRANDINGS (BYCELS)

The Chair of the Working Group on By-catch, Entanglements and Live Strandings (BYCELS), Guðni Magnús Eiríksson (IS), presented the activities of BYCELS since Council 27 (2019).

8.1 REPORT OF THE BYCELS WORKING GROUP

Data

BYCELS has spent a considerable amount of time identifying and standardising the data needed to inform its work. The annual reporting from Member Countries currently includes data on by-catch, entanglement and strandings.

Reviewing the data submitted by Member Countries in 2019 and 2020, BYCELS initiated a discussion on whether the data identified needed to be looked at again. BYCELS agreed to continue the discussion of the application and usefulness of the data.

BYCELS discussed the possibility of developing interactive maps depicting the reported data on by-catch, entanglement and strandings.

Guidelines on euthanasia

BYCELS developed guidelines on how to euthanise stranded cetaceans. These guidelines were based on the 2017 Norwegian guidelines “Dyrevelferdsmessig forsvarlig håndtering av levende strandet hval, hval i oppdrettsmerder og hval viklet inn i fiskeredskaper i sjøen”. The guidelines were presented to the Council for consideration.

Guidelines on how to set up a stranding response network

Based on a review of existing stranding response networks, BYCELS developed guidelines on how to set up a national response network that were forwarded for the use of Member Countries should they decide to establish national networks.

BYCELS reviewed existing protocols and guidelines on sampling of stranded animals and recommended that Member Countries use the most recent recognised protocol. Attention was drawn to the 2019 ASCOBANS report “Best practice on cetacean post-mortem investigations and tissue sampling”.

Guidelines on disentanglement of cetaceans

BYCELS discussed the usefulness of developing guidelines for disentanglement of cetaceans. Recognising the extensive work undertaken by the IWC on entanglement response, including the material on large whale entanglement response efforts available online, BYCELS did not find it necessary to develop additional guidelines for NAMMCO. The IWC guidelines cover the essential and

important information on behaviour, equipment, and safety without giving too detailed instructions on what to do specifically. Concerned that the existence of more detailed guidelines might prompt untrained personnel to initiate a disentangle action, BYCELS agreed to recommend to Council not to develop NAMMCO guidelines.

COMMENTS AND DISCUSSION

The Chair thanked the Chair of BYCELS for his presentation of the work of the Working Group and Norway for putting forward their guidelines on euthanasia as a basis for the work of BYCELS.

The Faroe Islands noted that the guidelines on euthanasia did not mention the spinal lance as a suitable weapon and questioned why it had not been considered when developing the guidelines. The Chair of BYCELS acknowledged that the spinal lance would represent a good alternative, and this should be reflected in the guidelines.

The Council **agreed** that the Working Group should refine the guidelines on euthanasia and present a revised version to the next Council meeting.

With respect to the guidelines on how to set up national stranding networks, the Council concluded that these could be a point of reference for the Member Countries to apply when/if relevant. Greenland informed that it had already developed guidelines related to strandings and Norway informed that the establishment of national guidelines was under consideration.

8.2 WORK PLAN 2021-2022

2021

- Refining the guidelines on euthanasia.

2022

- Review submitted data from 2021 and consider the possibility of creating interactive maps for illustrating the data received.

Comments and discussion

The Council **endorsed** the proposed workplan for BYCELS.

8.3 OTHER BUSINESS

There was no other business.

9. MANAGEMENT COMMITTEES (MCS)

The Chair of the Management Committees (MCs), Guro Gjelsvik (NO), presented to the Council the recommendations for conservation and management made by the Management Committee for Cetaceans (MCC), the Management Committee for Seals and Walrus (MCSW) and the Joint Meeting of the Management Committees (MCJ) directly to their members

She also presented new recommendations for research and a new request for advice from the Scientific Committee that Council was asked to consider and, if appropriate, endorse. In addition, she presented the requests for advice that had been answered by the SC and which the MCs were recommending could now be considered answered and closed. The Chair of the MCs also presented information relating to user knowledge and a new recommendation on this topic from the MCJ.

9.1 PROPOSALS FOR CONSERVATION AND MANAGEMENT

Proposals for conservation and management are within the remit of the MCs and decisions on these are presented to the Council for information. Only the proposals for conservation and management

directly related to sustainable catches are reported here. Appendix 8: Proposals for Conservation and Management presents the full set of proposals.

Advice on sustainable catches:

Beluga

- For the North Water stock (north of Cape York), an annual landed catch of no more than 37 individuals.
- For the West Greenland stock (south of Cape York and north of 65°), an annual landed catch of no more than 265 individuals.

Harbour porpoise

- For West Greenland, an annual catch (animals reported landed) of no more than 1,869 harbour porpoises.

Harp seals

- An upper limit for removals from the White Sea/Barents Sea stock of 21,172 seals.
- An upper limit for removals from the Greenland Sea stock of 11,548 seals.
- Catches on harp seals from the local communities in East Greenland may continue.

Hooded seals

- There should be no commercial catch from the Greenland Sea stock, but scientific and hunting by local communities may continue.

COMMENTS AND DISCUSSION

The Council **took note** of the new proposals for conservation and management forwarded by the MCs to the Member Countries (Appendix 8: Proposals for Conservation and Management).

9.2 RECOMMENDATIONS FOR SCIENTIFIC RESEARCH AND REQUEST FOR SCIENTIFIC ADVICE FROM THE SC

9.2.1 New request for advice from the Scientific Committee

Request R-1.6.7: “The SC is requested to explain how and at what level the precautionary approach is, or can be, integrated into advice provided by the SC for use in conservation and management, with a particular focus on depleted stocks.”

COMMENTS AND DISCUSSION

The Council **adopted** the new request for advice to the Scientific Committee.

9.2.2 New recommendations for research

The new recommendations for research proposed by the MCs are listed in Appendix 9: Recommendations for Scientific Research.

COMMENTS AND DISCUSSION

The Council **endorsed** the new recommendations for research.

9.2.3 Requests for advice considered answered

The list of requests for advice to the Scientific Committee that the MCs proposed be considered answered and closed is provided in Appendix 9: Recommendations for Scientific Research.

COMMENTS AND DISCUSSION

The Council **agreed** to consider as finalised the requests for advice outlined in Appendix 9: Recommendations for Scientific Research.

9.2.4 User Knowledge

The MCJ discussed the issue of user knowledge and how it may be strengthened within NAMMCO, particularly in light of the challenges the MCC saw in the very different positions of scientists and hunters in the case of narwhal in East Greenland. Following this discussion, the MCJ recommended that further work be carried out on this topic. Given this new recommendation, the MCs welcomed any input Council may have for how the future work of the MCJ on including user knowledge within NAMMCO should proceed.

COMMENTS AND DISCUSSION

Greenland extended its thanks to the Secretariat for an interesting presentation on how NAMMCO could further integrate hunter and user knowledge. Greenland was looking forward to working with NAMMCO on this issue and proposed that it be dealt with by the MCs.

All Member Countries agreed that it was important to continue discussing how the inclusion of user knowledge may be strengthened within NAMMCO and that this discussion should be continued within the Management Committees.

Greenland informed that hunters from East Greenland had offered to provide information on the location and distribution of harbour seals in East Greenland. Furthermore, hunters had regularly expressed their willingness to enhance their collaboration with scientists and how. Hunters could be more involved in the planning of research related to marine mammal management might be a relevant discussion. Greenland suggested that the three types of narwhals identified by hunters in East Greenland be scientifically investigated, e.g., through genetic analysis. Greenland also proposed to request that the SC provide information on how they could involve hunters and user knowledge in their assessments and development of management recommendations.

Norway noted that although this was an important topic for NAMMCO to advance on, it may be premature to make a formal request to the SC on this topic at this meeting, given its complexity and the limited time remaining. The MCs could, however, be tasked with exploring potential ways forward and what the SC may be requested to do in relation to this topic.

Greenland noted that for the last 5–6 years, the necessity to improve and structure the collection and use of hunter and user knowledge in relation to marine mammal management has been clearly recognised. The current imbalance in the type of knowledge used in advisory and decision-making processes (i.e., mostly scientific) challenges the relationship between scientists and hunters and has a clear impact on management decisions. Greenland further noted that scientific knowledge on marine mammals had been steadily improving, in turn improving the management advice in Greenland. Hunters and users develop their knowledge based on 24-hour/year-round observations, which also represents highly valuable knowledge that should be channelled into the decision-making process. Greenland considered that the best available knowledge that politicians should base their management decisions upon would be obtained by combining the two knowledge systems. When this is not done, it causes frustration in hunter communities and leads to advice that is seen to place unnecessary restrictions on meat supply and cultural heritage.

For these reasons, Greenland is currently focused on addressing this imbalance and on supporting the organised and structured collection of hunter knowledge and its use in decision-making processes. It also encourages such a focus within the context of NAMMCO.

Greenland noted that in the last two years, community consultations on narwhal issues had been carried out in 3 communities, and some of their settlements, and these will continue. An executive order on the collection and use of hunter and user knowledge was also in preparation, which would

formalise the development of a more structured approach and thereby hopefully help to balance the knowledge input in the decision-making process.

The Council **endorsed** the recommendation from the MCs that further work on strengthening the inclusion of user knowledge in NAMMCO be carried out within the MCJ.

10. ENVIRONMENTAL QUESTIONS & ECOSYSTEM APPROACH TO MANAGEMENT

The Chair noted that the importance of environmental questions to NAMMCO and the commitment to progress towards an ecosystem approach to management was reiterated in the Nuuk Declaration in 2017. Environmental matters directly related to scientific advice on the conservation and management of marine mammals were addressed by the MCJ – and points of discussion can be found in the report of the MCJ (NAMMCO/28/FI03).

The Chair noted that NAMMCO was engaging with environmental programmes and initiatives under the Arctic Council, providing relevant information for inclusion in monitoring and assessment reports on the status of the environment and biodiversity in the Arctic. It had also initiated a dialogue with OSPAR, which is the regional body in the NE Atlantic responsible for the protection of the marine environment in the NAMMCO region and therefore also an important partner (see also under 11. External Relations).

The Chair opened the floor for information and discussion.

Mining projects

Canada provided a comprehensive update on relevant developments in the Mary River Project.

Background

The original Mary River Project proposed by Baffinland Iron Mines Corporation (Baffinland) was recommended for approval by the Nunavut Impact Review Board (NIRB) in December 2012. It involved developing an open-pit iron ore mine on northern Baffin Island and included using an existing Tote Road between Milne Inlet and the Mine Site at Mary River and a railway connecting the Mine Site to the Steensby Port.

As initially proposed, iron ore would be transported from the Mine Site via railway south to the port at Steensby Inlet. Since the approval of the Mary River Project Certificate No. 005 on December 28, 2012, several elements of the original Mary River Project have not been constructed. This includes the construction of an ore carrier railway from the Mine Site to Steensby Inlet. It is important to note that the delay in constructing this railway has limited the environmental, species and ecosystem impact of the mine's activities.

Since 2012, through several reconsideration processes (i.e., The Early Revenue Phase, The Production Increase Proposal and the Extension Request to the Production Increase Proposal), Baffinland has been approved to ship up to 6MT/annually North, using the existing Tote Road to a Port and stockpile at Milne Inlet until December 31, 2021. From port, ore is then transported along a Northern Shipping corridor through Eclipse Sound and Baffin Bay out to international markets.

Monitoring and Oversight

Environmental impact monitoring of Baffinland's Mary River project is carried out by the Nunavut Impact Review Board. The latest environmental impact statement was issued in June 2020, it found that the Mary River project complied with its licensing agreement with appropriate precautionary measures to prevent adverse impacts from its activities.

Key Messages

- The Mary River Project was approved on the basis that all its activities are carried out considering the precautionary principle to protect and conserve the ecological environment in which its activities are based. This precautionary principle has since been incorporated into several pieces of Canadian legislation, including the Canadian Environmental Protection Act (CEPA, 1999), the Oceans Act (Oceans Act, 1996), and the Canada National Marine Areas Conservation Act (CNMAC, 2002).
- To continue to operate, the Mary River project must demonstrate clearly and in detail to Canadian authorities that its activities comply with Canadian law, including by adhering to the precautionary principle. Further, it must specifically demonstrate that its activities do not cause severe or irreversible damage to the environment, including protecting marine mammals and other species.
- Further, Baffinland is required to identify any follow-up and monitoring activities planned at the Mary River project in areas where scientific uncertainty exists in the prediction of effects.
- Regarding NAMMCO's proposed study on human disturbances resulting from the Mary River project on the region's walrus, narwhal, beluga and seal population, Canada notes that due to the delay in the construction of the southern railway, activities of the Mary River project have had no impact on the walrus habitat areas in Foxe Basin. At the present, the construction of this railway remains uncertain.
- Canada remains committed to ensuring the long-term health of its marine ecosystems, including the marine mammals and other species that depend on them. Canada works closely with territorial and indigenous partners to this end, recognising the importance of balancing economic and cultural interests in this process.

Canada thanked NAMMCO for the opportunity to give an update on the Mary River Mine process and is happy to continue to provide updates in this regard, upon request.

COMMENTS AND DISCUSSION

Greenland noted that they had consulted the Greenland Institute of Natural Resources (GINR) on this issue as GINR researchers had actively followed the Mary River mine project and its environmental impact assessment. The GINR informed the Ministry of Fisheries, Hunting and Agriculture that the environmental impacts in both international and Canadian waters could have quite large consequences for Greenland as they will significantly affect the populations of narwhals, belugas, bowhead whales, and walruses that live in West Greenland in the winter and which are used by the communities there. None of these stocks are present in large numbers in these waters in the period from July to 15 November, when the mining company's shipping traffic is planned. However, at the beginning and end of this period, animals are potentially vulnerable to impacts along the shipping route in international and Canadian waters, which can have consequences for Greenland.

Other Non-Hunting Related Anthropogenic Stressors

Greenland noted that shipping is an activity that is increasing in all places in Greenland, including north of Qaanaaq/Thule area and far North East Greenland. This is not only related to the transportation of goods, but also fishing trawlers offshore and near the coast. The number of family boats are also increasing in a large scale. The most problematic issue is seen to be the increasing numbers and sizes of tourist vessels, which are visiting all towns and various isolated areas. Hunters in these remote areas are experiencing disturbance to their hunting activities. Furthermore, the hunters are very worried about the presence of ships and sailboats in the Scoresby Sound Fjord disturbing narwhals, seals, walrus and polar bears. The increasing level of shipping traffic experienced up to 2019 has caused significant frustration. Although the COVID-19 pandemic has limited the presence of shipping vessels in 2020, it is assumed that the widespread vaccination program will allow the activity to increase again.

11. EXTERNAL RELATIONS

The Chair noted that the Administrative Report (NAMMCO/28/07) presents a detailed overview of governmental and intergovernmental (IGO) meetings and events where NAMMCO has been represented in 2019 and 2020 and provides relevant observer reports.

The General Secretary provided an update on the relationships NAMMCO has maintained since Council 27 with a number of governmental and inter-governmental organisations working on marine management.

NAMMCO Member Countries have been considering a possible Memorandum of Understanding, with OSPAR, as the regional body in the NE Atlantic responsible for the protection of the marine environment. A draft MOU, focusing on enhancing the sharing of relevant information between the two organisations, had been forwarded to the OSPAR Secretariat in June 2020 and was presently being discussed within OSPAR. NAMMCO has also provided OSPAR with comments on its draft nomination proforma for a “North Atlantic Current and Evlanov Seamount” (NACES) marine protected area (MPA) in the OSPAR Maritime Area. The comments addressed only its implications for the conservation and management of marine mammals and especially cetaceans in the North Atlantic.

NAMMCO was engaging with environmental programmes and initiatives under the Arctic Council, providing relevant information for inclusion in monitoring and assessment reports on the status of the environment and biodiversity in the Arctic. It was involved in the activities of the Conservation of Arctic Flora and Fauna (CAFF) sub-groups and is an active member of the Circumpolar Biodiversity Monitoring Program (CBMP) and of its Marine Mammal Expert Network (MENN). It contributed to the update of the information related to marine mammals of the State of the Arctic Marine Biodiversity Report (SAMBR, 2017). Contact had been initiated with the Secretariat of the Arctic Monitoring and Assessment Programme (AMAP) with a view to enhancing the use of AMAP expertise on non-hunting related anthropogenic stressors, such as pollution, noise, and other disturbances. NAMMCO also observed the 39th Annual Meeting of AMAP.

The Secretariat participated in the FAO workshop on by-catch (Rome, 2019), and actively contributed to the drafting of the FAO technical *Guidelines to prevent and reduce bycatch of marine mammals in capture fisheries*, which were presented to the 34th Session of COFI. The Secretariat has also continued regularly contributing to the Regional Fishery Body Secretariats’ Network’s activities and newsletter providing information on NAMMCO’s work on the conservation and management of marine mammals and highlighting ongoing priorities and themes.

The Secretariat attended the IWC Scientific Committee meeting and observed the meeting of the IWC Conservation Committee. It also attended ASCOBANS 9th MoP and its Working Group on Beaked Whales, sharing the new abundance estimates gained through the NASS series.

12. COMMUNICATION AND OUTREACH

The General Secretary provided an update on the communication and outreach activities since Council 27 (Administrative Report NAMMCO/28/07).

12.1 OUTREACH ACTIVITIES

The Secretariat attended and gave presentations on the work of NAMMCO and/or relevant thematic subjects at 14 events at a range of locations - including Tromsø, Mystic (USA), Antarctica, Barcelona and online.

The Secretariat arranged two Marine Mammal Student Symposia in Tromsø, in cooperation with the UiT the Arctic University of Norway, so that the Norwegian community of postgraduate students studying marine mammals could be presented with the work of NAMMCO and had a forum for sharing their projects, issues and results.

Two additional outreach events were highlighted in particular.

The participation of the Scientific Secretary, Fern Wickson, in the ***Homeward Bound Global Leadership Initiative for Women in STEMM*** (science, technology, engineering, mathematics and medicine). This programme provides 12 months of leadership training in collaborative and inclusive styles of leadership and culminates in a 3-week voyage to Antarctica. In December 2019, the Scientific Secretary acted as Lead Facilitator for the programme and held a 2.5-hour session on the topic “*Science Meets Ethics and Politics*”. This included an interactive session on environmental ethics and a coordinated role play exercise prepared by the Secretariat. This roleplay engaged participants in a ‘Model UN’ Global Sustainability Council on the theme “*Can the harvest of marine mammals be part of a sustainable food system? Why/why not? Under what conditions?*”. The session introduced the participants to the work of NAMMCO and encouraged them to reflect on their assumptions and beliefs regarding the sustainable harvest of marine mammals.

The participation of the Secretariat at the ***World Marine Mammal Conference*** in Barcelona in December 2019. Besides manning a stand with the theme “*Abundance of marine mammals versus removals in the NAMMCO core area*”, the General Secretary gave a presentation titled “*Outreach on the case of Arctic Sealing: opening up for a reframing of the sustainability discourse?*” in the Session on Education and Outreach. The presentation discussed the Greenlandic use of seal meat and products in the context of global sustainability and true environmental costs. It illustrated the lack of interplay between “moral concerns and measures” (seal ban) and sustainability.

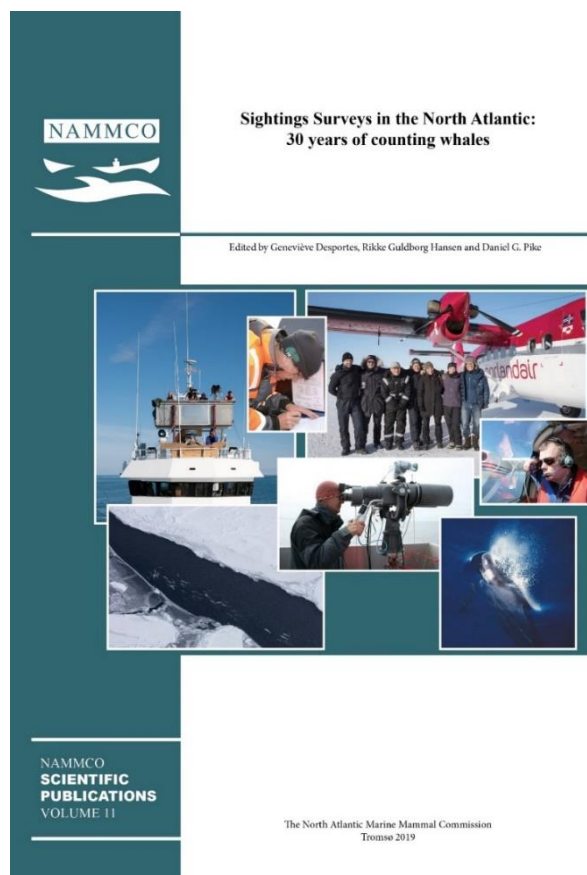
12.2 WEBSITE

Since Council 27, the Secretariat has had a strong focus on the website and on updating and enhancing its content. Nine species pages have been added and 3 were fully revised and updated. Information has been added on NAMMCO management areas, trends in abundance estimates of relevant cetacean species generated through the NASS series, and a searchable catch database has been introduced.

The visits to the website increased in 2019–2020, with close to 20,000 users/yr (incl. 89% new) and an increased number of organic visitors (c. 70%). The top visitor countries were the USA, UK and Canada. The website was used as a general source of information on marine mammal species, with the species pages being the most visited ones.

12.3 SCIENTIFIC PUBLICATIONS

A major task of the Secretariat since Council 27 has been to finalise the editing and publication of Volume 11 of the NAMMCO Scientific Publications series, titled: “*Sightings Surveys in the North Atlantic: 30 years of counting whales*”. The Volume is available [online](#) and contains 14 articles and two technical notes.



Volume 7 “*Counting whales in the North Atlantic 1987-2001*” presented the results of the first 4 NASS:1987, 1989, 1995 and 2001. Volume 11 deals with the results of the next two NASS, 2007 and 2015, the associated Norwegian mosaic surveys (2002–2007, 2008–2013, 2014–2018), and the Canadian High Arctic Cetacean Survey (2013).

This volume provides survey specific results as well as 30-year trends of abundance for several species.

It spans 30 years of counting whales, with all abundance estimates that could be derived from the 1987–2015 NASS series now produced & published. It also rounds out an epoque with some of the scientists involved in the 1987 survey now retiring.

12.4 SOCIAL MEDIA

Stories posted on Facebook and Twitter were usually published as trailers to longer news, articles, and report releases on the website and/or directing the reader to a specific section of the website, thus supporting the visitor flow to the website.

The interest for the NAMMCO Facebook site has increased, reaching 2000 likes and followers. The fun-fact Friday posts had been praised by many, including senior researchers, with over 100,000 users being reached by some posts. The top post on humpback whales inspiring new wind turbine technology was shared over 500 times and reached 107,518 people (see pictures to the right).

There was also an increase of activity on Twitter, but less effort was dedicated to that platform.

COMMENTS AND DISCUSSION ON 12.1–12.4

The Chair, supported by the Members, commended the efforts made by the Secretariat in communication and outreach and not least, the focus given to the website. She underlined that the website represented a useful internal and external tool that NAMMCO could be proud of. It was therefore noted that it was important to keep it updated and accurate and that effort towards this should be, and was being, shared with the committees.

Greenland thanked the NAMMCO Secretariat for its efforts in communication and outreach. It regretted, however, the title given to one presentation “Saving the Unicorn of the Sea” without notification to the relevant Member Country beforehand, as this could be misunderstood by an external audience. It was noted that the situation surrounding narwhals in East Greenland was highly sensitive and Greenland stressed the importance that this not be exacerbated.

12.5 OTHER BUSINESS

The Faroe Islands presented a proposal for a NAMMCO conference on marine mammals as food resources. A preliminary concept paper was circulated as document NAMMCO/28/20.

The harvesting of marine mammals for food defines NAMMCO and its members as an organisation. Sustainable whaling and sealing are fully in line with United Nations Sustainable Development Goal 14 – to conserve and sustainably use the oceans, seas and marine resources for sustainable development. The proposed conference would explore different themes of marine mammals as a food resource with a basis in the NAMMCO report from 2017, “Marine Mammals – a Multifaceted Resource”.



The proposed conference would highlight marine mammals in gastronomy. Food cultures evolve and the conference would facilitate inspiration across cultures. The plan is to invite and bring together chefs from whaling and sealing countries to showcase how marine mammals are used in different food cultures, and to discuss the potential for innovative use of sustainable marine mammal produce in modern gastronomy.

A tangible product of the conference could be an online cookbook with recipes from participating chefs. The reason for proposing an online cookbook was to take advantage of the outreach possibilities of online videos and make the recipes easily accessible for the public. Video platforms like YouTube are becoming a main media source, especially among the younger generations, also in the field of gastronomy.

The Faroe Islands hoped that the Member Countries would endorse this proposal. If endorsed, the next step would be to establish a steering group and prepare a more detailed plan for the organisation, budget and funding. NAMMCO would also need to explore possibilities for partnerships and funding from external sources such as observer countries, Nordic Agencies and industry & hunters' associations.

The Faroe Islands proposed that the conference be held in the Autumn of 2022. The Faroe Islands would be happy to host the conference.

COMMENTS AND DISCUSSION

Member Countries were supportive of the project. Greenland proposed to contribute both with in-kind and direct funding and was looking forward to following up on the similar conference held 20 years ago. Norway indicated that this was a timely project and was looking forward to participating in its planning.

Japan noted that it had participated in the World Council of Whalers Conference "*Whaling for the Future*" in 2002 and had a great interest in this conference, as would the Japanese Whalers Associations. Japan was willing to participate and provide financial support.

13. ELECTION OF CHAIR AND VICE-CHAIR

The Chair noted that NAMMCO has a principle of rotation of chairmanship between countries. She was elected at the 2019 Council Meeting and had now completed a two-year term and was not seeking re-election.

Greenland proposed Ole-David Stenseth, Norway, as Chair of the Council for the next two years. The Faroe Islands proposed Einarsdóttir, Iceland, as Vice-Chair. Both accepted and were duly elected with applause.

Stenseth thanked the Parties for their confidence and looked forward to chairing the Commission and maintaining close contacts with all members and the Secretariat.

The Chair welcomed Stenseth as the new Chair and Einarsdóttir as the new Vice-Chair. She thanked everyone for their support and input during the past two years. She noted that she had enjoyed coming back to NAMMCO after an absence of several years and had been pleased to see how the work of the Commission had progressed, not least due to the hard work and engagement of the Secretariat.

Norway, supported by the other Members and the Secretariat, thanked the out-going Chair for her able chairing of the meeting and of the Commission over the last two years. Greenland, on behalf of all, presented her with a virtual gift, to be forwarded later, in appreciation of her efforts and wished her all the best in her new diplomatic appointment.

14. ANY OTHER BUSINESS

Japan informed the Council that, in relation to the sustainable use of aquatic living resources, including marine mammals, it had a series of important meetings this year (including those postponed last year). Japan is prepared to hold these meetings irrespective of the situation with the COVID-19 pandemic, either as physical meetings or face-to face events. Japan has therefore decided to organise in June this year the annual meeting on Sustainable Use of Aquatic Living Resources, which had been cancelled last year. A tentative date for this meeting is Thursday 17th to Friday 18th June. An invitation will be sent to all the NAMMCO Members as well as the Secretariat. Japan is, as usual, looking forward to active discussions on the common goal of the sustainable use of aquatic living resources – and preferably in a physical manner in Tokyo.

The Chair thanked Japan for this forthcoming invitation.

15. CLOSING PROCEDURES

15.1 PRESS RELEASE

A press release, summarising the main issues and decisions of the 2021 Council Meeting was adopted by the Heads of Delegation immediately after the meeting (Appendix 10: Press Release and [web portal](#)).

15.2 NEXT MEETING

The next Annual Meeting will be hosted by Norway, with venue and dates to be determined as soon as possible. The new annual schedule will apply, with the Annual Meeting to be held in the first half of the calendar year, and the meeting of the Scientific Committee at least two months prior to the Annual Meeting.

The Chair, on behalf of all participants, thanked the Secretariat for their work in preparing for the meeting and their dedicated support during the meeting. She also thanked all the delegates for a constructive and productive meeting.

The report of the 28th Council Meeting of NAMMCO was adopted by correspondence on 26 April 2021.

APPENDIX 1: LIST OF PARTICIPANTS

MEMBER COUNTRIES

Faroe Islands

Páll Nolsøe (C)
Ministry of Foreign Affairs and Culture
FO-110 Tórshavn
Faroe Islands
palln@ummr.fo

Kate Sanderson (Chair)
Ministry of Foreign Affairs and Culture
FO-110 Tórshavn
Faroe Islands
KateS@ummr.fo

Ólavur Sjúrdarberg
The Pilot Whalers Association
FO-110 Tórshavn
Faroe Islands
olavur.sjurdarberg@skulin.fo

Ulla Svarrer Wang
Ministry of Fisheries
FO-110 Tórshavn
Faroe Islands
ulla.svarrer.wang@fisk.fo

Greenland

Sofie Abelsen
Ministry of Fisheries, Hunting and Agriculture
GL-3900 Nuuk
Greenland
soab@nanoq.gl

Åge Hammeken Danielsen
Association of Fishermen and Hunters in
Greenland (KNAPK)
GL-3980 Ittoqqortoormiit
Greenland

Tobias Ignatiussen
KNAPK
Kuummiut,
GL-3913 Tasiilaq
Greenland

Jesper Ødegård Jakobsen
Ministry of Fisheries, Hunting and Agriculture
GL-3900 Nuuk
Greenland
jeod@nanoq.gl

Amalie Jessen (C)
Ministry of Fisheries, Hunting and Agriculture
GL-3900 Nuuk
Greenland
amalie@nanoq.gl

Bjarne Lyberth
KNAPK Secretariat
GL-3900 Nuuk
Greenland

Iceland

Ásta Einarsdóttir (C)
Ministry of Industries and Innovation
Department of Fisheries and Aquaculture
IS-150 Reykjavik
Iceland
asta.einarsdottir@anr.is

Guðni Magnús Eiríksson
Directorate of Fisheries
IS-220 Hafnarfjörður
Iceland
Gudni.M.Eiriksson@fiskistofa.is

Sandra Granquist
Icelandic Seal Center and Marine and
Freshwater Research Institute
IS-530 Hvammstangi
Iceland
sandra.magdalena.granquist@hafogvatn.is

Kristján Loftsson
Hvalur H.F.
IS-222 Hafnafjörður
Iceland
kl@hvalur.is

Gísli Víkingsson
Marine and Freshwater Research Institute
IS-121 Reykjavik
Iceland
gisli.vikingsson@hafogvatn.is

Jóhann Sigurjónsson
Ministry for Foreign Affairs
IS-105 Reykjavik
Iceland
johann.sigurjonsson@utn.is

Guðjón Már Sigurðsson
Marine and Freshwater Research Institute
IS-121 Reykjavik
Iceland
gudjon.mar.sigurdsson@hafogvatn.is

Norway

Alessandro Andres Tøvik Astroza
Ministry of Trade, Industry and Fisheries
NO-0032 Oslo
Norway
ata@nfd.dep.no

Arne Bjørge
Institute of Marine Research
University of Oslo
NO-0316 Oslo
Norway
arne.bjoerge@hi.no

Guro Gjelsvik
Directorate of Fisheries
NO-5804 Bergen
Norway
guro.gjelsvik@fiskeridir.no

Tore Haug
Institute of Marine Research
NO-9296 Tromsø
Norway
tore.haug@hi.no

Sonja Elin Kleven Jakobsen
Norwegian Fishermen Association
NO-7010 Trondheim
Norway
sonja.jakobsen@fiskarlaget.no

Steinar Lindberg
Ministry of Foreign Affairs, Norway
NO-0032 Oslo
Norway
steinar.lindberg@mfa.no

Kathrine A. Ryeng
Institute of Marine Research
NO-9294 Tromsø
Norway
kathrine.ryeng@hi.no

Ole-David Stenseth (C)
Ministry of Trade, Industry and Fisheries
NO-0032 Oslo
Norway
ods@nfd.dep.no

Hild Ynnesdal
Directorate of Fisheries
NO-5804 Bergen
Norway
hild.ynnesdal@fiskeridir.no

SCIENTIFIC COMMITTEE

Bjarni Mikkelsen (Chair)
Faroe Marine Research Institute
FO-100 Tórshavn
Faroe Islands
bjarnim@hav.fo

Aqqalu Rosing-Asvid (Vice-Chair)
Greenland Institute of Natural Resources
GL-3900 Nuuk
Greenland
aqro@natur.gl

Roderick Hobbs (Chair of the NEGWG)
National Marine Fisheries Service
7600 Sand Point Way NE
US-98155-6349, Seattle, WA
USA
rod.hobbs99@gmail.com

OBSERVER GOVERNMENTS

Canada

Amber Lindstedt
Fisheries and Oceans Canada
CA-K1A 0E6 Ottawa, ON
Canada
Amber.Lindstedt@dfo-mpo.gc.ca

Daniel Townsend
Fisheries and Oceans Canada
CA-K1A 0E6 Ottawa, ON
Canada
Daniel.Townsend@dfo-mpo.gc.ca

Justin Turple (C)
Fisheries and Oceans Canada
CA-K1A 0E6 Ottawa, ON
Canada
Justin.Turple@dfo-mpo.gc.ca

Romy Vaugeois
Seals & Sealing Network
Fur Institute of Canada
Canada
romy@sealsandsealing.net

Denmark

Anne Birgitte Hansen (C)
Ministry of Foreign Affairs
DK-1448 Copenhagen
Denmark
anbiha@um.dk

Japan

Yukako Mio
Ministry of Justice
Japan
y.mio.d2j@i.moj.go.jp

Hideki Moronuki (C)
Fisheries Agency of Japan
Japan
hideki_moronuki600@maff.go.jp

Yasushi Nakamura
Ministry of Foreign Affairs
Japan
yasushi.nakamura@mofa.go.jp

Kimihiko Okano
Ministry of Foreign Affairs
Japan
kimihiko.okano@mofa.go.jp

Luis A. Pastene
Institute of Cetacean Research
Japan
pastene@cetacean.jp

Shinichi Suzuki
Fisheries Agency of Japan
Japan
shinichi_suzuki930@maff.go.jp

Fumihiko Yanaka
Ministry of Justice
Japan
f.yanaka.c2r@i.moj.go.jp

Russian Federation

Vladimir Zabavnikov
Polar Branch of VNIRO (PINRO)
Russia
ltei@pinro.ru

United States of America

Elizabeth Phelps
U.S. Department of State
USA
PhelpsE@state.gov

Mi Ae Kim
National Oceanic and Atmospheric
Administration (NOAA)
USA
mi.ae.kim@noaa.gov

INTERGOVERNMENTAL ORGANISATIONS

Agreement on the Conservation of Small
Cetaceans of the Baltic, North East Atlantic, Irish
and North Seas (ASCOBANS)
UNEP/ASCOBANS Secretariat,
DE-53113 Bonn
Germany

Observers:

Jenny Renell, jenny.renell@un.org
Melanie Virtue, melanie.virtue@un.org

International Whaling Commission (IWC)
The Red House
UK-CB4 4NP Cambridge
United Kingdom

Observers:

Cherry Allison, cherry.allison@iwc.int
Jemma Jones, jemma.jones@iwc.int
Rebecca Lent, rebecca.lent@iwc.int
Sarah Smith, sarah.smith@iwc.int
Iain Staniland, iain.staniland@iwc.int

Marguerite Tarzia, marguerite.tarzia@iwc.int
 Imogen Webster, imogen.webster@iwc.int

Northwest Atlantic Fisheries Organisation
 (NAFO)
 CA-B2Y 3Y9 Dartmouth, Nova Scotia
 Canada

Observers:

Norway
 Fred Kingston, fkingston@nafo.int

North-East Atlantic Fisheries Commission
 (NEAFC)
 UK-W1T 3DY London
 United Kingdom
info@neafo.org

Observer:

Norway

NON-GOVERNMENTAL ORGANISATIONS

Inuit Circumpolar Council (ICC)
 CA-Ottawa ON
 Canada

Observer:

John Cheechoo,
jcheechoo@inuitcircumpolar.com

Livelihood International (LIVIN)
 Magdalen Islands, Quebec
 Canada

Observers:

Pierre-Yves Daoust, daoust@upei.ca
 Gil Theriault, info@livintl.org

Makivik Corporation
 Department of Environment, Wildlife &
 Research
 CA-H4M 2X6 St. Laurent, Quebec
 Canada

Observer:

Gregor Gilbert, ggilbert@makivik.org

Nunavut Tunngavik Inc.
 POB 638 Iqaluit, Nunavut X0A 0H0
 Canada

Observers:

Paul Irngaut, pirngaut@tunngavik.com
 David Lee, dLee@tunngavik.com

World Conservation Trust (IWMC)
 CH-1006 Lausanne
 Switzerland

Observers:

Eugène Lapointe, elapointe@iwmc.org
 Nikolas Sellheim, sellheim.consulting@gmail.com

NAMMCO SECRETARIAT

Geneviève Desportes (General Secretary)
 Nicolai Scherdin (Intern)
 Mana Tugend (Scientific and Communication
 Assistant)
 Fern Wickson (Scientific Secretary)
 Charlotte Winsnes (Deputy Secretary)

INTERPRETERS

Kikkik Olsen, Greenland
 Aqqaluk Lynge Egede, Greenland

APPENDIX 2: AGENDA

Agenda Items	Document Reference
1. Opening Procedures <ul style="list-style-type: none"> 1.1 Welcome address by the Chair 1.2 Admission of Observers 1.3 Opening Statements 1.4 Adoption of agenda 1.5 Meeting Arrangements 	NAMMCO/28/01, 02, 03
2. National & Annual Progress Reports	APR reports
3. Financial and Administrative issues <ul style="list-style-type: none"> 3.1 Report from the Finance and Administration Committee 3.2 Audited accounts 2020 3.3 Budget 2021, draft budget 2022 and forecast budget 2023 3.4 Administrative Report 2019-2020 3.5 Other business 	NAMMCO/28/04, 05, 06, 07
4. <i>Ad hoc</i> Working Group on Performance Review <ul style="list-style-type: none"> 4.1 Report from the Working Group on Performance Review 4.2 Recommendations 	NAMMCO/28/15, NAMMCO/27/04
5. Scientific Committee (SC) <ul style="list-style-type: none"> 5.1 Report of the Scientific Committee 5.2 Adoption of priorities and work plan 2021-2022 5.3 Other business 	NAMMCO/28/08, 18, 19
6. Committee on Hunting Methods (CHM) <ul style="list-style-type: none"> 6.1 Report of the Committee on Hunting Methods 6.2 Adoption of priorities and work plan 2021-2022 6.3 Other business 	NAMMCO/28/09
7. Committee on Inspection and Observation (CIO) <ul style="list-style-type: none"> 7.1 Report of the Committee on Inspection and Observation 7.2 Revisions to the Inspection and Observation Scheme <ul style="list-style-type: none"> 7.2.1 Section A 7.2.2 Section B 7.3 Observation activities in 2021 and 2022 7.4 Adoption of priorities and work plan 2021-2022 7.5 Other business 	NAMMCO/28/10, 16, 17, FI04

8. Working Group on By-catch, Entanglements and Live Strandings (BYCELS) 8.1 Report of the BYCELS Working Group 8.2 Adoption of priorities and work plan 2021-2022 8.3 Other business	NAMMCO/28/11
9. Management Committees (MCs) 9.1 Proposals for Conservation and Management 9.2 Recommendations for Scientific Research and Requests for Scientific Advice from the SC 9.3 Other business	NAMMCO/28/12, 13, FI01, FI02, FI03, MC05, MC06
10. Environmental Questions & Ecosystem Approach to management	
11. External Relations	NAMMCO/28/07
12. Communication and Outreach	NAMMCO/28/07, 20
13. Election of Chair and Vice-Chair	
14. Any other business	
15. Closing procedures 15.1 Press Release 15.2 Next Meeting	NAMMCO/28/14

APPENDIX 3: LIST OF DOCUMENTS

Reference	Title	Agenda item
NAMMCO/28/01	List of Participants	1
NAMMCO/28/02	Council draft annotated agenda	1.4
NAMMCO/28/03	List of Documents	All
NAMMCO/28/04	Report of the Finance and Administration Committee	3.1
NAMMCO/28/05	Audited accounts 2020	3.2
NAMMCO/28/06	Budget 2021, draft budget 2022, forecast budget 2023	3.3
NAMMCO/28/07	Administrative Report 2019 - 2020	3.4
NAMMCO/28/08	Report of the Scientific Committee 2019 - 2021	5
NAMMCO/28/09	Report of the Committee on Hunting Methods 2019 - 2021	6
NAMMCO/28/10	Report of the Committee on Inspection and Observation 2019 – 2021	7
NAMMCO/28/11	Report of the Working Group on By-catch, Entanglements and Live Strandings 2019 - 2021	8
NAMMCO/28/12	MCs New Proposals for Conservation and Management	9.1
NAMMCO/28/13	MCs New Recommendations for Scientific Research and Requests for Advice from the SC	9.2
NAMMCO/28/14	Press Release	15.1
NAMMCO/28/15	Report of the <i>ad hoc</i> Working Group on Performance Review	4
NAMMCO/28/16	Proposed guidelines to the Observation Scheme	7.2
NAMMCO/28/17	Proposal for observation activities 2021 and 2022	7.3
NAMMCO/28/18	Proposal for a North Atlantic Survey of Selected Cetaceans NASS-2024	5
NAMMCO/28/19	Revised Super-Tag Project Description	5
NAMMCO/28/20	NAMMCO Conference on marine mammals as food resources - Preliminary concept paper	12

For Information Documents		
NAMMCO/27/04	Report of the Performance Review Panel	4
NAMMCO/28/MC05	List of Proposals for Conservation and Management and Recommendations for Research, with Responses from the Parties	9
NAMMCO/28/MC06	List of Active Requests from the NAMMCO Council to the Scientific Committee, with Responses from the Scientific Committee	9
NAMMCO/28/FI01	Report of the MCC	9
NAMMCO/28/FI02	Report of the MCSW	9
NAMMCO/28/FI03	Report of the MCJ	9
NAMMCO/28/FI04	Provisions of the Joint NAMMCO Control Scheme for the Hunting of Marine Mammals	7.2
Annual Progress Reports (APR)		
NAMMCO/28/NPR/FO-2020-2019	National Progress Reports Faroe Islands – 2020 & 2019	2
NAMMCO/28/NPR/GL-2020-2019	National Progress Reports Greenland – 2020 & 2019	2
NAMMCO/28/NPR/IS-2020-2019	National Progress Reports Iceland – 2020 & 2019	2
NAMMCO/28/NPR/NO-2020-2019	National Progress Reports Norway – 2020 & 2019	2
NAMMCO/28/NPR/C&BC&S-2020	NAMMCO Catches, by-catches & strandings up to and including 2020	2
NAMMCO/28/NPR/CA-2020-2019	National Progress Reports Canada – 2020 & 2019	2
NAMMCO/28/NPR/JP-2020-2019	National Progress Reports Japan – 2020 & 2019	2
NAMMCO/28/APR/MA-2020-2019	Annual Progress Reports Makivik Corporation – 2020 & 2019	2

APPENDIX 4: OPENING STATEMENTS

OPENING ADDRESS FROM THE FAROE ISLANDS

The Faroe Islands are a large ocean nation, and the livelihood of our people is based on sustainable harvesting of the resources of the ocean.

The Faroe Islands believe that international cooperation on conservation of shared resources of the sea should be carried out through regional cooperation, and such a cooperation is more likely to be effective at a regional level, rather than on a global level.

Next year NAMMCO can celebrate the 30th anniversary of the founding of the organisation. This testifies to the importance of our organisation and the value of our cooperation.

The Faroe Islands would therefore like to thank all parties and others involved in the work of NAMMCO for their efforts and commitment to NAMMCO and tasks of our organisation.

Sustainable harvesting of marine mammals for food defines NAMMCO and unites the Member Countries. And sustainable whaling and sealing is fully in line with United Nations Sustainable Development Goal 14 – to conserve and sustainably use the oceans, seas and marine resources for sustainable development.

In 2017, NAMMCO produced the report “Marine Mammals – a Multifaceted Resource”. With a basis in that comprehensive and very useful report, and the UN SDGs, the Faroe Islands will be proposing to the Council this week that NAMMCO organise a Conference on marine mammals as a food resource to be held in the Autumn of 2022.

The conference would explore different themes related to marine mammals as food and focus on marine mammals in gastronomy. We want to bring together chefs from whaling and sealing countries to showcase how marine mammals are used in different food cultures, and to discuss the potential for more creative and innovative use of sustainable marine mammal products in modern gastronomy.

OPENING STATEMENT FROM GREENLAND

We are gathered virtually to address issues on the conservation and management of marine mammals. This new normal, gives us the possibility to have more meetings. However, it also gives limitations, preventing us in having useful informal discussions. Through joint effort, we all have overcome to prepare the annual meeting in spite of the pandemic situation.

Follow up on recommendations from the Performance Review

Greenland welcomes the processes on follow up on the recommendations from the performance review. However, the Commission should be aware of the workload and administrative burdens it entails for the Member Countries. It is therefore important that the Commission is keeping track on focus and priority issues in order not to create too big bureaucracy in NAMMCO.

The need for increased focus on hunter and user knowledge

For the last 5-6 years, there has been clear evidence that there is a need to improve and structure the collection and use of hunter- and user knowledge in relation to addressing issues on the conservation and management of marine mammals. There is an imbalanced situation, which increases challenges between scientists and hunters. The situation has a severe impact on the management on marine mammal in Greenland. It is also a cause for frustrations in the hunter communities, in meat supply and to their cultural heritage.

The best available scientific knowledge

The scientific knowledge of the marine mammal stocks has been steadily improving, and thus improving the management advice in Greenland.

The view from Greenland is that the best available knowledge is obtained by combining the two knowledge systems of hunter and user knowledge with the scientific data in the decision-making process. Then it will be up to the politicians to make the final decision using the two types of knowledge.

The above-described situation can be solved, focussing the work on structured collection and use of hunter and user knowledge in a greater level. A knowledge of the marine mammal based on 24 hours and year-round observations of wildlife from hunters is valuable and needs to be taken into account in the decision-making process.

Therefore, Greenland would like to work for an increased focus on organised collection and use of hunter knowledge in the decision-making process in the coming years, also within the NAMMCO context.

We hope for a positive and constructive meeting, despite the meeting being held virtually.

Qujanaq – Thank you.

OPENING STATEMENT FROM JAPAN

At the outset, Japan would like to thank the Secretariat of NAMMCO for preparing the NAMMCO Council meeting, with great efficiency overcoming challenges of online meetings. We are always happy to find a series of achievements of this organisation in the conservation and management of marine mammals including cetaceans, and in this regard, Japan once again confirms its full support of the “NUUK DECLARATION” adopted at the NAMMCO 25 in 2017, which reaffirms NAMMCO’s fulfilment of its role as an appropriate international organisation in accordance with the UNCLOS.

Japan is proud of having contributed to NAMMCO with its scientific inputs including scientific data and findings from Japan’s whale research programs and resumed commercial whaling. Japan wishes to further contribute to and strengthen cooperation with this organisation.

As you all are aware, Japan withdrew from the ICRW on 30 June 2019, and since July 2019 has resumed commercial whaling for sei, Bryde’s and common minke whales in the western North Pacific.

The catch limits were calculated in line with the Revised Management Procedure (RMP), based on the Norwegian Catch Limit Algorithm (CLA). The application of the CLA was based on the best and latest scientific information, including stock structures and abundance estimates. Detailed calculation methods and its results are available on the website of the Fisheries Agency. Technical aspects of the work conducted by Japanese scientists on the calculation of catch limits were reviewed by an independent panel composed of six foreign experts in June 2019. The annual catch limits were calculated at 171 for Minke whale, 187 for Bryde’s whale and 25 for Sei whale, and I am very happy to inform you that whaling operations in 2019 and 2020 were successfully completed.

Even since its withdrawal from ICRW in 2019, Japan has remained committed to international cooperation for the proper management of cetaceans, through cooperation with relevant international organisations, including NAMMCO and IWC. Japan has also continued to collect scientific data through commercial whaling and its research programs with non-lethal methods in the Antarctic Ocean and the North Pacific. I would like to stress that such efforts by Japan have received wide welcomes from various international fora such as IWC-SC, CCAMLR-SC and of course NAMMCO-SC.

Japan is eager to enhance collaboration with NAMMCO and its Member Countries to strengthen its science-based approach. From such perspective, Japan wishes to make a financial contribution to this organisation in order to jointly work on various activities of common interest, which could specifically promote our collaboration in scientific activities for conservation and management of marine mammals including cetaceans.

Finally, Japan would like to reiterate its conviction that the collaboration between NAMMCO and Japan is a vital force in international fora to promote conservation and sustainable use of marine living resources based on science. Thank you for your attention.

OPENING STATEMENT FROM THE UNITED STATES OF AMERICA

The United States would like to thank the NAMMCO members for the invitation to observe the 28th Annual Meeting. This is the first time the United States is observing a Council meeting and we hope to gain a better understanding of your organization and approach to issues of mutual concern.

Our interests here are to listen and learn how NAMMCO is structured and operates and learn more about the work that you do. In particular, we are interested in your work on bycatch, entanglements and strandings, the ecosystem approach to management, and your work on hunting methods. We would also like to learn more about the organizational structure of NAMMCO, its decision-making process, its use of scientific information, how it addresses conservation issues, how it incorporates indigenous communities' views into decisions and how it addresses management issues. We look forward to observing discussions over the next few days and hope that in the future we will be able to meet in person.

Thank you.

OPENING STATEMENT FROM THE MAKIVIK CORPORATION

Makivik Corporation, on behalf of the Inuit of Nunavik (Northern Québec, Canada) is once again pleased to be an observer to the 28th meeting of the NAMMCO Council. We would like to thank the NAMMCO Secretariat for facilitating this meeting during these difficult times. I would also like to send the regrets of Adamie Delisle Alaku, the Executive Vice President of Makivik Corporation, who would have liked to have participated but unfortunately has other engagements.

Makivik views the proceedings of NAMMCO as an important forum for discussions on issues that pertain to the sustainable use of marine mammals that are essential to Nunavik Inuit food security, culture, and livelihood, within the context of modern comprehensive Canadian Land Claims Agreements. This includes the use of both science and Inuit Knowledge in marine mammal management and decision-making. Moreover, because of the heavy dependence of Nunavik Inuit on these marine resources for food and clothing, Makivik established and now owns, operates, and funds the Nunavik Research Centre so as to ensure that marine mammals are safe for consumption and researched with both Inuit Knowledge and science.

We are also encouraged by the presence of fellow Canadian Inuit organization, Nunavut Tunngavik Incorporated, and the continued participation of the Canadian Federal Government as an observer to NAMMCO. Makivik Corporation, from policy, management, Inuit Knowledge, and scientific perspectives, hopes that it can contribute in meaningful ways to these proceedings.

Nakurmiik, thank you, merci.

OPENING STATEMENT FROM NUNAVUT TUNNGAVIK INCORPORATED (NTI)

Nunavut Tunngavik Incorporated, on behalf of the Inuit of Nunavut is pleased to participate as an observer in this 28th meeting of the NAMMCO Council. NTI is responsible for the implementation of the Nunavut Agreement in Canada which includes principles of conservation, co-management of wildlife, and recognition of Inuit Qaujimajatuqangit and Inuit system of wildlife management.

As you know, Inuit rely on wildlife for subsistence, cultural, and spiritual value. The access and availability of local resources has been no more evident than the challenges presented by the global COVID-19 pandemic. Despite this, NTI has continued to implement an Inuit Marine Monitoring Network in Nunavut to monitor vessel traffic as well to develop capacity to test for *Trichinella* in Atlantic Walrus.

NTI greatly values the work of NAMMCO and thanks the NAMMCO Secretariat for their regular communication and facilitation of this meeting. Sustainable management of marine mammals is not only important to Inuit, but also for all members and observers. NTI would also like to acknowledge the participation of Makivik Corporation who represent the Inuit of Northern Québec and the Government of Canada as observers to this meeting.

NTI appreciates the invitation and is willing to participate in all relevant discussions to promote the work of NAMMCO. Inuit inherently support the sustainable use of wildlife to ensure that Inuit can pass on the traditions, knowledge and values of elders and hunters to future generations.

Qujannamiik,

OPENING STATEMENT FROM THE INTERNATIONAL WHALING COMMISSION

We trust that you and your families are doing well in such challenging times.

On behalf of the International Whaling Commission, we wish to express our gratitude for the invitation to join this week's meeting of the Council of the North Atlantic Marine Mammal Commission. As we gather once again in a virtual setting, we are reminded of the one thing this pandemic cannot take away, notably our common mission of cetacean science and stewardship. We are grateful for our partnership which is even more valuable given the challenges to carrying out our mission over the past year.

We thank the General Secretary and her team, and the NAMMCO members for the collaborative work already in place in the management and conservation of cetaceans. We welcome, in particular, collaboration between our scientists, whether through their research programs on the ground or their engagement in meetings and workshops. We take this opportunity to thank the NAMMCO staff members and members who participated in the 2020 IWC virtual Scientific Committee meetings. This year's IWC Scientific Committee will again meet virtually, 27 April – 14 May 2021. A number of pre-SC workshops will be held, addressing amongst other things the latest abundance estimates, climate change, the role of cetaceans in the ecosystem, and status and threats to small cetaceans under Conservation Management Plans.

This year marks the 75th anniversary of the signing of the Whaling Convention, a milestone that is impressive in its longevity and reflects the Commission's ability to adapt. The IWC is as important and relevant today as it was in 1946 because it has evolved in response to an ever-changing environment. The mandate remains unchanged: the regulation of whaling and conservation of whale stocks, but the threats to whale stocks have changed considerably and our two organisations share interests in managing these threats. Bycatch and entanglement in fishing gear is the greatest single threat, and NAMMCO's BYCELS and IWC's Bycatch Mitigation Initiative seek to expand efforts to monitor and mitigate bycatch through collaborative work with the fishery sector to achieve practical and viable options. There are potentially opportunities for closer collaboration through these groups, including knowledge sharing on effective solutions and approaches for addressing bycatch – vital for building capacity and knowledge across different regions – as well as for strandings and entanglement response.

Whales and other cetaceans also face ship strikes, ocean noise, marine debris, chemical pollution and, of course, climate change, threats that have increased significantly since IWC was formed. It is thanks to the flexibility and resilience of the IWC, and the many benefits of partnerships with other organisations such as NAMMCO, that we are able to raise awareness of these challenges in other fora and find workable solutions.

For example, NAMMCO and IWC collaborated in the development of the FAO Marine Mammal Bycatch Guidelines, which were welcomed at FAO COFI in February of 2021. IWC and NAMMCO participate in the FAO's Regional Secretariat's Network to explore collaboration with RFMOs and other organisations to design and implement viable solutions to bycatch and entanglement.

On strandings, we note with interest NAMMCO's work with Member Countries to establish national stranding response networks and to collate strandings information to better understand and manage the forces behind cetacean mortality. This work has great synergies with the IWC Strandings Initiative, and we welcome collaboration between NAMMCO and the IWC, including with the IWC Strandings Expert Panel to progress our shared aims. We also wish to note that the IWC Secretariat is in the process of recruiting a database manager to oversee the ship strikes database that has been under development for a number of years by the Scientific Committee.

Regarding Aboriginal Subsistence Whaling (ASW), as we reported at NAMMCO's 2019 meeting in the Faroes, the ASW amendment to IWC's schedule put in place a 7-year block of quotas with automatic renewal if there is no change in the science or in the needs of the aboriginal community. In 2019, ASW landings reached some 360 whales in 4 countries with ASW communities.

The IWC maintains records of historical and modern whaling catches, having taken over the role of the Bureau of International Whaling Statistics in the 1980s. The databases are the most comprehensive for any wildlife resource, believed to be a virtually complete record of over 2,360,000 of these animals, including biological details and position information. In December 2020, new and updated versions of the IWC catch databases were released by the Secretariat following a thorough review of existing records, together with new data up to and including the 2019 season. The data are made available on request and interest in obtaining the information has already been expressed. The Secretariat is grateful for the contributions of data from a broad range of countries and researchers including NAMMCO members.

The IWC also maintains a table of the abundance estimates endorsed by the IWC Scientific Committee. It includes information on the status of estimates (e.g., whether they are suitable for providing management advice or else provide a general indication of abundance) and the degree to which the estimate was examined. The IWC looks forward to an increased collaboration with NAMMCO on this important topic, to avoid duplication of effort by our two organisations.

The IWC's Governance Review Report has been carried forward by the Working Group on Operational Effectiveness. This included a workshop in the summer of 2019 and a follow-up virtual workshop planned for this summer (May/June 2021). Several draft papers are now available for review and comment. Once again, the focus of the Governance Review is on how we do our work – including the structure of the Commission and its subsidiary bodies, funding allocation, and the Secretariat. A central theme of the Governance Review is ensuring that the work of the Commission's subsidiary bodies reflects the directives from the Commission.

Once again, we wish to express our gratitude to the NAMMCO Secretariat, NAMMCO members and observer delegations, and the scientists from NAMMCO countries for their ongoing collaboration with IWC.

Thank you, Madame Chair, and we look forward to the discussions over the next two days.

OPENING STATEMENT OF THE IMWC WORLD CONSERVATION TRUST

The world is still holding its breath while watching the COVID-19 pandemic tightening its grip around our societies. There was a time before and there will be a time after COVID. What our lives will look like after the virus has gotten under control is still shrouded in mystery.

COVID-19 is probably the most spoken about topic worldwide. Not surprisingly, also international environmental governance is not shielded from it. To the contrary: when looking at the websites of all major conventions, COVID-19 surfaces. Not least because in-person meetings have been replaced by online ones. The entire structure of decision-making is now dependent on the internet.

But this is not the only effect the pandemic has on the sphere of environmental governance. Since cases were exposed that the virus has sprung from animals to humans, we hear calls to reduce or even

ban use, trade in wild species to prevent further mutation of the virus and thereby to reduce the risk of its more aggressive spread.

Like Climate change, Zoonotic diseases are nothing new though. There are countless examples throughout ancient and modern history that demonstrate how the proximity between humans and animals has triggered diseases that have drastically affected human societies. The novel SARS-CoV-2 virus is but another virus that finds humans and animals equally attractive. And like before, there is no need to reduce international wildlife trade because of a new disease.

Who would argue that local marine mammal consumption contributes to the spread of the coronavirus? Who would argue that it contributes to climate change? And who would argue that hunting whales and seals locally in small numbers by indigenous and local populations adversely affects the environment? In all likelihood, nobody would challenge our view that it is best left to the locals to consume what is in front of their doorsteps.

Besides, we do have the UN on our side as well. After all, in December 2018 the General Assembly adopted the UN Declaration on the Rights of Peasants and Other People Working in Rural Areas. This declaration also makes those in the fisheries sector its subjects and those with a close relationship to the lands and seas that they have been living with for generations. If the UN accepts this view, why not others?

COVID-19 will be around for a while still. Climate change will be around for a while still. Nothing new! But if we don't pay attention, our local communities won't be around for long anymore. On the other hand, we shall not allow COVID-19 and Global warming to become an excuse for prohibiting the harvesting and use of marine resources, thus destroying, without valid motives, the livelihoods of people whose culture and traditions are based on these resources.

Let's hope that the current situation will not prevent NAMMCO from fulfilling its mission "to maintain" the equilibrium between humankind and the marine resources.

With our highest consideration.

APPENDIX 5: AUDITED ACCOUNTS 2020**INCOME AND EXPENDITURE****NOK****Income**

Contributions 4,739,922

TOTAL INCOME**4,739,922****Expenditure**

Staff related costs 3,699,887

Internship 112,026

Staff travel and subsistence 28,454

Meetings 31,503

Rent of premises 277,751

Office supply 127,099

Communication & Outreach 59,432

Accounts & auditing 199,127

Observation Scheme 115,920

Committee on Hunting methods -

Committee on Inspection and Observation -

Working Group on BYCELS -

Scientific Committee 99,989

Capacity building -

Other expenses 7,349

Previous years transfer - 15,226

TOTAL EXPENDITURE**4,743,311****OPERATING RESULT** - 3,389

Financial revenue (interest) 8,551

Financial costs - 4,260

RESULT TO RESERVE**902****BALANCE****Assets**

Outstanding claims 388,039

Bank deposits 964,195

TOTAL ASSETS**1,352,234****Equity**

General Reserve 581,312

Restricted Reserve 600,000

Result 902

TOTAL EQUITY**1,182,214****Liabilities**

Creditors 46,666

Employer's tax 123,354

Total liabilities 170,020**TOTAL LIABILITIES AND EQUITY****1,352,234**

APPENDIX 6: BUDGET 2021, DRAFT BUDGET 2022 AND FORECAST BUDGET 2023

INCOME AND EXPENDITURE		NOK		
	Budget 2021	Draft budget 2022		Forecast budget 2023
Income				
Contributions	4,834,773	4,931,469		5,030,098
TOTAL INCOME	4,834,773	4,931,469		5,030,098
Expenditure				
Staff related costs	2,946,885	3,067,509		3,235,884
Internship	150,000	167,400		167,400
Staff travel and subsistence	211,000	350,000		250,000
Meetings	85,000	215,000		205,000
Rent of premises	257,250	292,000		307,000
Office supply	120,000	136,000		143,000
Communication & Outreach	100,000	30,000		100,000
Food Conference		120,000		
Accounts and auditing	200,000	210,000		220,500
Observation Scheme	-	431,000		200,000
Committee on Hunting Methods	150,000	-		-
Committee on Inspection and Observation	-	-		-
Working Group on BYCELS	-	-		-
Scientific Committee	171,500	324,000		200,000
Capacity building	20,000	20,000		20,000
Other expenses	20,000	35,000		35,000
NASS 2024 planning	100,000	150,000		50,000
Super-Tag project		150,000		175,000
TOTAL EXPENDITURE	4,531,635	5,697,909		5,308,784
OPERATING RESULT	303,138	- 766,440		- 278,686
Financial revenue (interest)		5,000		5,000
Financial costs	- 5,000			
RESULT // TO/FROM RESERVE	298,138	- 761,440		- 273,686
General Reserve 2019	1,182,212	1,480,350		718,910
Transfer to/from general reserve	298,138	- 761,440		- 273,686
NEW TOTAL RESERVE 31.12.20	1,480,350	718,910		445,224
General Reserve	880,350	118,910		- 154,776
Restricted Reserve	600,000	600,000		600,000

APPENDIX 7: GUIDELINES TO THE NAMMCO OBSERVATION SCHEME

OBSERVERS

Appointment of observers

The NAMMCO Council approves and appoints observers. An approved observer will continue to function in the role until his/her services are withdrawn/cancelled by either personal notification or notification by the (nominating) member country.

Member Countries are required to contribute a minimum of two candidates to the corps of observers.

Nomination and approval process for observers

Member Countries nominate observer candidates by notifying the Secretariat and sending their names and qualifications. The Secretariat subsequently forwards the list of nominees together with information on the qualifications of the candidates to all Member Countries for their approval.

The Member Countries have one month to consider the nominations, after which the candidates are deemed approved unless direct objections or reservations are raised.

A reservation regarding a candidate must be communicated to the Secretariat and all Member Countries within the month following notification of the nomination. It is understood that a reservation to the appointment of a candidate is a reservation to his/her appointment as a NAMMCO observer in any area of activity.

Candidates for whom a reservation has been expressed will not be included in the observer corps.

Competence and training of observers

The requirements for the qualifications of the observers (professional, linguistic and safety at sea) are defined in the attached standardised CV-form for observers.

For safety reasons, the language competency of observers must be taken into consideration. An observer on board a hunting vessel must be able to communicate spontaneously with the crew. For communication on land, a translator may be used.

To ensure that observers are sufficiently informed about the relevant hunting regulations and the duties of national control personnel, observers shall receive all necessary documentation and relevant training before going into the field. Before being deployed in the field, a meeting will be held between the observer and the national authorities in question or NAMMCO to review legislation and information on how the hunt is carried out.

Duties of the observer

Observation activities can be carried out in five areas:

- observation of hunting and/or flensing of whales
- observation of hunting and/or flensing of seals
- observation of hunting and/or flensing of walrus
- observation of the landing/delivery of marine mammal catches
- observations of national marine mammal inspection activities

Hunt specific check lists are available for all the hunts to be observed and the observer is required to report on all the items listed.

REPORTS

No later than eight days after the end of the deployment period, the observer must submit a written report to the NAMMCO Secretariat. The report shall consist of the hunt specific check lists completed during the observation period and a completed standardised report form. The language of the report shall be either English or a Scandinavian language.

The Secretariat will compile an annual report for the consideration of the Council based on the check lists and the standardised report from the observers.

GENERAL CONDUCT OF OBSERVERS

During the exercise of their duties, observers shall conduct themselves with appropriate tact and respect. Upon arrival at a vessel, a landing/receiving station or other place where observation duties are carried out, the observer shall always display their authorisation and identification card to the person in charge.

CONFIDENTIALITY

Observers shall ensure the confidentiality of their duties and shall not report on observations carried out under the NAMMCO Inspection and Observation Scheme to any other parties than the Secretariat.

ADMINISTRATION OF THE SCHEME

Plans for observation and activities

The Secretariat, in cooperation with the Committee on Inspection and Observation (CIO) develops a proposal for the scope and range of observation priorities (including budget) by 1 May for the following year. The Council shall approve this proposal by 1 June. This is to facilitate the possibility of observing hunts at the start of the year. The Secretariat, in co-operation with control authorities in respective Member Countries, then develops a specific plan for observation activities. This plan shall, among other things, define the time frame for observation activities and shall specify the observation areas for each observer.

The Secretariat may for practical reasons, and in co-operation with the authorities of the relevant Member Countries, make changes in the plan if necessary. The detailed plan of observation activities will only be known to the ~~control~~ authorities in the relevant Member Countries and the Secretariat.

Employment of observers

When a detailed plan for the of observation activities is finalized, those observers who are called upon for active observation duties that year will receive an employment contract from the Secretariat. When both parties sign this contract, the observer will receive an identification card, as well as other relevant documentation necessary for his/her duties. The observer shall return his/her identification card to the Secretariat together with the final report of activities.

APPENDIX 8: PROPOSALS FOR CONSERVATION AND MANAGEMENT

New Proposals for Conservation and Management Endorsed by the MCs

CETACEANS

Beluga

Advice on Sustainable Catch:

- *For the North Water stock (north of Cape York), an annual landed catch of no more than 37 individuals.*
- *For the West Greenland stock (south of Cape York and north of 65°), an annual landed catch of no more than 265 individuals.*

Narwhal

- *A new meeting of the Ad hoc Working Group for Narwhal in East Greenland be held in 2021 to review the latest data and update the assessment.*
- *Greenland include information on body length in reports of any landed animals.*

White-beaked, White-sided, and Bottlenose Dolphins

- *Greenland develop a way to distinguish between white-sided and white-beaked dolphins in reporting.*

Harbour Porpoise

Advice on Sustainable Catch:

- *For West Greenland, there be an annual catch (animals reported landed) of no more than 1,869 harbour porpoises.*

Other:

- *Greenland work to eliminate underreporting and validate the catch statistics for harbour porpoises.*
- *Greenland ask hunters in East Greenland to provide samples to scientists when harbour porpoises are caught.*
- *Conduct a formal assessment for Norway with updated by-catch estimates when new abundance estimates become available.*
- *Conduct a formal assessment for Iceland following a full review of available data, including the use of close-kinship genetic analysis to arrive at abundance estimates.*
- *Update the West Greenland assessment as soon as a new abundance estimate becomes available and no later than 2029.*

PINNIPEDS

Harp Seals

Advice on Sustainable Catch:

- *An upper limit for removals from the White Sea/Barents Sea stock of 21,172 seals.*
- *An upper limit for removals from the Greenland Sea stock of 11,548 seals.*
- *Catches on harp seals from the local communities in East Greenland may continue.*

Hooded Seals

Advice on Sustainable Catch:

- *There should be no commercial catch from the Greenland Sea stock, but that scientific and hunting by local communities may continue.*

Harbour Seals

- *Catch statistics for harbour seals in Greenland (up to 2011) be removed from the NAMMCO website due to known errors and a lack of validation.*

GENERAL**Reporting to the NAMMCO database**

- *Member Countries inform the NAMMCO Secretariat of any and all revisions of catch statistics taking place at a national level (e.g., revisions of historical data or revisions after submission of national progress reports).*
- *Member Countries validate all data (direct catch, by-catch or other) before submitting it to formal databases and repositories.*

Assessment and Advice on Small Stocks

- *NAMMCO develop guidance on a principle-based approach for how to manage and provide harvest advice for small stocks*

Marine Mammal - Fisheries Interactions

- *Since self-reporting is an insufficient basis for quantifying by-catch, additional sources of information (e.g., independent observation) should always be sought.*

Non-hunting Related Anthropogenic Stressors

- *Member Countries ensure the availability of relevant information from seismic surveys to allow for proper sound estimation to meet research and management needs.*

APPENDIX 9: RECOMMENDATIONS FOR SCIENTIFIC RESEARCH

1. NEW RECOMMENDATIONS FOR RESEARCH ENDORSED BY THE COUNCIL

CETACEANS

Beluga

- *New surveys for beluga be carried out in Somerset Island in the summer and West Greenland in the winter.*
- *A half day workshop be held (in connection with a JWG meeting) to exchange information on effective tagging practices for belugas.*

Narwhal

- *Abundance estimates in East Greenland be reviewed by the JCNB at the next JWG. Greenland investigate ways to improve reporting of user observations to inform future assessments.*
- *Greenland recognise and include the negative impact of climate change on narwhals in management decision-making on all stocks.*

Harbour Porpoise

- *All assessment areas provide samples to support a multidimensional investigation into population structure and stock identity and allow for all datasets to be merged into a common analysis.*
- *New surveys for harbour porpoises be carried out in NAMMCO areas, and particularly off Iceland since the last dedicated survey there was now over 12 years old.*
- *Greenland conduct follow up research to investigate how widespread underreporting of catches is in the Piniarneq system.*
- *Iceland and Norway carry out tagging and tracking studies to help answer questions about stock identity and the appropriate management units.*
- *Faroe Islands work to obtain reliable removals data, update abundance survey, and conduct tagging studies to provide the information required to perform an assessment.*

PINNIPEDS

Harp seals

- *New aerial surveys of harp seal pups in the Greenland Sea be carried out in 2022.*
- *Norway continue its efforts to obtain reproductive samples, particularly in years when an aerial survey is completed.*

Hooded seals

- *New aerial surveys of hooded seal pups in the Greenland Sea be carried out in 2022.*

Harbour seals

- *Greenland enhance efforts to identify new breeding and moulting sites for harbour seals (particularly in West Greenland) using most feasible methods in the different areas.*
- *Norway complete the collection and analysis of DNA samples from harbour seal pups to help determine stock structure and propose more scientifically based management units.*

2. REQUESTS FOR ADVICE CONSIDERED ANSWERED AND CLOSED

CETACEANS

- *Request R-1.7.12: To give information on sustainable yield based on new abundance estimates expected from TNASS-2015 for all large baleen whales in West Greenland waters.*
- *Request R-3.2.4: To conduct a formal assessment of humpback whales following the completion of the T-NASS. In addition, to investigate the relationship between the humpback whales summering in West Greenland and other areas and incorporate this knowledge into their estimate of sustainable yields of West Greenland humpback whales.*
- *Request R-3.4.9: 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.*

PINNIPEDS

- *Request R-2.3.2: To advise on what scientific studies need to be completed to evaluate the effects of changed levels of removals of ringed seals in West and East Greenland.*
- *Request R-2.6.8: Provide assessments, and advice on, the sustainability of allowing walrus hunt all year round in Greenland on all stocks.*

GENERAL

- *Request R-1.6.4: To provide advice on the best methods for collection of the desired statistics on losses, as SC recommended that catch statistics include correction for struck but lost animals for different seasons, areas, and catch operations.*
- *Request R-1.5.4: To conduct a review of the management procedures used by the Committee for generating management advice (RMP, AWMP, Bayesian assessment, Hitter Fitter, etc), advise on which procedure is the most suitable for each species (or category of species) with the data that is currently available, while also meeting the management principles of NAMMCO, further advise where additional data could allow for more suitable management procedure(s) to be implemented.*

APPENDIX 10: PRESS RELEASE

Sustainable whaling and sealing in the North Atlantic: Regular scientific monitoring and close regional collaboration are key

The North Atlantic Marine Mammal Commission held its 28th Annual Meeting online this week to consider issues related to the conservation, management and study of marine mammals in the North Atlantic.

Sustainable harvesting of marine mammals for food defines NAMMCO and unites the Member Countries - the Faroe Islands, Greenland, Iceland and Norway - who all share a strong commitment to United Nations Sustainable Development Goal 14 – to conserve and sustainably use the oceans, seas and marine resources for sustainable development.

The Governments of Canada, Denmark, Japan, the Russian Federation and the USA were also represented in an observer capacity at the meeting, together with a number of international organisations, all of which follow the work of NAMMCO and share information with the Commission.

Over 30 years of whale sightings surveys continue with NASS 2024

To provide the best possible scientific basis for sustainable management, NAMMCO and its members have generated a wealth of information on marine mammal distribution, trends in abundance, behaviour and ecology in the North Atlantic over more than 30 years and will continue to do so in the decades ahead.

NASS – the North Atlantic Sightings Surveys for cetaceans – are a series of internationally coordinated surveys conducted in the North Atlantic since 1987, with follow-up surveys in 1989, 1995, 2001, 2007 and 2015. The next in the series is planned for 2024.

Volume 11 of the NAMMCO Scientific Publications series, *“Sightings Surveys in the North Atlantic: 30 years of counting whales”*, [published in 2020](#), provides up-to-date abundance estimates and 30-year trends in abundance for key whale populations, based on data collected from these surveys. This is fundamental to knowledge about whale stocks in the North Atlantic.

“Super-Tag” for tracking whales to be developed

Through its Scientific Committee, NAMMCO is involved in developing new tools for studying movement patterns, habitat selection and changes in occurrence of whales in the North Atlantic. NAMMCO members will be supporting plans to develop a new satellite tag that allows long-term tracking of fast-moving whale species, and which can be adapted to smaller whales, such as minke whales, for which

tracking data is scarce. Japan has also expressed its willingness to support the project, which aims to provide new technology that can enhance knowledge about the movement of whales in all ocean regions of the world.

International Observation in 2022 to focus on hunting in West Greenland

The NAMMCO Observation Scheme, which provides a mechanism for ensuring international oversight of hunting regulations in Member Countries, has recently been revised to ensure greater efficiency. After a few years with no observation in the field, activities will be considerably expanded in 2022, with plans for 3 observers appointed through NAMMCO to observe hunts of walrus, narwhal and beluga hunts in West Greenland, reporting back to NAMMCO’s Committee on Inspection and Observation.

Showcasing marine mammals as food

NAMMCO has endorsed a proposal from the Faroe Islands to organise an international conference on marine mammals as sustainable food resources. With a basis in the 2017 report

produced by NAMMCO, “Marine Mammals – a Multifaceted Resource”, the event focus on the economic, nutritional and cultural value of marine mammals. It will also bring together chefs from whaling and sealing countries to showcase how marine mammals are used in different food cultures, and to discuss the potential for more creative and innovative use of sustainable marine mammal produce in modern gastronomy, such as New Nordic Cuisine.

Including local and hunters’ knowledge in management advice

At the meeting hunters from East Greenland gave a presentation on the conservation status of narwhal in East Greenland, based on the hunters’ extensive knowledge, gathered through decades of observations and experience. Their presentation underlines a divergence in viewpoints between scientists and hunters on the conservation status of narwhal in East Greenland. NAMMCO agreed that its management advice should be based on the best available knowledge and that this required a balanced inclusion of knowledge from both hunters and scientists. Further work will therefore be carried out to strengthen the inclusion of knowledge from hunters and users in the development of scientific research and management advice.

NAMMCO’s Committee on Hunting Methods has always acknowledged the importance of including user knowledge. Hunters and other experts participate in Workshops and Expert Group meetings. The Committee provides a forum for sharing experiences and best practices and discussing improvements to hunting methods, in an atmosphere of trust and mutual respect.

New Proposals for Conservation and Management

The following conservation and management recommendations on sustainable catch were agreed:

- An upper limit of 21,172 **harp seals** annually from the White Sea/Barents Sea stock and of 11,548 harp seals from the from the Greenland Sea stock,
- An annual landed catch of no more than 37 **belugas** from the North Water stock (north of Cape York) and 265 belugas from the West Greenland stock (south of Cape York - north of 65°),
- An annual landed catch of no more than 1,869 **harbour porpoises** for West Greenland.