



27th MEETING OF THE COUNCIL

*3 - 4 April 2019
Tórshavn, Faroe Islands*

COUNCIL REPORT



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1. OPENING PROCEDURES

1.1 WELCOME ADDRESS

The Chair of Council, Amalie Jessen (Greenland), welcomed all the participants (Appendix 1) to the 27th meeting of the Council of NAMMCO, and to the Faroe Islands and Tórshavn.

Jessen regarded NAMMCO as a well consolidated collaborative regional organisation for the scientific work related to marine mammals as well as their conservation and management in the North Atlantic. The Council had initiated many activities over the years at different levels, of which one was the recent independent Performance Review of the organisation. Its objective was to evaluate whether the organisation was meeting its overall objectives. Jessen encouraged the Parties to have an open-minded attitude to the recommendations from the Performance Review Panel, so the organisation can consolidate and strengthen its achievements.

Jessen underlined that NAMMCO should continue to welcome relevant partners on scientific and technical aspects to achieve a closer and broader cooperation on shared stocks in the North Atlantic and other types of cooperation. In her capacity as Chair of Council and long-time contributor to NAMMCO, Jessen has initiated a dialogue on the need for NAMMCO to define a long-term strategy and support capacity building. NAMMCO was on the right track, but there was room for improvement. By capacity building and consolidating its objectives, NAMMCO would be an even more efficient ambassador for the people that depend on marine resources, helping to ensure sustainable use of marine mammals.

Following her remarks, Jessen gave the floor to the Faroese Minister of Foreign Affairs and Trade.

In his welcome address, Minister Poul Michelsen underlined the fact that sustainable whaling and sealing is fully in line with the United Nations Sustainable Development Goal 14 Life below water *“Conserve and sustainably use the oceans, seas and marine resources for sustainable development”*. He also stressed the shared objectives of NAMMCO member countries: *“Our common goal is to make sure that our use of whales and seals is sustainable. We do not need to make unnecessary distinctions between commercial and non-commercial activities. We just need to base our decisions on the best available scientific advice.”* The minister’s full address is contained in Appendix 4.

Jessen warmly thanked Michelsen for his clear-cutting and inspiring words.

1.2 ADMISSION OF OBSERVERS

On behalf of the Council, the Chair welcomed all the observers (Appendix 1), noting representatives from Canada, Denmark, Japan, the Makivik Corporation, Nunavut Tunngavik Inc., the International Whaling Commission (IWC), the Northwest Atlantic Fisheries Organisation (NAFO) and the North East Atlantic Fisheries Commission (NEAFC). Regrets were received from OSPAR, NASCO and the Arctic Council as well as the EU Commissioner for Environment, Maritime affairs and Fisheries.

Jessen especially welcomed the Chair of the Performance Review Panel, Caterina Fortuna, as well as Fern Wickson, the new Scientific Secretary, and Solveig Enoksen, a temporary Scientific and Communication Assistant.

1.3 OPENING STATEMENTS

Greenland, Iceland and Norway, as well as Canada, Japan, Makivik Corporation, Nunavut Tunngavik Inc. and the IWC delivered opening statements. These statements are contained in Appendix 4.

1.4 ADOPTION OF AGENDA

The agenda ([NAMMCO/27/02](#)) was adopted without amendments (Appendix 2). Supporting documents to the meeting ([NAMMCO/27/03](#)) are listed in Appendix 3.

1.5 MEETING ARRANGEMENTS

Kate Sanderson (Faroe Islands) also welcomed participants to the Faroe Islands. She informed about the social events hosted by the Faroe Islands, which included the screening of a 2016 documentary "The Islands and the Whales" by the Scottish director and cinematographer Mike Day and a visit to the former whaling station at við Áir followed by a dinner at a nearby institution, Dugni.

The General Secretary, Geneviève Desportes, joined in welcoming all the participants and presented the meeting arrangements and practicalities.

2. PERFORMANCE REVIEW

At its 25th Annual Meeting, NAMMCO Council agreed to undertake a Performance Review of the organisation, which should give special emphasis to the objective of the Commission 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*". Council 25 adopted the process whereby the Review would be carried out, specifying the objectives of the review, terms of reference, selection of the Review Panel, assessment criteria, procedure and administration.

The terms of reference (ToR) of the Performance Review were:

- To assess the performance of NAMMCO since July 1992 (the date when the Agreement came into force) against the objectives set out in the Agreement and any other relevant international instruments addressing the conservation and management of marine mammals or living marine resources relevant to marine mammals.
- To assess the performance of the Parties of NAMMCO in following the recommendations and proposals of NAMMCO in terms of conservation and management, hunting methods and inspection and observation.
- Consideration should be given to developments in ocean management, monitoring techniques and technical development that have taken place during the period covered by the review.
- The review should be performed based on the criteria specified in the attached list and should point to achievements as well as areas which could be improved.

The Performance Review Panel was to be composed of external experts who were neither nationals nor residents of any NAMMCO member country to ensure objectivity and neutrality. The Council agreed to ask the Food and Agriculture Organization (UN FAO), the IWC and the Northwest Atlantic Fisheries Organization (NAFO) to nominate one expert each to the panel; they nominated Dan Goodman, Caterina Fortuna, Russell Smith, respectively. The Panel started its work in January 2018 and delivered its report to the General Secretary on 1st of March 2019.

2.1 PRESENTATION OF THE REPORT BY THE CHAIR OF THE PANEL

The Chair of the Performance Review Panel, Caterina Fortuna, presented its report (NAMMCO/27/04).

The Panel assessed the performance of NAMMCO against its overall objectives and 47 detailed criteria established under 7 general areas: conservation and management, hunting activities, compliance and enforcement, decision making, international cooperation, financial and administrative issues and, outreach. The Panel applied three methods to collect information: (a) a questionnaire, (b) in-person and Skype interviews, and (c) a review of official documents including documents on the NAMMCO website and documents prepared for the Panel by the Secretariat. To guide its work, the Panel developed a modus operandi inspired by the methodology of the Multilateral Organization Performance Network 3.0 (MOPAN 3.0).

In conclusion, the Panel found that the Commission was meeting its objective stated in the NAMMCO Agreement by contributing "through regional consultation and cooperation to the conservation, rational management and study of marine mammals in the North Atlantic".

Outputs from NAMMCO's Management Committees, Scientific Committee and Committee on Hunting Methods had been significant and substantial. NAMMCO had attained a level of credibility among other organizations involved with Arctic issues and marine mammal conservation. Its work was valued, relied upon and sought. NAMMCO was a preeminent and credible forum for the discussion on conservation and management of marine mammals in the Arctic and Northern Atlantic regions.

The Panel found that all NAMMCO members share NAMMCO's commitment to ensure the sustainable management of marine mammals in the North Atlantic. They had, for the most part, implemented the recommendations and the conservation and management measures proposed by the Commission in a timely fashion, although there have been some instances in which they had not.

The Panel concluded that while NAMMCO had performed well, there was room for improvement. It provided a total of 95 specific recommendations and suggestions on how the Commission could improve various aspects of its performance and had identified some serious concerns.

There was concern that there were some declining or unknown populations facing substantial takes. There was a lack of transparent procedures and working methods in relation to assessments, implementation of management actions and interactions between NAMMCO's bodies. NAMMCO should provide its Members with advice that will allow them to manage all harvested stocks using a precautionary approach. The Panel was also concerned that the Observation Scheme did not provide benefits that are commensurate with its costs.

The Panel's overarching recommendation was that NAMMCO develop and implement a Strategic Plan to help focus its efforts and better guide decision-making across the organisation. It also recommended that NAMMCO consider a) explicitly defining the geographical scope of the Agreement; b) expanding its membership; c) identifying and prioritizing the stocks to be managed; d) securing sufficient resources to allow the Commission to meet its goals; e) strengthening the capacity of the Secretariat to support the work of the Commission; f) developing clearer operational guidelines related to working methods for all its subsidiary bodies.

Fortuna concluded by thanking the many individuals that engaged with the Panel during the preparation of the Report. On behalf of the Panel, she warmly thanked the staff of the NAMMCO Secretariat for their assistance and their genuine availability during the whole process and for providing and preparing overview documents.

COMMENTS AND DISCUSSION

The Chair thanked Fortuna for her presentation. Supported by all member countries, she expressed her warm appreciation for the extensive and comprehensive work carried out by the Panel and the thorough review and acknowledged their constructive comments and recommendations.

The Chair was pleased to note that the overall conclusion of the Panel was that the Commission was meeting its continuing overall objective and the variety of goals identified in the Preamble to the Agreement that could be seen as related to the overall objective of the Agreement.

The Faroe Islands noted that it was an achievement for NAMMCO to have set this process in motion, which will allow the organisation to step back and consider how well it was doing according to its own objectives.

Greenland noted that it had been a time-consuming but worthwhile exercise for the Secretariat and the member countries. Together with the SWOTS, carried out by all committees, the review would constitute a very valuable tool and input into the way forward.

Norway expressed its surprise that the Panel had not considered the institutional culture of trust existing in NAMMCO, which allows for more informal working relationships that are characteristic of NAMMCO. Fortuna responded that the Panel had noted the very positive atmosphere but reiterated that it considered that a strategy and some more defined guidelines would be important to help the organisation progress and develop.

Norway welcomed the recommendation that NAMMCO develop a Strategic Plan, and during this process give careful consideration to the role of the Commission in developing a model for applying an ecosystem approach to the management of marine mammals, but also underlined that focus on an ecosystem approach should not compromise the research, scientific advice and management on the specific populations of marine mammals, in particular those harvested and of poor conservation status. Norway also supported the idea to develop simple, transparent and efficient management procedures for evaluating stocks and to assist in assessing management measures against defined reference points.

To a question on why the Panel had IFAW in their list of respondents, Fortuna mentioned that in the interest of objectivity, they wanted to have diverse organisations involved, not only like-minded ones. Like several other NGOs and IGOs, they declined to answer, with the explanation that they had very little knowledge of NAMMCO and its work.

2.2 DISCUSSION AND ACTIONS ARISING

Council **agreed** to establish an *ad hoc* Working Group (WG) led by the Chair of Council to review the recommendations introduced in the Performance Review Report (PRWG). The PRWG would then seek the views of NAMMCO Committees and working groups on the recommendations specific to their areas of work. Together with their 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 membership of the PRWG would be discussed at a later point.

Once again, the Chair thanked the Panel for its work and the Secretariat for its support to the process. She saw the performance review and the internal SWOT analysis as a very healthy process for NAMMCO, which would help the organisation grow by increasing its competence and better support the conservation of marine mammals and the people living from them. She was particularly looking forward to the initiated process.

Japan reiterated from its Opening Statement, that despite its withdrawal from the International Convention for the Regulation of Whaling (ICRW), Japan remained committed to international cooperation for the proper management of marine living resources including cetaceans, especially through cooperation with relevant international organisations such as NAMMCO. In this regard, Japan is more than happy and ready to enhance its cooperation with NAMMCO, both technically and financially, so that recommendations by the Review Panel could be materialized in an appropriate and efficient manner. The Council took note of the Japanese statement.

3. FINANCE AND ADMINISTRATION

3.1 REPORT OF THE FINANCE AND ADMINISTRATION COMMITTEE (FAC)

The Chair of the Finance and Administration Committee, Sanderson (Faroe Islands), presented the activities of the Committee since NAMMCO 26 ([NAMMCO/27/05](#)).

The main administrative issues of relevance to Council included the recruitment of a new scientific Secretary, the review of the two different pension schemes, capacity and staffing of the Secretariat in relation to workload following the serious concerns raised by the General Secretary, the follow up on the SWOTs analyses. Financial issues included the accounts for 2018, the Committee's workplan and its budget implications, the financing of the super tag project, the preparation of the budget 2019 and the draft budget 2020 and forecast budget 2021. Other matters included the status of the Committee's annual report to Council, the deadline for submitting meeting documents and how best to take into account generational changes.

The FAC made the following recommendations to the Council:

- Steps be taken on an urgent basis to explore how best to rectify in this financial year the cost of one of the pension schemes, which had become excessive, both in the level of pension premium in relation to the gross salary and in the associated administrative fee;
- A more focused intersessional discussion be undertaken among member countries and the Secretariat on the priorities of the Commission and the ability and capacity of the Secretariat to fulfil the tasks assigned;
- The results of the SWOT analysis remain an internal document, to be used as inspiration in coming discussion on the Commission's work and priorities;
- To approve the 2018 accounts;
- To encourage prospects for funding the "Super Tag" project;
- To endorse the 2019 budget and approve the 2020 draft budget;
- That the FAC annual report to the Council be made publicly available, in line with the other committees;
- Clear deadlines be developed for the submission of documents and reports in advance of meetings of NAMMCO bodies and incorporated in the relevant Rules of Procedure;
- To encourage the recruitment of new scientists and other experts to ensure continuity and high quality in the work of the organisation, keeping gender equality in mind.

COMMENTS AND DISCUSSION

The Chair thanked Sanderson for her presentation and thanked the Faroe Islands, in particular Jóannes V. Hansen, for chairing the Committee for the last three years.

The Council **endorsed** all the recommendations of the FAC and **tasked** the Committee to go ahead with the different issues, with priority given to finding an acceptable solution to the pension scheme issue. It was noted that a discussion of capacity, workload and priorities in the Secretariat would be a part of discussions on the follow-up of the Performance Review.

Norway noted that developing a super tag for deployment on the fast moving rorquals such as minke and fin whales will open up new research possibilities and provide essential knowledge for the sound management of whales. It will also lay the ground for global collaboration with scientists not normally engaged in NAMMCO research. Therefore, Norway encouraged further discussion on the possibility for full funding of the project with the total budget of NOK 6,400,000, or pursuing the split funding model where NAMMCO member countries invest in the initial development and testing of the tag for a total budget of NOK 1,550,000. Norway will explore the funding possibilities internally, including within the relevant ministries.

3.2 AUDITED ACCOUNTS 2018

Sanderson presented the accounts 2018 ([NAMMCO/27/06](#), Appendix 5).

The accounts corresponded to the 2018 budget **endorsed** by NAMMCO 26 in terms of income, but the expenditures were significantly lower resulting in a deficit of NOK 71,841 compared to the expected deficit of NOK 540 000. The deficit was covered by funds from the General Reserve.

COMMENTS AND DISCUSSION

The 2018 accounts were **approved** by Council.

3.3 BUDGET 2019 AND FORECAST BUDGET 2020

This agenda item had been left open until the presentation to the Council of the reports of the committees and of their proposed workplans.

The Chair of the FAC introduced the 2019 budget and the draft budget for 2020 ([NAMMCO/27/07](#)). The budget 2019 showed a negative balance of NOK -1,024,000. This discrepancy was largely due to

the anticipated excessive increase in the cost of the pension scheme in 2019 due to a belated backdating payment. As steps will be taken to solve the uneven costs of the pension schemes and the backdating expenses, this should be a one-time expense. Depending on the outcome of the reform, pension-related expenses should in fact be less than budgeted for 2019. The discrepancy would be covered by the Total Reserve of NOK 1,174,000, meaning that the Total Reserve, and consequently the General Reserve, would be reduced to NOK 149,000, instead of the level agreed upon of 10% of the general NAMMCO budget, i.e. NOK 500-600,000.

The draft budget 2020 was calculated with a slight deficit of NOK -12,000.

Both budgets took into account the proposed work plans of the committees, which could therefore be **endorsed** without modification.

COMMENTS AND DISCUSSION

The Council **endorsed** the prioritisation of activities proposed by the FAC as reflected in the projected expenses of the different committees. It **endorsed** the 2019 budget and **approved** the 2020 draft budget. It also **tasked** the FAC to follow closely the level of expenses in 2019 and to work on an urgent basis towards solving the issue of the pension schemes in the financial year 2019.

3.4 OTHER BUSINESS

Election of officers: Amalie Jessen (Greenland) was elected Chair of the FAC, with Ásta Einarsdóttir (Iceland) as Vice-Chair.

4. NATIONAL & ANNUAL PROGRESS REPORTS

Parties submitted their National Progress Reports (NPR) for 2018 in accordance with the new deadline of 1 March for the previous year adopted by Council 25 (NAMMCO/27/NPR-FO 2018, NAMMCO/27/NPR-GL 2018, NAMMCO/27/NPR-IS 2018, NAMMCO/27/NPR-NO 2018, <https://nammco.no/topics/npr/#2018>).

NPRs were received from the observer countries Japan (2017-2018) and the Russian Federation (2017-2018) and Annual Progress Reports had been received from Makivik Corporation (2018) and Nunavut Tunngavik Inc. (2017-2018); the 2017 Canadian National Progress Report was also available. The Chair thanked the different parties for their input.

Norway encouraged Canada to again submit a Progress Report. To learn how marine mammal research and management were resolved in collaborating countries with different challenges was very informative. This year the two Progress Reports from Japan were of particular interest, as Japan was withdrawing from IWC. Norway noted that a wide variety of small cetaceans were harvested and encouraged Japan to also report on analytical methods for abundance estimates and the calculation of quotas for these species. Also, since NAMMCO deals with all marine mammals, Norway would welcome information on research and management of seals in Japan, in line with what was reported by NAMMCO member countries and other observing countries.

4.1 PROPOSED REVISION TO NPR REPORTING FROM CHM, CIO & BYCELS

The Chair noted that there was a joint proposal and recommendation from the Committee on Hunting Methods (CHM), the Committee on Inspection and Observation (CIO) and the Working Group on BY-Catch, Entanglement and Live Strandings (BYCELS) for standardising the data requested by the Committees from the Parties and their submission.

Gudni Eiríksson, Chair of the committee on Hunting Methods, presented the joint proposal and recommendation.

Each Committee requests every year from the Parties data of relevance for their work. Presently, the data were reported under different formats and were requested at different times depending on the

Committee's schedule. Sometimes, the same data were reported differently to different Committees because of the time lapse in reporting. These different streams of data created confusion and it was thus essential to obtain a unique, complete, and validated database at the Secretariat.

The CHM, CIO and BYCELS outlined the process for better characterising their data needs and improving the validation of the Secretariat's database. The Committees strongly recommended that the Council expand the current NPR, presently mostly designed to accommodate the Scientific Committee (SC), to also include the information required by all the Committees. The NPR, and its associated database, would then represent the common reporting tool for all Committees, and a single source of data. One single annual data submission would also simplify the member's reporting tasks.

Eriksson noted that the current deadline of 1 March will need to be revisited to accommodate all subsidiary bodies, as CHM, CIO and BYCELS usually have their main meetings in February.

Jointly the CHM, CIO and BYCELS have been working on standardising and identifying relevant data categories (catches, by-catch, strandings, ship strikes and hunting and national inspection efforts). This work will continue in cooperation with the SC and the By-catch WG.

CHM, CIO and BYCELS also recommended that NAMMCO develop a proper database at the Secretariat as a depository for this data.

COMMENTS AND DISCUSSION

Greenland thanked Eiríksson for his presentation and fully supported the recommendations from the technical committees on data reporting, the database held at the Secretariat and the adoption of a common deadline. Greenland remarked that further consideration should be given to the database technical requirements and financial aspects, although many open access software programmes were available. This could be part of the Performance Review follow-up process.

The Council **endorsed** the recommendation of extending and standardising the data input to the NPR to meet the data requirements and the deadlines of all committees. There was no decision taken on the recommendation to develop a proper database with the Secretariat as depository. The new submission deadline should be agreed by correspondence.

5. SCIENTIFIC COMMITTEE (SC)

5.1 REPORT OF THE SCIENTIFIC COMMITTEE

The Chair of the Scientific Committee, Tore Haug (NO), presented the activities of the SC since NAMMCO/26 ([NAMMCO/27/08](#)). Haug focused on the general part of the SC report, as the species-specific sections, the ecosystem approach issues, including human disturbances, climate change and marine mammal-fisheries interactions, had been reported to the Management Committees (NAMMCO/27/13-15).

Haug noted that 2018 had marked the 25th anniversary of the SC. The meeting took place aboard the Norwegian coastal steamer and concluded with a 25th anniversary celebratory lecture and dinner upon arrival in Tromsø. Observers from Russia, Canada and Japan participated in the meeting and presented updates on recent research relevant for management decision-making.

5.1.1 Overall work in 2018

During 2018, three working groups met - the By-Catch Working Group (BYCWG, video meeting in April and October), the Abundance Estimates Working Group (AEWG, meeting in May) and the Walrus Working Group (WWG, meeting in October). In addition, the [report](#) of the Global Review of Monodontids was finalised and a status review of killer whales in the North Atlantic was completed by a contracted expert in liaison with the Secretariat and SC members and reviewed by the SC.

Environmental Issues – work undertaken on by-catch, the consumption of resources by marine mammals, contaminants and the results of the MareFrame project had been reviewed. The SC

recommended that the Secretariat conduct a literature review on pollutant levels and impacts for all marine mammals relevant to NAMMCO.

Seals & Walruses - the focus in 2018 was on walrus stocks in Greenland, including stock structure, catches and abundance. New management advice and recommended quotas were given.

Cetaceans – a range of revised abundance estimates from the Icelandic and Faroes shipboard surveys of 2007 and 2015 were endorsed in 2018, including estimates for blue, fin, minke, humpback, sperm, and pilot whales and for white-sided and white-beaked dolphins. Further clarification was provided on the methods for generating management advice for humpback whales in Greenland. The management of narwhals in East Greenland was discussed. The status review of killer whales in the North Atlantic was discussed and endorsed by the SC.

Cetacean Sightings Surveys – the analysis of results from NASS2015 as well as previous surveys had been significantly advanced but remained ongoing. The SC saw 2023 as the best year to carry out the next survey but noted that this could be postponed until 2026 if priority should be given to joining survey efforts planned in the NW Atlantic. The SC requested further guidance from the Council.

A Joint NAMMCO/Norwegian Institute for Marine Research (IMR) Harbour Porpoise Symposium on the Status of Harbour Porpoises in the North Atlantic was held in December 2018 after the SC meeting and the findings will be reported to SC 26. It was attended by representatives from around the North Atlantic, the North Sea and the Baltic. Its aims were to review the conservation status of harbour porpoise in the North Atlantic and adjacent waters, considering all available information on stock structure, distribution, abundance and movements of harbour porpoises in the North Atlantic, and to assess data gaps for obtaining a reliable status in all areas.

5.1.2 Cooperation with other organisations

In 2018, the SC continued maintaining a close cooperation with several organisations and particularly with the Scientific Committee of the International Whaling Commission (IWC). An exchange of Chairs, or their representatives, was initiated between the two organisations' WGs on Abundance Estimates.

Members of the SC participated in the Scientific Committee of the IWC, the meeting of the Conservation of Arctic Flora and Fauna (CAFF) Circumpolar Biodiversity Monitoring Programme (CBMP) Marine Strategy Group as well as in the CAFF Arctic Biodiversity Conference.

5.1.3 Proposed workplan for 2019-2020

A **Harbour Porpoise Working Group** (HPWG) took place in March 2019, chaired by Bjarni Mikkelsen (FO) and with external experts from Denmark and the UK. The ToR for the meeting were: a) conduct an assessment of the sustainability of the harvest of harbour porpoise in West Greenland; b) review assessments performed in other areas by the NAMMCO Harbour Porpoise Workshop in 2018; c) identify knowledge gaps and needs for further research; d) assess impacts from non-hunting related anthropogenic stresses (pollution, climate change, noise etc).

A **Joint Japanese/NAMMCO Working Group** in Spring 2019 to review the information presently available for informing the conservation status of baleen whales off Japan, to identify gaps in knowledge, and provide recommendations on research and analysis needs.

An *ad hoc* **Working Group on the Population Status of Narwhals in East Greenland** in autumn 2019 to address the concerns raised by high levels of catches from a declining population. The Chair would be Rod Hobbs (USA), with Rikke Hansen (Greenland) as convener. External experts will be invited from Fisheries and Oceans Canada (DFO). The ToR were: a) review the latest information on surveys in East Greenland including options for updating the surveys from the 1980s; b) review information of satellite tracking of narwhals in East Greenland; c) present the latest information on genetic discrimination of stocks in East Greenland; d) assess the importance of climate change on the distribution of narwhals in East Greenland; e) compile hunting statistics and information from hunters on availability of narwhals; f) assess the future sustainability of catches.

A joint **ICES/NAFO/NAMMCO Working Group on Harp and Hooded seals (WGHARP)** in autumn 2019. The Chair would be Mike Hammill (Canada), with Haug (Norway) as convener and invited experts from the USA and UK. The ToR were: a) Review results of new surveys as available for harp seals in the White Sea and south-eastern portion of the Barents Sea; b) Review results from the biological samples obtained from harp seals; c) Provide advice on issues as requested.

An **Abundance Estimate Working Group (AEWG)** in autumn 2019. The Chair would be Daniel Pike (Canada), with Rikke Hansen (Greenland) as convener and external experts from Canada, the USA and the SCANS project. The ToR were to complete the review of the remaining abundance estimates and trends from all surveys including a) NASS 2007 and 2015; and b) earlier “vintage” and recent “fresh” data (1995-2018) from the Norwegian mosaic survey cycles.

The **annual SC meeting** would be held in the Faroe Islands at the end of October.

5.1.4 Other business

Tore Haug noted that he had now completed his second term as SC Chair and that his successor was Bjarni Mikkelsen from the Faroe Islands.

COMMENTS & DISCUSSION TO 5.1

The Council took note of the report and thanked Haug and the Committee for their work.

On behalf of the Council, the Chair thanked Haug for his able and engaged chairing of the Committee for the last three years and welcomed Bjarni Mikkelsen (Faroe Islands) as the new Chair of the SC.

5.2 ADOPTION OF PRIORITIES AND WORK PLAN FOR THE SC IN 2019-2020

Following the presentation of the reports of the Management Committees, the Council **agreed** to the following schedule for the SC in 2019 and 2020, pending budget consideration.

2019	2020
<p>Working Groups:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Harbour porpoise (spring) - ICES/NAFO/NAMMCO on harp and hooded seals (autumn) - Abundance Estimate (autumn) - East Greenland Narwhal (autumn) <p>Other:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Completing the analysis of all remaining TNASS and NASS data for species for which an abundance estimate is possible. - Review of pollutant levels in marine mammals in NAMMCO countries 	<p>Working Groups:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Bycatch - Coastal seal - Pilot whale [- Harbour porpoise?] - NAMMCO/JCNB on narwhal and beluga <p>Workshops:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Workshop on impacts of climate change on management advice - North Atlantic humpback whale tagging workshop <p>[Still planned for 2021: Bearded & ringed seals WGs]</p>

5.3 OTHER BUSINESS

Japan noted that at the 25th meeting of the SC it requested a joint WG with NAMMCO to review the information presently available for informing the conservation status of baleen whales off Japan. Japan reiterated that it was willing to provide the necessary finances to cover the costs associated with this WG. Recognising that this joint WG was subject to agreement from the Council and noting the short time frame available, Japan understood that the Commission would not be in a position to commit to holding this WG in spring 2019 as had originally been proposed. However, Japan invited NAMMCO to continue considering this request and looked forward to furthering collaboration.

6. COMMITTEE ON HUNTING METHODS (CHM)

6.1 REPORT OF THE COMMITTEE ON HUNTING METHODS

The Chair of the Committee on Hunting Methods (CHM), Guðni M. Eiríksson (Iceland), presented the activities of CHM since Council 26 ([NAMMCO/27/09](#)).

Member countries had presented information from 2018 on hunting related issues such as quotas, catches, number of active vessels and hunting periods. In Greenland a new Executive Order on large whales (no 9 of 6 December 2018) had come into force, extending the hunting period to all year round for minke whales and removing the minimum length limit for fin whales.

Since Council 26, CHM had focused on a) struck and lost, b) the collection of time to death (TTD) data with self-reporting as an alternative method, and c) defining the need for an efficient and standardised annual reporting of data to NAMMCO. CHM, like CIO and BYCELS, recommended standardising the information requested from member countries – see agenda item 4.1 above.

Struck and lost (S&L)

CHM had compiled an overview of all NAMMCO hunts with known S&L rates where applicable. The document will form the background for CHM's efforts in decreasing S&L. The working document will be further developed and updated as new information becomes available.

CHM had been given the following updates on progress on last year's recommendations to member countries related to S&L:

Greenland to collect S&L data on narwhal and beluga – **Response:** S&L were reported by hunters. There were no plans to do a scientific collection of S&L.

Iceland to collect S&L data on harbour and grey seals – **Response:** reporting S&L by hunters was presently not mandatory but a bill had been introduced to the Parliament addressing the issue. Seal hunting in Iceland was small scale making scientific collection of S&L impractical.

Norway to collect S&L data on harp seal – **Response:** S&L will be collected in the 2019 season.

Collection of Time to Death (TTD) and self-reporting

NAMMCO24 (2016) had asked CHM to look at alternative methods of collecting TTD data given the cost of the scientific method currently used by Norway and Iceland and, not least, because the method was not applicable to most of the hunts taking place in NAMMCO countries.

CHM had discussed self-reporting as a possible alternative and NAMMCO 26 (2018) had endorsed the committee's recommendation to a) look further into the possibility of implementing self-reporting methods to describe the killing efficiency of the hunt, and b) convene a workshop on alternative methods to collect these data. CHM did not reach a consensus regarding how to proceed with these two recommendations and would continue working with the issues.

CHM initiated a literature review on hunting efficiency and TTD in terrestrial and marine mammals. The comparison showed that methods for examining hunting efficiency and TTD were much more developed and used in marine mammals than in terrestrial mammals. It also confirmed that the scientific method for collecting TTD data used in Norway and Iceland, which included post-mortem examinations, was the best method presently developed.

General

To facilitate transparency, visibility, and traceability an overview document collating all the recommendations emanating from CHM Workshops and Expert Group meetings and follow ups by member countries had been developed. CHM would continue updating the document, as follow ups developed and new recommendations arise.

The current Chair, Eiríksson (Iceland) stepped down and Kathrine Ryeng (Norway) was elected Chair.

COMMENTS AND DISCUSSION

The Council noted the report, thanked Eiríksson and the Committee for their work and welcomed the new Chair.

Norway reconfirmed that animal welfare was a prioritized area for Norway and NAMMCO. It pointed to the tremendous improvements that had been achieved regarding the efficiency of hunting methods, particularly for large cetaceans. It noted, however, that much remained to be done for this to apply to all hunts taking place in NAMMCO countries. There were clearly some hunts that needed substantial improvements.

6.2 ADOPTION OF WORK PLAN

The Committee proposed the following work plan for the next 2 years.

2019	2020
Finalising the video on handling Whale grenade 99 together with Henriksen Verksted.	<u>2 back to back Expert Group Meetings (EGM)</u> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • EGM on hunting efficiency of small cetaceans • Workshop/EGM on hunting methods where the combined use of harpoon and rifle is not one weapon

The overall aim of the Expert Group Meeting (EGM) on hunting efficiency of small cetaceans would be to look at the efficiency of killing methods with regard to animal welfare and safety of the hunter. Invitations should be extended to relevant Canadian territories, Canada and Japan. The EGM would focus on hunting methods where death was not immediate, e.g. types of hunts requiring harpooning before killing in order not to lose the animal, or netting. A focus would also be on the hunts where SC considered that knowledge of S&L data would benefit the assessment of the stocks (relevant species are narwhal and beluga). The ToR were a) Review and assess current hunting and killing methods for small cetaceans; b) Review and assess information on recent and ongoing research on improvements and technical innovations in hunting methods and gear used for hunting of small cetaceans; c) Review and assess TTD data on the killing of small cetaceans, d) Provide recommendations on possible improvements.

The Workshop/EGM on hunting methods was planned back to back with the EGM on hunting efficiency of small cetaceans, as it was anticipated an overlap in participation and content.

COMMENTS AND DISCUSSION

Norway supported the priorities and recommendations made by CHM, in particular to continue working on the improvement of the killing efficiency of certain hunts where the animal welfare outcome was known to be poor, rather than focusing on alternative methods to collect data on the efficiency of hunts. This would concentrate the effort and provide the necessary focus to this very important issue.

The Council noted that the NO/IS method of recording TTD data was not applicable in all hunts. However, it agreed to prioritise work towards improving killing efficiency in hunts where the animal welfare outcome was poor. Identifying alternative methods to collect data on the efficiency of hunts will remain a task for the CHM but will not be presently prioritised. The organisation of the workshop on alternative methods to collect TTD data would be postponed.

The Council **adopted** the proposed workplan and the draft terms of reference for the two activities put forward by CHM.

7. COMMITTEE ON INSPECTION AND OBSERVATION (CIO)

7.1 REPORT OF THE COMMITTEE ON INSPECTION AND OBSERVATION

The Chair of the Committee on Inspection and Observation (CIO, Ulla S. Wang, Faroe Islands), presented the activities of CIO since Council 26 ([NAMMCO/27/10](#)).

The CIO was presented with information from member countries on hunting effort and national monitoring data from 2018. The CIO, like the CHM and BYCELS recommended standardising the information requested from member countries – see agenda item 4.1 above.

On request from Council 26, the CIO reviewed, the implementation of the Observation Scheme, Section B of the Joint NAMMCO Control Scheme for the Hunting of Marine Mammals. The report and the recommendations to Council were presented under agenda item 7.2.1 below.

CIO also recommended the following:

- To review Section A and appendix 1 of the current Joint NAMMCO Control Scheme for the Hunting of Marine Mammals, which deals with common elements for national inspection schemes for coastal whaling conducted from vessels mounted with a harpoon gun;
- To convene a training course for observer candidates in late 2019 to update the competence of the existing observers in line with the revised Scheme and recruit new candidates. The last course was held in 2013.

The current Chair, Ulla S. Wang (Faroe Islands) had completed her term and Guðni M. Eiríksson (Iceland) was elected Chair.

COMMENTS AND DISCUSSION

The Council noted the report and thanked Wang and the Committee and welcomed the new Chair.

The Council **endorsed** the recommendation to review Section A and appendix 1, noting that this would include proposing common elements for national inspection schemes for other relevant hunts. It also **endorsed** the convening of a training course for observer candidates.

7.2 THE JOINT NAMMCO CONTROL SCHEME

7.2.1 Review of implementation

The Deputy Secretary, Charlotte Winsnes, presented in detail the CIO's review of the Section B – International Observation Scheme. The output of the review was based on the review initiated by the Secretariat in 2018 and extensive discussion in the CIO.

In 2005, the CIO concluded the Scheme to be a success by the mere fact that it existed and that observers could conduct their tasks without interference. A high observation rate was desirable but not seen as very plausible due to budget restrictions. In 2013, the CIO wished to obtain more quantitative measurements to assess the implementation level and began looking at coverage rates and collecting data on national monitoring efforts. However, it became apparent that the data collected both via the observers and the member countries were not sufficiently detailed or focused for all the hunts to provide usable data. The lack of clearly defined purpose and objectives of the Scheme made it difficult to assess performances.

The current review identified five criteria for evaluating the performance of the implementation based on international legal instruments as well as guidelines, standards and best practices of relevance to NAMMCO (the Fish Stock agreement, the FAO code of conduct and guidelines for responsible fisheries, as well as measures in regional fisheries management organisations (RFMO) pertaining to observer programmes). The criteria identified and discussed were a) coverage rates and representativeness of observation activities, b) on-land versus on-board observations, c) observers' competence and safety

and d) establishment of both observer programmes and review procedures for assessing effectiveness, e) cost effectiveness of the Scheme.

Coverage rates and representativeness were calculated using different parameters. The diversity of hunting activities in NAMMCO (around 40 different hunts) and an overall budget that would never allow for more than partial coverage made it difficult to compare coverage rates with other RFMOs' observer programmes. The other criteria were found to be mostly met by the NAMMCO Scheme.

The deliberations of the CIO were centred upon the following three main concerns:

The current Scheme had a lack of clear purpose and objectives

The CIO agreed to expand the Scheme to collect reliable information on all kinds of hunting activities in the NAMMCO area, and not simply to limit the Scheme to monitoring whether recommendations given by the Commission were followed. The CIO also agreed that it was its own role to assess if NAMMCO recommendations were followed i.e. implemented in national legislation, while the role of the observers was to oversee whether national regulations were adhered to by the hunters.

The revised Scheme provided a mechanism for NAMMCO to both evaluate whether recommendations adopted by NAMMCO were implemented in national regulations (role of the CIO) and as such, adhered to (role of the observers). Furthermore, it provided a foundation for the member countries to evaluate the recommendations and thus would contribute to the improvement of national regulations related to hunting activities in member countries.

The proposed purpose and objectives of the revised Scheme would require that the CIO took a more active role in the implementation of the Scheme and perform a more thorough review of both the national regulations pertaining to hunting and the observation reports. The observer reports would have to be developed further as they would form the basis for further evaluation and follow up by member countries, both in a national and a NAMMCO context.

The role of the observer

NAMMCO hunting activities are (mostly) carried out in areas under national jurisdiction, unlike e.g. the NAFO observer programme. For the majority of the CIO it was essential to make a clear distinction between observation and inspection. If observers were assigned controlling responsibilities i.e. *immediate* reporting of infringements, the observers would be seen as performing duties belonging to the flag states/coastal states.

Safety issues

The CIO recognised the significance and importance of clarifying all safety-related issues relevant for the observer's mission. It was of paramount importance to clarify the lines of responsibilities related to securing safety equipment, training, health and insurance matters.

The CIO **agreed to forward the following recommendations** to Council for a revised Observation Scheme:

- To change the current title from *Provisions of the Joint NAMMCO Control Scheme for the hunting of marine mammals* to *Provisions of the NAMMCO Inspection and Observation Scheme for the hunting of marine mammals in member countries*.
- To change the current purpose and objectives from:

The purpose of establishing an international observation scheme among NAMMCO member countries is to provide a mechanism for NAMMCO to monitor whether decisions made by the Commission are respected. For this purpose, NAMMCO appoints observers who oversee hunting and inspection activities in NAMMCO member countries.

to the following:

The purpose of this Observation Scheme is to collect reliable information on all kinds of hunting activities in the NAMMCO member Countries. The objectives are to

- a) provide a mechanism for NAMMCO to oversee whether recommendations made by NAMMCO are implemented and national regulations adhered to;*
 - b) provide a foundation for the member states to evaluate whether a recommendation is serving its purpose or not;*
 - c) contribute to the improvement of the national regulation of hunting activities in the member Countries.*
- Generally, to replace the text of the current Section B and related guidelines with the one contained in Annex 1 of the report.

Furthermore, the CIO recommended:

- Increasing coverage rates, using flexibility in scope and frequency of the observation activity;
- Developing an evaluation procedure that includes frequency and a set of criteria;
- Further developing hunt specific/catch event control lists and reporting forms to ensure the compilation of necessary data to make the evaluation of the implementation possible;
- Implementing the observation of the killing process of individual animals (drive hunts and sealing) to gain precise information on compliance with the legal killing procedures;
- For facilitating any review of the Scheme
 - members annually submit data for evaluating the Scheme (e.g. hunting effort) for inclusion in a database held at the Secretariat;
 - the Secretariat keeps a precise and updated database of hunting and observation activities in NAMMCO countries;
- Considering the feasibility of comparing results of the NAMMCO observation and that of the national inspection for specific hunts and season, to see whether they differ, thus indicating some possible issues;
- Giving NAMMCO the possibility of assigning to the observer other tasks than observation activities (including scientific work);
- Allowing national observers in specific cases due to specific logistical and language issues;
- Encouraging observers to divide their time between several platforms in one season, instead of spending a longer time on a single platform;
- Establishing routines to ensure whether on-board observers are aware of safety issues and safety measures.

COMMENTS AND DISCUSSION

The Chair thanked Winsnes for her presentation and kindly requested its upload to the web portal.

Greenland appreciated the extensive work that had been put into the revision of the Observation Scheme. There were still issues that needed to be resolved, but the revision had come a long way.

Norway joined Greenland in praising the work accomplished. It gave its strong support to the proposed revised Scheme, emphasising the utmost importance of distinguishing between inspection and observation as well as emphasising the prerogative and the responsibility of the coastal states/flag states to conduct inspection and control activities within relevant areas under national jurisdiction.

These reports will form the basis for further evaluation and follow up by member countries, both in a national and in a NAMMCO context. The new Scheme will therefore require the CIO to perform a more thorough review of the Observation reports, besides the Secretariat's examination.

Iceland questioned the rationale for allowing national observers, arguing that this would undermine the neutrality and legitimacy of the Scheme. It was explained that national observers would represent an exception e.g. when observing hunts that due to logistical (e.g. of *ad hoc* character) and language issues

could not otherwise be observed, likely mostly in Greenland. The general rule would still be to use non-national observers.

The Council noted that Greenland had initially wanted the observer also to be able to report infringements immediately. However, for the sake of advancement and given the benefit of the overall changes in the proposal for a new Observation Scheme, Greenland had agreed to support the proposal.

The Council thanked the CIO for their work and the Secretariat for the initial revision. The Council **adopted** the new Section B of the Provisions of the NAMMCO Inspection and Observation Scheme for hunting of marine mammals in member countries and its guidelines (Annex 1). The Council also **endorsed** the various recommendations given by the CIO for the future implementation of the Scheme.

7.2.2 Observation activities in 2019

The CIO discussed the possibility of sending out observers in 2019 and had agreed to recommend resuming observation activities in 2020. There were still pending issues related to the new Observation Scheme (qualification requirements, safety issues) that needed to be addressed before implementing the Scheme and the CIO also found it appropriate to consider the report of the Performance Review Panel before making a final decision on scope and range of the activities for the 2020 season.

The CIO also considered that the Observation budget for 2019 would be better spent by conducting a training course for observers, acquainting them with the requirements of the revised Observation Scheme.

COMMENTS AND DISCUSSION

The Council **agreed** and **endorsed** the recommendation not to have observers in the field in 2019 but rather to resume observation activities under the new revised Observation Scheme in 2020.

7.3 ADOPTION OF WORK PLAN

The Committee proposed the following work plan for the next 2 years.

2019	2020
Continue the finalisation of uncompleted issues related to the Observation Scheme i.e. safety concerns, reporting and qualifications	Review Section A of NAMMCO Control Scheme and propose common elements for national inspection schemes for other relevant hunts.
Planning observation season 2020	Implementation of observation activities for 2020
Organise and convene a training course for observers in the autumn	Planning observation season 2021

COMMENTS AND DISCUSSION

The Council **adopted** the proposed work plan, pending budget consideration.

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

8.1 REPORT OF THE WORKING GROUP ON BY-CATCH, ENTANGLEMENTS AND LIVE STRANDINGS (BYCELS)

The chair of the Working Group on By-catch, Entanglements and Live Strandings, Katrine Ryeng (Norway), presented the activities of the WG since the last meeting of the Council ([NAMMCO/27/12](#)).

Data requirement and reporting

BYCELS continued discussing which kind of data were required to obtain an overview of the extent of by-catch, entanglement and disentanglement, live and dead strandings in member countries. BYCELS like CHM and CIO recommended standardising the information requested from member countries – see agenda item 4.1 above.

Updates from members on by-catch, entanglement and strandings

In the **Faroe Islands** it is mandatory to report by-catch in the logbooks. It is primarily pilot whales that have been reported, a few individuals in trawls. Reporting of strandings and reporting of lost fishing gear is also mandatory. Fishermen report via logbooks (from 2019 only electronic) to the Fisheries Inspection Service.

In **Greenland**, regulations required that entangled and bycaught marine mammals are reported to the Ministry of Fisheries, Hunting and Agriculture. The buyer/traders under the MSC certification process also has a legal obligation to report by-caught marine mammals. Observations of stranded large whales are often communicated via local wildlife officers or the municipality. A protocol for collecting information on floating or stranded large whales had previously been produced.

In **Iceland**, reporting by-catch was mandatory, but not all fishermen complied. Fishermen should report by-catch in logbooks (electronically for vessels longer than 15 meters). Reporting of lost fishing gear was mandatory, but strandings were reported on a voluntary basis.

In **Norway**, reporting of by-catch was mandatory, but not all fishermen complied. Inspectors did not monitor by-catch. There was currently no stranding network or routines for sampling stranded cetaceans or pinnipeds, and strandings were reported on a voluntary basis. An action plan had been developed for handling events involving large whales, including live strandings, entrapment in fish farm and entanglements. It clearly stated that entangled or entrapped whales in purse seine had priority over the fish catch. During the last 30 years a programme to remove lost fishing gear along the Norwegian coast had been in place. It was mandatory for fishermen to report to the Fisheries Directorate the position where they had lost gear.

GUIDELINES

BYCELS had previously agreed to review the IWC and other guidelines (e.g., the Norwegian guidelines) on by-catch, including entanglement and disentanglement and live strandings with the aim of providing recommendations and guidelines to NAMMCO member countries. The work was postponed in 2018 but would take priority henceforth.

GENERAL

BYCELS reiterated the focus areas of their work (approved at NAMMCO 26) and proposed a work plan for 2019 and 2020 – see agenda item 8.2 below.

The current Chair, Ryeng (Norway) had completed her term and Guðni M. Eiríksson (Iceland) was elected Chair.

COMMENTS AND DISCUSSION

The Council **noted** the report and thanked Ryeng and the Committee for their work and welcomed the new Chair.

Norway noted that internationally, concerns about fishery by-catch was increasing. By-catch and entanglement were a welfare issue – as well as a conservation issue if by-catches exceeded sustainable levels. Norway had monitored by-catch in its coastal gillnet fisheries (mainly harbour and grey seals and harbour porpoises) since 2006 and conducted promising mitigation experiments with acoustic alarms. It informed that it will organise in June a workshop of international experts to discuss the best sampling design in Norway for fishery and by-catch data for providing the most reliable bycatch estimates.

Norway noted that animal welfare in marine mammals was an important issue for Norway and welcomed therefore the establishment of BYCELS and its work plan. Norway will share with NAMMCO its guidelines to improve the welfare of live stranded animals in terms of euthanasia. NAMMCO will serve the responsible management of marine mammals and gain in credibility by developing a joint focus to minimise catch and by-catch related animal suffering, with the ultimate goal of preventing bycatch. Investigating alternative methods to entangling nets and working towards methods that catch and kill at once was essential.

8.2 ADOPTION OF WORKPLAN

The Council **reiterated its endorsement** of the work focus of BYCELS and **adopted** the proposed WG work plan for 2019 - 2020, as outlined below.

2019	2020
<p>Finalise the tables for reporting on by-catch, entanglement and strandings with the aim of identifying and characterising the problem to provide recommendations on mitigation.</p> <p>Develop guidelines on</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The euthanasia of live stranded animals • The sampling of stranded animals • Specific to disentanglement in the Arctic <p>Identify how stranding networks could be set up</p>	<p>Finalise work on guidelines</p>

8.3 OTHER BUSINESS

The observer for the IWC gave an intervention pointing to relevant ongoing work carried out by its Scientific, Conservation and Welfare Committees, including the IWC Global Whale Entanglement Response Network, the IWC Bycatch Mitigation Initiative and its Strandings Initiative. The IWC looked forward to further cooperating with NAMMCO on these issues. Emphasis was given to effective data collection and reporting, working together with the FAO to develop technical guidelines on by-catch, and development of necropsy and sampling protocols for stranded whales.

9. JOINT MANAGEMENT COMMITTEES (MCJ)

9.1 REPORT OF THE JOINT MEETING OF THE MANAGEMENT COMMITTEES

The Chair of the Joint Management Committee (MCJ), Nette Levermann (Greenland) presented the report ([NAMMCO/27/13](#)).

The report contained information and updates related to a) the Ecosystem Approach, with a particular focus on disturbance, pollution and interactions between marine mammals and fisheries (including the issues of by-catch and the MareFrame project); and b) procedures for decision-making on conservation and management measures, including issues connected to struck and lost and the development of management advice.

On each of these topics, the report contained the relevant active requests from Council, information summaries from the 25th Scientific Committee Report, new proposals for conservation and management and recommendations for research, as well as the response of the MCJ to these. The report also provided the updates from member countries related to previous proposals and recommendations.

The report also contained an extended update from Canada on developments related to the Mary River project and a summary of the presentation given by the Scientific Secretary, Wickson, on the topic of user knowledge in management decision-making.

The MCJ adopted several new proposals for conservation and management and made recommendations for scientific research, which are outlined below.

NEW PROPOSALS FOR CONSERVATION AND MANAGEMENT

Procedures

- Requests older than 10 years should be withdrawn and archived after a review process within the management committees, unless specifically renewed by the Council;
- The issue of identifying the best reporting method for recording struck and lost should be forwarded to the CHM and advanced as a joint effort together with the SC.

Marine Mammal – Fisheries Interactions

Faroe Islands

- Implement a reporting system of marine mammal bycatch for fishing boats below 15 GRT, where logbooks are not mandatory.

Faroese/Iceland

- Add the selection of local marine mammal species to e-logbook design
- Information available on by-catch from foreign vessels should be presented to BYCWG

Iceland

- Describe the effort of foreign fisheries and provide the reported by-catch (also 0s), in order to inform by-catch risk
- Provide details of the amount of observer effort in pelagic trawl fleets

Norway

- Modify the design of the Coastal Reference Fleet (both the selection process and the number of vessels in areas of concern) according to BYCWG recommendations

All

- Logbooks reporting should not be used for calculating by-catch rates, only as a qualitative indicator for raising concern

NEW RECOMMENDATIONS FOR SCIENTIFIC RESEARCH

Multispecies approaches to management / Ecosystem modelling

- Funding be sought to apply and extend the approach of the MareFrame project to focus on marine mammals and the unique needs of NAMMCO

Other environmental issues

Secretariat

- Review available pollutant research on all marine mammals relevant to NAMMCO and report to SC 26

COMMENTS AND DISCUSSION

The Council took note of the report and the new proposals for conservation and management forwarded by the MCJ to the Parties and **endorsed** the new recommendations for research.

A clarification was sought on how agenda items 13 and 14 of the Council meeting (new requests for advice and new proposals for conservation and management) related to agenda items 9, 10 and 11 (reports from management committees) and whether these agenda items could be deleted to avoid duplication.

The General Secretary clarified that agenda item 13 *New Requests for Advice from the Council* needed to stay as a separate item because the new requests for advice needed to be endorsed by Council, while agenda item 14 *New Proposals for Conservation and Management* was for providing a collated information to Council on the new proposals. The information could be subsumed under the report of the management committees rather than appearing as a separate agenda item, if it is preferred.

Norway noted that they found it useful to have a separation between the recommendations themselves and justification for these from the management committees.

The Faroe Islands recalled that the Council has a mandate to review and endorse scientific research recommendations coming from the management committees but that proposals for conservation and management are made directly to members of the management committees.

10. MANAGEMENT COMMITTEE FOR CETACEANS (MCC)

10.1 REPORT OF THE MANAGEMENT COMMITTEE FOR CETACEANS

The Chair of the Management Committee for Cetaceans (MCC), Levermann (Greenland) presented the report ([NAMMCO/27/14](#)).

The report contained information and updates related to: a) relevant active requests from Council; b) information summaries from the from the Scientific Committee (SC25) report regarding recent research activities; c) any newly endorsed abundance estimates; d) new proposals for conservation and management; e) new recommendations for research proposed by the SC; and f) response of the MCC to these new proposals and recommendations. The report also provided the updates from member countries related to previous proposals and recommendations.

The MCC Report also reported the explanation from Greenland as to why the scientific advice regarding seasonal closures for beluga was not being implemented. This was due to the presence of a high level of disturbance from non-hunting related activities in the proposed area (e.g. shipping, commercial and recreational fisheries) and the belief attempting to re-establish the population would require that all of these non-hunting related activities be stopped, which was not feasible.

The SC had questioned whether performing an assessment of dolphin species was a priority and the MCC reiterated that it remained a valid request and had the same level of priority as assessments of other species from which there were removals.

The MCC adopted several new proposals for conservation and management and made recommendations for scientific research, as outlined below.

The MCC endorsed two proposals for conservation and management related to humpback whales that had not been endorsed in previous years due to a request to the SC for further explanation and information. The SC had informed that it was possible to use the Strike Limit Algorithms (SLAs) developed by the IWC without the use of 'needs statements', which the SC had done in its previous work to estimate sustainable yields. The MCC agreed therefore to endorse the proposals, as listed below.

There were also three proposals for conservation management of narwhals from 2017 that had not previously been endorsed due to a request for further explanation on the advice given by the SC. The SC had further explained its reasoning behind its advice, related to gap in distribution and decreasing abundance and will to use of a precautionary approach. Based on these clarifications, the three proposals were endorsed by the MCC, as listed below.

NEW PROPOSALS FOR CONSERVATION AND MANAGEMENT ENDORSED BY THE MCC

Greenland

Killer whale

- Regulate the hunt and restrict quotas in a precautionary way.
- Validate catch records, improve the reporting (including struck and lost) and include it in existing mandatory reporting schemes.

Humpback whale

- SLAs that are developed in the IWC be used for advice for large whales in Greenland.
- Annual strikes of no more than 25 humpback whales off West Greenland from 2019 to 2024.

Narwhal

- Recognize the hunting areas in East Greenland, Tasiilaq, Kangerlussuaq and Ittoqqortormiit, as three separate management areas.
- Catches of fewer than 10 narwhals in both Ittoqqortormiit and Kangerlussuaq.
- The advice for the southern hunting areas applies only to Kangerlussuaq fjord. No catches should be made south of 68°N (where Tasiilaq is situated).

NEW RECOMMENDATIONS FOR SCIENTIFIC RESEARCH

Humpback whale

- A workshop on humpback tagging projects across the Atlantic be held in 2020 in combination with the IWC meeting.

Narwhal

- An *ad hoc* WG be convened to assess the status of narwhals in east Greenland and results be reported to SC/26.

Bottlenose whale

- An analysis of the sighting data from 2015 be done.

Killer whale

- Further monitoring and sampling be performed in all NAMMCO countries and pollutant and genetic analyses conducted;
- Further research be carried out on abundance & population structure in the West Atlantic.

Long-finned pilot whale

- A pre-assessment meeting be held prior to PWWG to ensure that the data necessary for performing an assessment is available.

Harbour porpoise

- Combined genetics analysis be done with samples from all NAMMCO countries.

Sightings Surveys

- A workshop on novel abundance survey and estimation methods be held, preferably before the next NASS;
- The common NAMMCO / IWC sighting survey database be also hosted by NAMMCO;
- The ongoing spatial analysis at SMRU using NASS/NILS data series be supported to completion;
- 2023 was the preferred year for the next NASS survey.

COMMENTS AND DISCUSSION

The Council took note of the report and the new proposals for conservation and management forwarded by the MCC to the Parties and **endorsed** the new recommendations for research.

The Faroe Islands welcomed that there was now a better basis, including more data, for proceeding with the assessments of small cetaceans and particularly the white-sided dolphin.

10.2 OTHER BUSINESS

Greenland informed that there will be a gradual implementation of the MCC proposal with a gradual lowering of quotas for narwhals in East Greenland.

The Faroe Islands welcomed the change in the IUCN status listing for the pilot whale, now listed as *Least Concern*, noting that two NAMMCO associated scientists were used as reviewers (Desportes and Pike). This demonstrated that the work being done within NAMMCO over many years was now being recognised by the IUCN.

Norway informed that it participated in the IUCN cetacean specialist working group. Desportes reported that the work of NAMMCO on harbour porpoises and specifically the conclusions of the recent joint IMR/NAMMCO Harbour Porpoise Symposium on the Status of Harbour Porpoises in the North Atlantic would also be used within the IUCN assessment process for this species.

11. MANAGEMENT COMMITTEE FOR SEALS AND WALRUSES (MCSW)

11.1 REPORT OF THE MANAGEMENT COMMITTEE FOR SEALS AND WALRUSES

The Chair of the Management Committee for Seals and Walruses (MCSW), Guro Gjelsvik (Norway) presented the report ([NAMMCO/27/15](#)).

The report contained information and updates related to a) the relevant active requests from Council; b) information summaries from the Scientific Committee (SC25) report regarding recent research activities; c) new proposals for conservation and management and recommendations for research to member countries; d) recommendations for requests for new advice from the SC; and e) response of the MCSW to these new proposals and recommendations. The report also provided the updates from member countries related to previous proposals and recommendations.

MCSW agreed to propose to Council three new/revised requests for scientific advice. It adopted several new proposals for conservation and management and made recommendation for scientific research. These are outlined below.

NEW PROPOSALS FOR CONSERVATION AND MANAGEMENT

Greenland

Harbour seals

- Improve the accuracy and validation of reported catches, so accurate information is reported to the catch database.

Walruses

- Total allowable landings: North West 79; West 74; East 17
- Protect haul-out sites in regular use through creating an exclusion zone
- Establish dialogue between managers and hunters on methods for collecting S&L data
- Report struck and lost in the "Særmeldingskema"

Greenland and Canada

- Evaluate the possibility of a joint management process for shared stocks
- Advance cooperation on shared stocks.

Canada

- Encourage to provide more complete catch data

NEW RECOMMENDATIONS FOR SCIENTIFIC RESEARCH

Walruses

Greenland

- Explore the relationship between the present findings [on distribution related to ice coverage] and hunting and non-hunting anthropogenic impacts.
- Update age/tusk relationships for all GL populations

Greenland and Canada

- Maintain regular surveys of all GL stocks & coordinate with CA surveys
- Improve data on stock structure and seasonal movements between GL & CA

NEW PROPOSALS FOR REQUESTS FOR ADVICE FROM THE SCIENTIFIC COMMITTEE

Harp seals

The quota issue for the common stocks between Norway and the Russian Federation is dealt with by the Joint Norwegian – Russian Fisheries Commission.

Revised request R-2.1.10

R-2.1.10: To provide advice on total allowable catches for the management of harp seals and the establishment of a quota system for the common stocks between Norway and Russia.

Rephrased as:

To provide advice on the total allowable catches for the management of harp seals.

Walruses

Revised request R-2.6.3

R-2.6.3: Effects of human disturbance including fishing and shipping activities in particular scallop fishing on the distribution, behaviour and conservation status of walruses in West Greenland.

Rephrased as:

Provide advice on the effects of human disturbance including fishing and shipping activities, tourism, hydrocarbon exploration and mineral extraction on the distribution, behaviour and conservation status of walruses in Greenland.

New request R-2.6.8

Provide assessments of and advice on the sustainability of allowing walrus hunts all year round in Greenland on all stocks.

COMMENTS AND DISCUSSION

The Council took note of the report and the new proposals for conservation and management forwarded by the MCSW to the Parties and **endorsed** the new recommendations for research. Requests for advice from the Scientific Committee would be dealt with under agenda item 13.

Norway noted that there were a few recommendations endorsed by NAMMCO regarding the forthcoming revision of the Management Plans for coastal (harbour and grey) seals, which were currently managed county by county for administrative reasons. NAMMCO requested that the management units be re-evaluated and based on biological parameters. This work was underway and should be considered in relation to the review of the target level for harbour seals. The revision of the plans would be on the agenda of the Norwegian Marine Mammal Scientific Advisory Board at its next

meeting in October 2019. The Board would advise on how the recommendations from NAMMCO best could be incorporated in the Management Plans.

11.2 UPDATE ON EU SEAL BAN AND INUIT EXEMPTION

11.2.1 Greenland

Greenland relayed a statement on behalf of Association of Fishers and Hunters in Greenland (KNAPK), who had been prevented from participating at the last minute. Seal hunting, and the possibility to earn an income from sealskins, was vital in communities with no fish plants. Currently, there were about 35 communities with no fish plants in Greenland. It was also vital in areas where fishery was high, as there were periods when seal hunting was the only possibility for income due to bad fishing conditions.

An evaluation of the regulation had been initiated by the EU. A questionnaire was sent to Greenland and Denmark separately, and a coordinated effort was under way.

11.2.2 Canada/Nunavut

Canada informed that it had received a questionnaire from the EU related to the review of the EU legislation and was looking into the details of how the exemption worked. Canada would welcome a cooperation with Denmark and Greenland on the matter. It would also welcome the opportunity to organise a joint event in Brussels in the spirit of the QR event in November 2017.

Nunavut Tunngavik Inc. (NTI) emphasised the importance of ringed seals for Inuit communities, and noted that NTI advocated and supported any effort that provided economic benefits to Inuit that flow from the sustainable harvest of marine mammals. NTI also supported the statement made by the Greenland Hunters and Fishers Association (KNAPK) on the detrimental impact of the EU seal ban on this aspect of Inuit livelihood, despite the Inuit exemption.

12. 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 had been restated in the Nuuk Declaration in 2017. Environmental questions, notably disturbances, had been dealt with by the MCJ and points of discussion could be found in the report of the MCJ ([NAMMCO/27/13](#)). The Chair opened the floor for updates on any challenges associated with the development of human activities.

Mining projects

Canada had provided a comprehensive update to the MCJ on the advances and expansion of the Mary River Project. It reiterated its suggestion that NAMMCO reach out directly to the Nunavut Impact Review Board for further information regarding this project. In doing so, NAMMCO should consider refining information requests specific to the project to facilitate corresponding responses.

Considering the fluid nature of marine mammal populations, the Council **recommended** that the impact assessments of present and future development projects be coordinated between Greenland and Canada.

Whale and seal watching

Norway informed that a proposal for new regulations related to whale watching was presented for public consultation as of 1 April with a one-month response time. Many stakeholders involved in whale watching had advocated for regulations and the present proposal was the result of a joint effort between the industry, authorities and research community. Norway viewed this as a first important step in achieving a more respectful whale watching.

The proposal included

- A general ban on activities that displace the whales from their natural habitat
- Whale watching vessels will be prohibited to be closer than 0.2 nautical miles (approx. 370 meters) from fishing vessels.
- [For whale watchers] A ban on swimming, diving or paddling more than 0.4 nautical miles (about 740 meters) from fishing vessels.

13. NEW REQUESTS FOR ADVICE FROM THE COMMITTEES

New requests for advice were provided in document [NAMMCO/27/18](#).

13.1 REQUESTS FOR ADVICE FROM THE SCIENTIFIC COMMITTEE

HARP SEALS

The Requests R-2.1.10: *“To provide advice on total allowable catches for the management of harp seals and the establishment of a quota system for the common stocks between Norway and Russia”* was rephrased as

R-2.1.10rev: *“To provide advice on the total allowable catches for the management of harp seals”*.

WALRUSES

The request R-2.6.3: *“Effects of human disturbance including fishing and shipping activities in particular scallop fishing on the distribution, behaviour and conservation status of walruses in west Greenland”* was rephrased as:

R-2.6.3rev: *“Provide advice on the effects of human disturbance including fishing and shipping activities, tourism, hydrocarbon exploration and mineral extraction on the distribution, behaviour and conservation status of walruses in Greenland”*

A new request was proposed to Council by the MCSW

R-2.6.8: *“Provide assessments of and advice on the sustainability of allowing walrus hunts all year round in Greenland on all stocks”*

Sightings Surveys

The Council noted that, regarding the next cetacean sightings survey, it expected some input and recommendations from the SC regarding the scope and focus of the survey.

13.2 REQUEST FOR ADVICE FROM THE COMMITTEE ON INSPECTION AND OBSERVATION

Review Section A of the NAMMCO inspection and observation scheme and propose common elements for national inspection schemes for other relevant hunts.

13.3 REQUEST TO ALL COMMITTEES

Extend and standardise the data input to the national progress reports to fulfil the requirements and meet the deadlines of all committees.

COMMENTS AND DISCUSSION ON 13.1, 13.2 AND 13.3

All proposals for new and revised requests for advice to committees were **adopted** by Council.

Council noted that the deadline for submitting the NPR was an organisational matter and should be dealt with by the committees.

14. NEW PROPOSALS FOR CONSERVATION AND MANAGEMENT

The new proposals for conservation and management ([NAMMCO/27/19](#)) were reported under agenda items 9, 10 and 11.

15. MARINE MAMMALS AS FOOD RESOURCES (MMFR)

The Chair reviewed the background and the outcome of the “Marine Mammal as Food Resources” (MMFR) project. The 2012 Ministerial Meeting emphasised the importance of an increased focus on marine mammals as a food resource. In 2012-2017, NAMMCO undertook the project “Marine Mammal as Food Resources” funded by the Nordic Council of Ministers, the Greenland Government and NAMMCO.

The outputs of the project included

- The white paper document “Marine Mammals: A Multifaceted Resource”, presenting myths and facts around whaling and sealing in NAMMCO countries in an ecosystem perspective;
- The development of a communication strategy for flagging most efficiently marine mammals as logical and natural food resources;
- The subsequent development of an information leaflet “No food – or?” as well as numerous presentations in various fora, focussing on marine mammals as a food resource in the context of blue economy and environmental costs.

In December 2017, a pilot Life Cycle Assessment (LCA) study was initiated, using the remaining funds from the MMFR project to quantify the relative environmental impacts of consuming marine mammal products versus other meat products, with seals in Greenland as a first example.

15.1 LIFE CYCLE ASSESSMENT – UTILISATION OF SEALS IN GREENLAND

The General Secretary presented the results of the pilot study “Local seal or imported meat? – LCA of environmental impacts of food choices in Greenland” ([NAMMCO/27/16](#)).

LCA analyses aim at assessing the environmental impact of a product from cradle to grave, i.e., from extraction to disposal through production and distribution and is standardised by the International Standards Organisation (ISO¹). It allows the comparison of environmental costs within and between supply chains.

The study initiated by NAMMCO was led by F. Ziegler from the Research Institutes of Sweden (RISE) with the collaboration of the Greenlandic Ministry of Fisheries, Hunting and Agriculture and the Association of Fishers and Hunters in Greenland (KNAPK) and the Secretariat.

The two supply chains compared were a) the production, processing and transportation to Nuuk of the most common alternative protein food product consumed in Greenland, identified as pork meat imported from Denmark, and b) locally hunted (extraction) seal meat. This entailed the production and use of supply materials utilised in hunting for seal meat (gasoline and ammunition, investigated through a survey among KNAPK members) and pig production and shipping for pork. Greenhouse gas emissions and energy use were quantitatively analysed, while other impacts were discussed qualitatively, such as animal welfare and use of land, presence of antibiotics and pesticides.

The study clearly pointed to seal meat as a better animal food option in Greenland than imported pork from a climate perspective, but also from a number of the other aspects assessed qualitatively. While

¹ ISO (2006a). ISO 14040. Environmental management – life cycle assessment – principles and framework. International Standards Organization.

ISO (2006b) ISO 14044. Environmental management – life cycle assessment – requirements and management. International Standards Organization.

this conclusion rested on limited data and needed further exploration, it clearly contrasted with the stigmatization of marine mammals as food resource.

Desportes noted that the study was interesting for NAMMCO because assumptions were confirmed by facts, thus contributing to the factual communication at the core of NAMMCO and its Communication and Outreach Strategy.

The results of the pilot study were submitted for publication and might be used for applying for funds to refine and extend the Greenlandic study and, if wished, initiate an LCA analysis in other NAMMCO countries for comparing the environmental impacts of consuming products from marine mammals, whether hunted locally or not, versus consuming alternative products.

COMMENTS AND DISCUSSION

The Chair, supported by member countries and Japan, thanked Desportes for her presentation, noting that the LCA study complemented well the presentation Desportes made at NAMMCO 26 on Arctic sealing and the EU trade ban from a blue economy and holistic environmental and societal perspective.

Greenland commented that it had been a very interesting exercise to participate and reported that for KNAPK, the work with the LCA analysis highlighted the difficulties in quantifying parameters such as fuel and ammunition used in hunting, which is sometimes opportunistic and unpredictable.

The Faroe Islands looked forward to reviewing the work in more detail, agreeing that it was important to document marine mammals as an environmentally friendly food resource. It was appreciated that the presentation also mentioned the possibility of looking at marine mammals as food that was also transported, exported and traded on international markets. The right to trade marine mammals on international markets and this aspect of utilization should be included in any future comparative analysis, meaning that the focus should be in terms of global food security rather than assuming that marine mammals are only consumed locally. All delegations concurred with these views.

Japan found the presentation interesting and inspiring, and invited Desportes to present the LCA study at the July 2019 Meeting on Sustainable Use of Aquatic Living Resources.

Makivik Corporation asked whether the study also took into account dietary preferences and cultural aspects, as these were important factors for indigenous communities. Desportes noted the difficulty to account for these quantitatively, but they should indeed be considered in qualitative terms.

Desportes reiterated the pilot and preliminary nature of the project, but that it would indeed be interesting to consolidate and expand. The Swedish collaborators were also interested in further participation.

The Faroe Islands asked for clarification on the process to take the project forward in terms of seeking additional funding, developing any potential application and coordinating between the NAMMCO members. Desportes informed that the Secretariat initiated and coordinated the pilot LCA study after establishing contact with Ziegler at the World Seafood Conference, but the LCA analysis was conducted by RISE with the information and data delivered by Greenland. A follow up project could be developed as a joint application with NAMMCO, with either the collaborators or NAMMCO as lead applicants.

Greenland mentioned that participating in the project involved some additional workload, as it was difficult to gather the quantitative data on the supply chain required for performing the LCA. Desportes noted that experience had been gained and that it would likely be easier to collate quantitative information with a less *ad hoc* form of hunting.

The Council took note of the outcome of the LCA and **recommended** that the study be expanded to include all member countries and that external funding be sought. Member countries should be consulted directly about their possible participation and input.

16. EXTERNAL RELATIONS

16.1 COOPERATION WITH NON-MEMBER COUNTRIES

Japan reiterated its commitment to the responsible management of living marine resources and particularly marine mammals. To this end Japan was always ready to enhance its cooperation with NAMMCO in terms of all aspects of the sustainable management of marine mammals.

Nunavut Tunngavik Inc. (NTI) gave an update on the information provided to NAMMCO members last year on their efforts to improve hunting methods for bowhead whales. NTI had been successful in ordering penthrite grenades and expressed its appreciation for the collaboration with Norway on this matter. NTI continued to collaborate with Egil Øen on quality testing of the penthrite grenade and delivery systems for hunts in Nunavut, as well as on hunters' training. Øen had been invited to a training-related workshop aiming at improving hunting standards. NTI appreciated both this collaboration and the advice that had been provided by NAMMCO. NTI welcomed the two workshops planned by the CHM (see agenda item 6.2) and was interested in participating.

Greenland relayed a message from KNAPK, who wish to have access to publicly available catch data from Canada.

16.2 COOPERATION WITH INTERNATIONAL ORGANISATIONS

Desportes introduced [NAMMCO/27/17](#), which presented summaries of observer reports from the Secretariat's and NAMMCO's observers' attendance at meetings of other organisations in 2018.

The Secretariat attended the meetings of the (NEAFC-OSPAR) Collective Arrangement (Berlin, DE), the Sustainable Use of Aquatic Living Resources (Tokyo, JP), the Regional Fisheries Body Secretariats' Network (Rome, IT), the International Whaling Commission (Florianopolis, BR), the CAFF Circumpolar Biodiversity Monitoring Programme (CBMP) Marine Strategy Group and Expert Network (Rovaniemi, FL) and the Norwegian Marine Mammal Scientific Advisory Board (Tromsø, NO). It also participated in the CAFF Arctic Biodiversity Congress (Rovaniemi, FL) and the Science for Ocean Actions Conference organised by the Norwegian Ministry of Foreign Affairs and IMR (Bergen, NO). The Secretariat delivered various presentations at five of these arrangements.

Inter-secretarial skype meetings had been held with OSPAR, the FAO By-catch mitigation team and FIRMs, the IWC and ASCOBANS.

In addition, NAMMCO was represented by the Faroe Islands at the 35th annual meeting of NASCO, by Iceland at the 40th annual meeting of NAFO and by Norway at the 37th annual meeting of NEAFC.

ASCOBANS, although invited to cooperate on the joint IMR/NAMMCO harbour porpoise workshop aiming at reviewing the conservation status of harbour porpoises in the North Atlantic, had refrained from doing so. However, many of the scientists usually associated with ASCOBANS welcomed the organisation of this review, participated and expressed their gratitude and thanks to NAMMCO and IMR for taking such a needed and timely initiative, especially considering the concerns about the conservation of the species in many areas.

The Chair informed that a possible Memorandum of Understanding with OSPAR and the joining of the Collective Arrangement had been positively considered, but a final decision had not yet been reached.

Although member countries saw the possibility of establishing a MoU between OSPAR and NAMMCO in a positive light, they were not presently in a position to further elaborate a text. More time was needed for internal consultations.

17. COMMUNICATION AND OUTREACH

The Chair recalled the Communication Strategy adopted at NAMMCO 25. She noted that many communication and outreach activities had taken place since then, with the launching of the new

website, presence on social media and new publications on the way. The Chair thanked the Secretariat for their continued outreach efforts.

[NAMMCO/27/20](#) presented an overview of the communication and outreach activities since NAMMCO 26.

17.1 WEBSITE

Enoksen (Secretariat) gave an update on the changes made to the website and the species sites. The internal structure and the organisation of the different pages and subpages were modified to make the navigation more logical and easier and to facilitate access to meeting documents (e.g., increased use of menus). The library was reorganised and more transversal links between pages were added, with species-relevant documents linked to the species page. Species-pages were, however, still missing for some presently non-hunted species.

Nammco.no tripled its number of first-time visitors from 2017 to 2018; in parallel the feed from Organic Search (i.e. reaching nammco.no from the web) increased from 26% to 56%. This clear trend was positive, showing that NAMMCO was becoming more visible on the web. Some of the most popular pages were the marine mammals and individual species pages, suggesting that people were also using the nammco.no as a source of information.

The Council welcomed the improvements made to the website, which render the platform easier to navigate, as well as the increasing visibility.

It is difficult for the Secretariat to evaluate how easy different items are to find and Desportes suggested that anyone encountering a difficulty should report the issue to the Secretariat, so improvements could be continued. She also noted that having a dynamic and interesting website requires input from the NAMMCO members in terms of news, blogs, pictures, videos, etc.

Canada complimented NAMMCO for the website, noting that it is both inviting and user-friendly and contains a wealth of information.

17.2 SOCIAL MEDIA

The General Secretary reported that the NAMMCO Facebook profile had gained viewers, engagements and “likes” at a steady pace, reaching a level which was reasonable compared to similar organisations. The posts were both internal information (related to NAMMCO, meetings, projects, new assessments, activities) and external news related to marine mammal conservation-related issues, scientific publications, conferences, etc.

NAMMCO also joined Twitter in September 2018.

Most internal stories posted on Facebook and Twitter were published as trailers to longer news, articles and release of reports on the website, thus supporting the visitor flow to the website.

In order to widen and diversify the pool of stories available for all platforms, the General Secretary suggested that stories and news could be posted by national contacts in their own language.

The Faroe Islands thanked the Secretariat for their continued efforts to increase the visibility of the organisation and improve access to and navigation on nammco.no. Outreach should be seen in terms of the balance between effort and results. The website should be prioritised, as a source of credible, reliable and updated information. Its continual update should be the overarching priority. Increased visibility would come from an increasing traffic to the website, which would be facilitated by a high-ranking placement in the search results page of search engines. This placement should be optimised with so-called Search Engine Optimisation (SEO) and the Faroe Islands suggested that the texts for the website be prepared and reviewed using these methods.

Norway also thanked the Secretariat for their work and appreciated the profile it was building for the organisation. Facebook and Twitter were likely more appealing for some than the website, which represented a more static interface, and they should remain active. It supported the posting in national

language, although this required some translation for transparency, at least an introductory text in English. Norway suggested that the discussion on outreach be taken up by the Performance Review ad hoc Working Group, where cost and benefits of different activities should be further examined.

17.3 OUTREACH ACTIVITIES

The General Secretary provided an update on other outreach activities since NAMMCO 26. The Secretariat had actively participated (organiser and presenter) in different conferences and events (NAMMCO/27/17 and 20).

Besides the activities mentioned under agenda item 16.2, the Secretariat attended and gave presentations on the work of NAMMCO or more thematic subjects at the Gujarat International Maritime Law Academy (Gujarat, IN), the Fjord and Coast Flagship event organised by the FRAM Centre (Tromsø, NO), the 20th Seminar of the French Stranding Network, the Joint IMR/NAMMCO Harbour Porpoise Symposium (Tromsø, NO), and the joint NAMMCO/ Tromsø University (UiT) Student Symposium (Tromsø, NO).

The Secretariat took the initiative of arranging with UiT a Marine Mammal Student Symposium in Tromsø, so the Norwegian international community of marine mammal students could be presented with the work of NAMMCO and the sharing of projects, issues and results would be facilitated.

The Secretariat contributed regularly to the Regional Fishery Body Secretariats' Network's newsletter informing on NAMMCO's work on conservation and management of marine mammals and highlighting ongoing priorities and themes.

Desportes noted that it had been interesting and fruitful to expose NAMMCO's work and issues to new and not necessarily "like-minded" fora (e.g. Seminar of the French Stranding Network) and people unfamiliar with the organisation. Presenting facts in a logical sequence, focussing on marine mammals as food resources with minimal environmental impact within a global ecosystem perspective had proven to be a very effective way to disseminate information on NAMMCO's work and the contribution of marine mammals to food security. Desportes felt that, notably because of the discourse on climate change, more and more people seem ready to recognise that the major concerns for the marine environment are not whaling and sealing at present rates and that environmental problems are global.

17.4 SCIENTIFIC PUBLICATIONS

Wickson presented an update on the NAMMCO Scientific Publications. Volume 10 on "[*Age estimation of marine mammals with a focus on monodontids*](#)" had finally been published, and the next volume "[*North Atlantic Sightings Surveys – Counting whales in the North Atlantic 2002-2016*](#)" presenting analyses from the 2007 and 2015 NASS and the Norwegian mosaic surveys was well underway, with two papers published and already 7 under peer-review or subsequent revision.

The UiT Open Journal Systems tools permitted a digitalized publishing process from first submission to publication, which facilitated and systematised the process.

She noted that the NAMMCO members should be aware of and prepare for the Science Europe Plan S, an initiative for Open Access science publishing by 2020, which involves mandatory criteria for Open Access journals and platforms, with all data needed to be available in an open repository.

17.5 COMMUNICATION PLANS

The Chair reminded the Council that the Communication and Outreach Strategy (COS) adopted by NAMMCO 25 provided an overarching framework for NAMMCO's communication and outreach work and required "Defining and implementing a shorter-term communication plan, the first one for 2017-2018". NAMMCO 25 endorsed a communication plan (CP) for 2017-2018 and NAMMCO 27 should review the status of its implementation and endorse a CP for 2019-2020.

The Secretariat had prepared a review of the implementation and developed a new plan, taking into account the experience gained under the implementation of CP1 ([NAMMCO/27/21](#)).

17.5.1 Review of the implementation of the Communication Plan 2017-2018

The General Secretary presented the status of the implementation.

The priorities of the COS were 1) allocating stable resources to communication; 2) boosting the website activity by implementing a blogging practice and regular updates; 3) channelling visitors from social media to the website; 4) defining and implementing a shorter-term communication plan, the first one for 2017-2018.

A Communication Plan had been defined and significant, although varying, resources had been allocated to the communication and outreach activities since 2016, with over NOK 430 000 over the two-year period, and an annual average of NOK 190 000 for the period 2016-2020.

A blogging practice had not been implemented, but the website had been updated, although not fully yet, with regular news and release of new documents. Visitors had been channelled to the website as indicated under agenda item 17.2. Several planned activities had not been carried out, notably optimising and creating marine mammal related pages on Wikipedia and creating an educational site dedicated to children and youth. The input from the NAMMCO community in outreach material remained very low.

In conclusion, progress had been made, resulting in increased visibility and number of persons contacting NAMMCO. Several essential elements (e.g., completion and update of nammco.no), however, remained to be implemented, in part due to the lack of dedicated and specialised human resources at the Secretariat. Pursuing NAMMCO's communication and outreach effort and bringing it to a level where it began to snowball required a) the Organisation's will, demonstrated through the allocation of stable and predictable resources; and b) the involvement of the NAMMCO community.

COMMENTS AND DISCUSSION

The Chair thanked Desportes for preparing the review of the Communication Plan (CP) and noted that 2018 had been an especially demanding year for the Secretariat with an extensive added workload related to the Performance Review Process as well as the lack of a Scientific Secretary for six months.

17.5.2 Communication Plan 2019-2020

Desportes presented CP2 2019-2020, which was developed, drawing upon the COS and based on the experience gained with the implementation of CP1.

CP2 is articulated around presenting whaling and sealing in a global environmental context. Disseminating information and increasing NAMMCO visibility should be attempted through four main actions

- Complete species sections and maintain general updates of nammco.no
- Increase Social media activity through regular posts on Twitter & Facebook, connecting to nammco.no
- Participate in high profile events
- Update Wikipedia sites on NAMMCO and marine mammal species

The website nammco.no remains the most important information platform for the organisation, and the hub and umbrella of all internal communication activities. The top priority was its completion (missing species page) and continual updates regarding the work of NAMMCO committees, taking into account search engine optimisation.

COMMENTS AND DISCUSSION

The Chair thanked Desportes and the Secretariat for formulating the second leg of the implementation of the NAMMCO COS and for their continued effort towards a better communication and a wider outreach.

The Council commended the development of CP2 and **agreed** with its prioritisation to keep the website and its update as its pivot. It **endorsed** CP2, noting that the NAMMCO COS should be reviewed in relation to the follow-up of the Performance Review recommendations. It **tasked** the Secretariat to work towards its implementation of CP2 and **encouraged** the support of the NAMMCO community.

The Chair noted that the COS required that a SWOT on communication activities be performed at the end of the first 2-year communication plan. The Secretariat was **tasked** to undertake this analysis to be presented to Council 28 under the guidance and support of the FAC.

17.6 OTHER BUSINESS

Japan mentioned that, with a view to achieving sustainable use of aquatic living resources through proper conservation and management, it considered it indispensable to have an opportunity for close in-person meetings to share new progress, discuss potential strategies for coping with the issues of concern and establish possible common course of action among sustainable use countries. Therefore, as in previous years, Japan would be hosting the “Meeting on Sustainable Use of Aquatic Living Resources” so-called Sustainable Use Meeting, in Tokyo, on 11 and 12 July this year. Japan believed that this long continued unique event could also serve as a good opportunity for NAMMCO to secure communication and thus strengthen collaboration with other sustainable use countries. An invitation for the Meeting will be extended to NAMMCO members and Japan would highly appreciate the participation of representatives from all member countries in this important meeting.

The Council thanked Japan for the information and intended invitation.

18. ANY OTHER BUSINESS

The Chair announced that the contract of the General Secretary had been renewed for a second four-year term, and thanked Desportes for her engaged work, energy, initiatives and new thinking during her first term. The Council and delegates complimented Desportes and wished her all the best for her new term.

Japan reiterated that after its withdrawal from the ICRW and in accordance with Article 8 of the Convention, it will terminate the two whale research programs conducted in the Antarctic Ocean (the 4th research cruise of NEWREP-A concluded in March) and in the western North Pacific (the 3rd research activities started in April will conclude in June). Japan would however continue to collect scientific data through commercial whaling and its research programs with non-lethal methods even after the resumption of commercial whaling. In order to pursue a science-based approach for the management of marine living resources including marine mammals, Japan would continue to provide scientific information derived from its commercial whaling and research activities to relevant international organisations including NAMMCO.

19. CLOSING ARRANGEMENTS

19.1 ELECTION OF OFFICERS

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

Sanderson thanked the Parties for their confidence and expressed her pleasure at having the opportunity to work closely with NAMMCO again. She looked forward to maintaining close contacts with all members and the Secretariat.

19.2 PRESS RELEASE

A press release, summarising the main issues and decisions of the 2019 Council Meeting was adopted (Appendix 6 and [web portal](#)).

19.3 NEXT MEETING AND CLOSING OF THE MEETING

The next meeting will be hosted by the Secretariat in Norway at a venue and date to be determined.

The Outgoing Chair, Amalie Jessen, thanked everyone for their work and input during the past two years. Norway, seconded by the other Parties, thanked Jessen for her able chairing of the meeting and of the Commission for the last two years. The Faroe Islands, on behalf of all, presented Jessen with a gift of traditional Faroese silverwork in appreciation of her efforts.

The Chair, on behalf of all participants, thanked the Faroe Islands for their hospitality and excellent facilities, the Secretariat for their work and dedicated support, and all the delegates for a constructive and productive meeting. She welcomed Sanderson as the new Chair and declared the meeting closed.

The Report of the 27th Council Meeting of NAMMCO was adopted by correspondence on 11 June 2019.

APPENDIX 1: LIST OF PARTICIPANTS

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APPENDIX 2: AGENDA

Agenda Items

1. **Opening Procedures**
 - 1.1 Welcome address
 - 1.2 Admission of observers
 - 1.3 Opening statements
 - 1.4 Adoption of agenda
 - 1.5 Meeting arrangements
2. **Performance Review**
 - 2.1 Presentation of the Report by the Chair of the Panel
 - 2.2 Discussion and actions arising
3. **Finance and Administration**
 - 3.1 Report of the Finance and Administration Committee (FAC)
 - 3.2 Audited accounts 2018
 - 3.3 Budget 2019 and forecast budget 2020
 - 3.4 Other business
4. **National & Annual Progress Reports**
 - 4.1 Proposed revision to NPR reporting from CHM, CIO & BYCELS
5. **Scientific Committee (SC)**
 - 5.1 Report of the Scientific Committee
 - 5.1.1 Overall work in 2018
 - 5.1.2 Cooperation with other organisations
 - 5.1.3 Proposed workplan for 2019-2020
 - 5.1.4 Other business
 - 5.2 Adoption of priorities and workplan for the SC in 2019-2020
 - 5.3 Other business
6. **Committee on Hunting Methods (CHM)**
 - 6.1 Report of the Committee on Hunting Methods
 - 6.2 Adoption of workplan
 - 6.3 Other business
7. **Committee on Inspection and Observation (CIO)**
 - 7.1 Report of the Committee on Inspection and Observation
 - 7.2 The joint NAMMCO Control Scheme
 - 7.2.1 Review of the Implementation
 - 7.2.2 Observation activities in 2019
 - 7.3 Adoption of workplan
 - 7.4 Other business
8. **Working Group on By-catch, Entanglements and Live Strandings (BYCELS)**
 - 8.1 Report of the Working Group on By-Catch, Entanglements and Live Strandings
 - 8.2 Adoption of workplan
 - 8.3 Other business

9. **Joint Management Committees (MCJ)**
 - 9.1 Report of the Joint meeting of the Management Committees
 - 9.2 Other business
10. **Management Committee for Cetaceans (MCC)**
 - 10.1 Report of the Management Committee for Cetaceans
 - 10.2 Other business
11. **Management Committee for Seals and Walruses (MCSW)**
 - 11.1 Report of the Management Committee for Seals and Walruses
 - 11.2 Update on EU seal ban and Inuit exemption
 - 11.2.1 Greenland
 - 11.2.2 Canada/Nunavut
 - 11.3 Other business
12. **Environmental Questions & Ecosystem Approach to management**
13. **New Requests for Advice from the Council**
14. **New Proposals for Conservation and Management**
15. **Marine Mammals as Food Resources (MMFR)**
 - 15.1 Life cycle assessment – utilisation of seals in Greenland
 - 15.2 Other business
16. **External Relations**
 - 16.1 Cooperation with non-member countries
 - 16.2 Cooperation with international organisations
 - 16.3 Other business
17. **Communication and Outreach**
 - 17.1 Website
 - 17.2 Social media
 - 17.3 Outreach activities
 - 17.4 Scientific publications
 - 17.5 Communication Plans
 - 17.6 Other business
18. **Any other business**
19. **Closing Arrangements**
 - 19.1 Election of Officers
 - 19.2 Press release
 - 19.3 Next meeting

APPENDIX 3: LIST OF DOCUMENTS

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NAMMCO/27/03	List of Documents	All
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NAMMCO/27/05	Report of the Finance and Administration Committee	3.1
NAMMCO/27/06	Audited accounts 2018	3.2
NAMMCO/27/07	Budget 2019 and forecast budget 2020	3.3
NAMMCO/27/08	Report of the Scientific Committee	5.1
NAMMCO/27/09	Report of the Committee on Hunting Methods	6.1
NAMMCO/27/10	Report of the Committee on Inspection and Observation	7.1
NAMMCO/27/11	Proposal for a revised Observation Scheme	7.2
NAMMCO/27/12	Report of the Working Group on By-catch, Entanglements and Live Strandings	8.1
NAMMCO/27/13	Report of the Joint Management Committees	9.1
NAMMCO/27/14	Report of the Management Committee for Cetaceans	10.1
NAMMCO/27/15	Report of the Management Committee for Seals and Walruses	11.1
NAMMCO/27/16	MMFR – Report of the LCA pilot study: “Local seal or imported meat? – LCA of environmental impacts of food choices in Greenland”	15.1
NAMMCO/27/17	External Relations	16.2
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National and Annual Progress Reports		
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NPR/IS-2018	National Progress Report Iceland – 2018	4
NPR/NO-2018	National Progress Report Norway – 2018	4
NPR/CA-17	National Progress Report Canada – 2017	4
NPR/JP-2016-17-small	National Progress Report Japan – 2016-17 – small cetaceans	4
NPR/JP-2017-18-large	National Progress Report Japan – 2017-18 – large cetaceans	4
NPR/RU-2018	National Progress Report Russian Federation – 2017-18	4
APR/MA-2018	Annual Progress Report Makivik Corporation – 2018	4
APR/NTI-2018	Annual Progress Report Nunavut Tunngavik Inc. – 2018	4
NPR/C&BC&S 2018	NPR Catches, by-catches & strandings 2018 – NAMMCO	4

APPENDIX 4: OPENING ADDRESS AND STATEMENTS

OPENING ADDRESS FROM THE FAROESE MINISTER OF FOREIGN AFFAIRS AND TRADE, POUL MICHELSEN

Madam Chair, distinguished delegates, observers, ladies and gentlemen.

Let me begin by wishing you all a very warm welcome to the Faroe Islands and to our capital, Tórshavn. It is a great pleasure for me to open the Twenty Seventh Annual Meeting of the North Atlantic Marine Mammal Commission.

It has been nine years since the Faroe Islands last hosted the annual meeting of NAMMCO. I am very pleased that we can host again during my time as Minister for Foreign Affairs and Trade.

For the Faroe Islands, taking an active part in regional fisheries management organisations has high priority. This includes NAMMCO, which has a special importance for the Faroe Islands, for a number of reasons.

NAMMCO is the only international body for cooperation on the conservation and management of all marine mammals, including seals and small whales, such as the pilot whales (*grindahvalir*) that we have used here for centuries. NAMMCO was created to fill this gap in international cooperation.

For conservation of shared resources of the sea, international cooperation is much more likely to work best on a regional, rather than a global level.

Before countries can work effectively together on any issue, we first have to be sure that we are all talking about the same thing. NAMMCO member countries agree that whales and seals are resources which can and should be used sustainably for the benefit of our peoples and economies.

Working through NAMMCO fulfils the requirements of the UN Law of the Sea for states to cooperate through appropriate international organisations. 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.”

Our common goal is to make sure that our use of whales and seals is sustainable. We do not need to make unnecessary distinctions between commercial and non-commercial activities. We just need to base our decisions on the best available scientific advice.

Our unique form of whaling in the Faroes is largely non-commercial - that is the way it has developed over centuries as a part of Faroese food culture. But we also fully respect the rights of others to trade commercially in their marine mammal resources, also on international markets.

We have seen how a global organisation, the International Whaling Commission, is still unable to find common ground on the management of whales as resources. After nearly four decades, the global ban on commercial whaling is still in place. This is because many of the IWC members do not consider whales as resources and have blocked decisions on sustainable whaling quotas.

By doing this, they are actually leaving whales out of the UN’s sustainable development goals, and they are ignoring the rights of peoples to benefit from their own natural resources. This is unacceptable. Even if countries do not themselves consume marine mammals, they should respect the rights of others to do so.

This is also why the Government of the Faroe Islands fully understands and respects Japan’s recent decision to leave the IWC and resume commercial whaling in its own waters. We welcome Japan’s continued interest and participation as an observer in the work of NAMMCO. I am sure there are many ways in which this cooperation can become even more active and mutually beneficial. I know that Japan has seen NAMMCO as a model for setting up a sister organisation in the North Pacific, and I would like to wish Japan all success in making this happen.

I believe that the time has come for the Faroe Islands to review our position as a part of Denmark's membership of the IWC.

We would also like to see Canada and the Russian Federation take the next step, after many years as valued observers in NAMMCO, and join us as full members as soon as possible.

Ladies and gentlemen,

After 27 years, NAMMCO remains just as valuable and necessary as it was in 1992, when the Faroe Islands signed the founding agreement, alongside Norway, Iceland and Greenland. Since then it has grown into an organisation that is respected for the quality and credibility of its scientific and other technical assessments and advice. This is the core of NAMMCO's work and must continue to be given high priority.

The first ever independent Performance Review of NAMMCO has just been completed and will be presented here today. We will be listening carefully to the Panel's conclusions and recommendations about how we can build on what NAMMCO has achieved so far.

Finally, I would like to say that I am very encouraged to see more balanced information on whaling and sealing in the international media in recent years. I take this as a sign that people have become better informed and are more interested in the cultural context of food production. More and more people want to make sustainable choices in their own consumption patterns. And more people are beginning to understand what we have known in the North Atlantic for a very long time – that living marine resources, including marine mammals, are among the most environmentally friendly sources of food available.

I wish you a very productive meeting and I hope you will all enjoy the rest of your week in the Faroe Islands.

Thank you.

OPENING STATEMENT FROM GREENLAND

Minister, Madam Chair, ladies and gentlemen.

Thank you for the warm welcome we have received here in Tórshavn. This meeting marks the 27th time the North Atlantic Marine Mammal Commission (NAMMCO) is gathered to address issues on the conservation and management of marine mammals. Through our joint work effort, we have all improved our management systems for the sustainable utilisation of marine resources.

Performance Review

The external independent Performance Review of the Commission is now finalised. Greenland hopes that the initiative together with an internal SWOT-analysis process will help strengthen our efforts to improve conservation and management of marine mammals. And maybe in a not so far future we can look back at capacity building and improvement of the Organisation itself based on recommendations from the Performance review.

The best available knowledge

The knowledge on marine mammal stocks is constantly growing hereby also improving the management advice. The foundation hereof is the tremendous time and effort spent collecting data and doing fieldwork by the scientific community in collaboration with local hunters and fishermen. Greenland holds the view that the best available knowledge is accomplished when the two knowledge systems of local, indigenous knowledge and scientific data is combined and supplement each other in the decision-making processes.

Food security

Greenland exists mostly by the sea and from the sea. Marine resources have great cultural and socio-economic significance to families in the coastal communities. Greenland is therefore dedicated to sustainable development, effective and prudent stewardship and management of the marine food resources. We see the marine resources as a source for solving food security, not only in Greenland, but also worldwide and have been happy to participate in a Life Cycle Assessment looking into the benefits of locally produced meat from for instance marine mammals.

NAMMCO has through its lifetime been presented with challenges regarding climate change, interactions with fisheries, hunting methods, tourism and public opinion. In recent years national legislation from outside of the NAMMCO area has had a large impact locally in Greenland as well as in other sealing nations. Greenland is grateful for the continued support and dedication shown by the member countries and observers. The desire to improve has always been there and we believe this is the backbone of a Regional Fisheries Management Organisation.

We hope for a positive and constructive meeting.

Qujanaq – Thank you.

OPENING STATEMENT FROM ICELAND

Minister, Madam Chair, delegates, observers, ladies and gentlemen.

It is with great pleasure that the Icelandic delegation attends the Annual Meeting of NAMMCO here in Tórshavn.

Iceland values its membership in NAMMCO and the close cooperation between the NAMMCO countries regarding marine resources is of great importance to us.

As you know, Iceland resumed its commercial whaling in 2006 after a 21-year break. All commercial whaling ceased in 1986 following the decision by the International Whaling Commission (IWC) on the so-called moratorium on commercial whaling. This year's sustainable catch limits for common minke and fin whales followed the advice of the Marine and Freshwater Research Institute for a catch of 161 fin whales and 217 minke whales. These catch levels are in accordance with the advice provided by the Scientific Committee of NAMMCO.

In January the Institute of Economic Studies at the University of Iceland published a report on the macroeconomic impacts of whaling in Iceland. The main conclusions of the report are that continued whaling in Iceland is beneficial from a national economical point of view.

Iceland places great emphasis on sustainable management of all living marine resources. Sustainable management of marine mammals is not only important to Iceland, but it is crucial for all of the NAMMCO member states. The main basis for Iceland's economic welfare has been utilising the living resources of the sea and therefore the international cooperation within NAMMCO in this field is very important. The work done within NAMMCO has made valuable contributions to the conservation and sustainable management of marine mammals, not least through the work of the Scientific Committee.

In this respect we note the NAMMCO performance review that will be introduced at this meeting. It is important that we study carefully the outcome of the review and come up with a realistic workplan to draw lessons and implement necessary changes to the way we operate our organisation. This can be a vital opportunity to improve and strengthen NAMMCO's work even further

Iceland is pleased to note the diversified professional work conducted by the Scientific Committee. We particularly welcome the review of the many abundance estimates of cetaceans resulting from the NASS-2015 survey. Stock assessments of fin and minke whales finalised by the committee in 2017, have now resulted in catch limits for the period 2019-2023. Iceland thanks the Scientific Committee for its review of the MareFrame project and encourages the suggested further work in developing this

ambitious research programme concerning marine mammal fisheries interactions. If funding can be secured the programme is likely to become a major step forward in this field on a global scale.

Iceland also welcomes the response of the Scientific Committee regarding the Council's request for consideration of general management models for large cetaceans, and estimation of bycatch rates for marine mammals. As a response to decreasing stocks of coastal seals, Iceland has significantly increased the research activities in this field and is working towards improved legislation.

Madam Chair, ladies and gentlemen,

I would like to end this opening statement by expressing my hope that we will have constructive discussions this week that will lead to a fruitful outcome of this meeting.

Thank you.

OPENING STATEMENT FROM NORWAY

Minister, Madame Chair, delegates, observers and guests - dear friends.

First of all, thank you to the Faroe Islands for hosting our meeting and thank you for a very nice reception yesterday evening - it is a great pleasure to be in beautiful Tórshavn and at this very nice venue.

NAMMCO at 27 is a well-established organisation, constructive in its work and forward looking. Norway would like to express its sincere gratitude to all the parties, and the secretariat, for contributing to this unique environment of cooperation.

The management of marine mammals represents challenges of various kinds. In NAMMCO we meet these with a solid combination of the best available science and the knowhow of the hunter. This knowledgebase puts NAMMCO in a hands-on position for effective management.

It is Norway's goal to secure and further develop our organisation in this respect.

To this end we are particularly happy to see a strengthening of the cooperation between the Scientific Committee and the Hunting Committee, thereby expressing and consolidating the user knowledge dimension in NAMMCO.

Far reaching discussions are ongoing for a revised Observation Scheme for NAMMCO. The revised scheme will provide a mechanism for NAMMCO to evaluate whether recommendations adopted by NAMMCO are implemented in national regulations and as such, adhered to. Furthermore, the revised Observation Scheme will provide a foundation for the member countries to evaluate the recommendations and as such contribute to the improvement of the national regulation of hunting activities in member countries. It is also of utmost importance to make a clear distinction between observation and inspection, in a way that clarifies that observers appointed by NAMMCO do not have any mandate that includes elements of control. Norway supports the proposal for new provisions for the Observation Scheme.

Norway welcomes the report from the Performance Review Panel and acknowledge the Panel for constructive comments and recommendations. We look forward to a close scrutiny of the report in our organisation.

Finally, I would like to focus on what looks to be a challenge to the NAMMCO community in a not too distant future. We rely on experts. Experts on marine mammals, experts on hunting methods and a variety of other disciplines. We are depended on a steady recruitment to these fields in the member countries, in observer countries and other interested parties in order to be able to give high quality advice also in the future. We are currently seeing a trend where this is not the situation. This is worrisome and I would urge all interested Parties to give this the necessary attention.

Progress reports have also this year been submitted by observer states. This is a sign of strengthening cooperation between our countries that Norway very much welcomes.

I look forward to and wish you all a fruitful meeting.

Thank you.

OPENING STATEMENT FROM CANADA

Madame Chair, distinguished delegates, fellow observers,

Canada is pleased to participate as an observer in this 27th meeting of the NAMMCO Council, and thanks the Faroe Islands for hosting this meeting in Tórshavn. Canada recognizes the value of these meetings to inform our positions on the research, management and conservation of marine mammals in the North Atlantic.

As you know, Indigenous subsistence harvests of marine mammals occur in communities across Northern Canada. In areas defined by settled Land Claims Agreements, co-management with Inuit is a cornerstone of Canada's approach to the conservation and sustainable use of marine mammals.

Sustainable harvest advice for marine mammals is based on the best available scientific information, Inuit Qaujimagatuqangit (IQ), and local knowledge to provide long-term social and economic benefits to the communities that depend on these aquatic resources.

Looking beyond our waters, Canada values its collaboration with international partners and organizations on the science, conservation and management of marine mammals. Canada recognizes NAMMCO as a credible and respected international forum. Through NAMMCO, regional partners are able to coordinate their approaches to the conservation, sustainable management and study of shared marine mammal stocks in the North Atlantic.

Canada looks forward to positive discussions over the next two days at the 27th NAMMCO Council Meeting.

Thank you, Merci, Nakurmiik, Qujannamiik, Matna, and Koana.

OPENING STATEMENT FROM JAPAN

At the outset, Japan would like to thank the Faroese Home Government for hosting the NAMMCO Council meeting, with great hospitality and efficiency. We are always happy to recognize a series of great achievements of this organization in the conservation and management of marine mammals including cetaceans, and in this regard, Japan fully supports the "NUUK DECLARATION" adopted at the 25th NAMMCO Council meeting, which reaffirmed that NAMMCO fulfils its role as an appropriate international organization in accordance with the UNCLOS.

Japan is proud of having contributed to NAMMCO with scientific inputs including presentation of findings from Japan's whale research programs and provision of data for advancing the animal welfare issues. Japan wishes to further contribute to and strengthen cooperation with this organization.

As you all are aware, Japan decided, towards commercial whaling to be resumed in July 2019 after a 30-year absence, to withdraw from the International Convention for the Regulation of Whaling (ICRW), in line with Japan's basic policy of promoting sustainable use of aquatic living resources based on scientific evidence. From July 2019, after the withdrawal comes into effect on June 30, Japan will conduct commercial whaling within Japan's territorial sea and its exclusive economic zone.

Japan remains committed to international cooperation for the proper management of marine living resources including cetaceans, including through cooperation with international organizations such as NAMMCO and the IWC, even with its status as an observer. Japan will continue its contribution to the science-based management of whales and whaling in sustainable manner.

In this regard, Japan will continue to engage with NAMMCO by sharing information on Japan's future commercial whaling and the scientific data thereby collected, and strongly wishes to strengthen collaboration with NAMMCO for management and conservation of whale resources, including the establishment of science-based sustainable catch limits.

After its withdrawal from the ICRW, Japan will cease the two whale research programs it has conducted in the Antarctic Ocean and in the western North Pacific in accordance with the Article 8 of the ICRW. Japan will however continue to collect scientific data through commercial whaling and its research programs with non-lethal methods such as sighting and satellite tagging even after the resumption of commercial whaling. In order to materialize its science-based approach, Japan is eager to enhance collaboration with NAMMCO and its member states.

Finally, Japan would like to reiterate its strong view that collaboration between Japan and NAMMCO is a vital force to promote conservation and sustainable use of marine living resources including cetaceans in international fora, which will eventually turn into wider cooperation among countries that share the basic position of promoting sustainable use of aquatic living resources. At this Council meeting, Japan is willing to participate in every discussion which would further promote this important collaboration.

Thank you for your attention.

OPENING STATEMENT FROM MAKIVIK CORPORATION

Madam Chair, NAMMCO members, and other observers

Makivik Corporation, on behalf of the Inuit of Nunavik, Northern Quebec, is happy to be an observer to the 27th meeting of NAMMCO in Tórshavn. We would like to thank Tórshavn and the Faroe Islands for hosting this meeting. 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 been here but unfortunately had another engagement.

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 and culture, and livelihood, within the context of comprehensive Canadian Land Claims Agreements. This includes the use of both science and Inuit Knowledge in marine mammal management and decision-making.

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 and science perspectives, hopes that it can contribute in meaningful ways to these proceedings.

Nakurmiik, thank you, merci.

OPENING STATEMENT FROM NUNAVUT TUNNGAVIK INCORPORATED (NTI)

Madam Chair, delegates, observers, ladies and gentlemen,

Firstly, we thank our hosts. It is a great pleasure to be in the Faroe Islands and to participate in this meeting.

Nunavut Tunngavik Incorporated represents the Inuit in the Nunavut Settlement Area. The Nunavut Agreement was signed in 1993 by the Inuit of Nunavut and the Government of Canada and is protected by the Canadian Constitution.

NTI's mission is to foster Inuit economic, social and cultural well-being through the implementation of the Nunavut Land Claims Agreement (NLCA). NTI implements Inuit obligations of the NLCA and ensures

that other parties to the NLCA meet their obligations. NTI advocates for the recognition and protection of Inuit hunting rights, conservation principles, and promotes the participation of Inuit in all aspects of wildlife management, including research.

Inuit rely on wildlife for subsistence, cultural and spiritual value. Inuit support utilization of wildlife through sound management. For Inuit, conserving wildlife is about ensuring that Inuit can pass on traditions, knowledge and values to future generations.

NTI appreciates the effort by NAMMCO to enhance the research, education and management of marine mammals. NTI continues to participate in various NAMMCO workshops including the most recent Atlantic Walrus Workshop.

Finally, NTI has also been implementing an Inuit Marine Monitoring Network as we have heard numerous concerns about increasing ship traffic close to Nunavut communities. NTI has also been engaged in a pilot project to test for the presence of Trichinella in Atlantic Walrus. We look forward to working together with NAMMCO members to address current and emerging issues.

Thank-you,

OPENING STATEMENT FROM THE INTERNATIONAL WHALING COMMISSION

Madame Chair, NAMMCO Commissioners, Madame General Secretary and members of the Secretariat, and Fellow Observers.

On behalf of the International Whaling Commission (IWC), I wish to express my gratitude for the invitation to join this week's meeting of the Council of the North Atlantic Marine Mammal Commission. Given our common mission of cetacean science and stewardship, this Council meeting is an excellent opportunity to redouble our efforts to make the most of the potential benefits of collaboration.

We are grateful to the General Secretary and Deputy Secretary for engaging with us a few weeks ago in preparation for this Council meeting. We have already begun to explore how we might expand on our areas of mutual interest and establish regular communications to keep abreast of various developments.

The IWC concluded its 67th meeting in Florianopolis, Brazil in September of last year by taking a number of key decisions including in areas of mutual interest with NAMMCO and topics that will be discussed at this Council meeting.

I will highlight two of these briefly:

1) Aboriginal Subsistence Whaling (ASW): quotas proposed by the four ASW communities of the IWC were adopted by the Commission and are renewable every six years at the same levels unless there are changes in the scientific information or subsistence harvest request. The Scientific Committee endorsed the proposed harvest limits, carryover provisions, and other aspects of the hunts as consistent with the conservation objectives of the Commission. The IWC has established a robust long-term approach ensuring that ASW does not impact the health of the populations of the harvested species whilst meeting the needs of native peoples. Funding has also been provided to address welfare aspects of the ASW hunt and we note the significant work by NAMMCO on improving the welfare of hunting.

2) Bycatch: The Commission endorsed the continuation of the work of the IWC Bycatch Mitigation Initiative in addressing one of the greatest direct threats to cetaceans, led by our IWC Bycatch Coordinator and generously funded by voluntary donations from member governments and NGOs. We are extremely pleased that the Bycatch Expert Panel will be meeting in person for the first time prior to the Scientific Committee meetings in Nairobi next month, as part of a wider Workshop on bycatch in the Indian Ocean. We are also excited to join with NAMMCO in inputting to the work of the Food and Agriculture organization to develop best practices to minimize marine mammal bycatch.

This NAMMCO Council meeting will also discuss other areas in which the IWC is keen to enhance collaboration including strandings and entanglement response. The IWC has developed general, rather than region-specific guidance on entanglement response given the myriad issues that can come up in different regions of the world, and we welcome the continuation of joint training with NAMMCO member countries in the Arctic. We have a mutual interest in strandings and euthanasia and look forward to future efforts in this area, including developing common protocols for strandings response and sampling.

The IWC's Governance Review Report will be carried forward by the Working Group on Operational Effectiveness with a workshop in summer 2019. 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. Though this differs somewhat from NAMMCO's Performance Review, the IWC is grateful for the opportunity to consider NAMMCO's report in light of our deliberations.

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 I look forward to the discussions over the next two days.

APPENDIX 5: AUDITED ACCOUNTS 2018

INCOME AN EXPENDITURE	NOK
Income	
Contributions	4,552,734
Employers Tax	249,408
NASS	318,705
MMFR	146,333
Total income	5,267,180
Expenditure	
Staff related costs	2,915,306
Internship	128,715
Rent of premises	172,503
Meetings	117,443
Travel and subsistence	196,670
Office supply	197,114
Communication & outreach	105,597
Accounts & auditing	196,378
Other expenses	20,912
Scientific Committee	171,910
Performance review	611,385
NASS	318,705
MMFR	146,333
GROM	40,050
Total expenditure	5,339,021
OPERATING RESULT	-71,841
BALANCE	
Assets	
Outstanding claims	459,996
Bank deposits	3,505,428
Total assets	3,965,424
Equity	
General Reserve	645,355
Restricted equity	600,000
Result 2018	-71,841
Total equity	1,173,514
Liabilities	
NASS	166,073
Membership contributions	2,325,110
Creditors	300,727
Total liabilities	2,791,910
TOTAL LIABILITIES AND EQUITY	3,965,424

APPENDIX 6: PRESS RELEASE

SUSTAINABLE WHALING AND SEALING ARE FULLY IN LINE WITH THE UN SDGS

The Council of NAMMCO held its 27th annual meeting in Tórshavn, Faroe Islands, on 3 and 4 April. NAMMCO is an international organisation for regional cooperation on the conservation, management and study of marine mammals in the North Atlantic, with the Faroe Islands, Greenland, Iceland and Norway as members.

In his welcome address on behalf of the Government of the Faroe Islands, Minister of Foreign Affairs and Trade, Poul Michelsen underlined the fact that 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. He also stressed the shared objectives of NAMMCO member countries: “Our common goal is to make sure that our use of whales and seals is sustainable. We do not need to make unnecessary distinctions between commercial and non-commercial activities. We just need to base our decisions on the best available scientific advice.”

HIGHLIGHTS FROM THE MEETING:

The NAMMCO Performance Review

During 2018 and 2019 an international panel of experts nominated by the UN Food and Agriculture Organisation (FAO), Northwest Atlantic Fisheries Organisation (NAFO) and International Whaling Commission (IWC) has assessed the performance of NAMMCO as a regional body for cooperation on the conservation management and study of marine mammals in the North Atlantic.

The report with recommendations was presented to the Council by the chair of the panel, Dr Caterina Fortuna, Italian Institute for Environmental Protection and Research (ISPRA), former chair of the IWC Scientific Committee. In general, the Performance Review concluded that NAMMCO is 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 will now review the detailed conclusions and recommendations of the panel and consider relevant follow-up action.

Work of the Scientific Committee

The member countries of NAMMCO are pleased with the comprehensive and professional work conducted by the Scientific Committee, including the consideration of marine mammal-fisheries interactions, and environmental impacts and production of stock assessments. In particular, the NAMMCO Council welcomed the progress made in estimating the abundance of marine mammal stocks in the North Atlantic. There are now updated estimates, based on recent sighting surveys, for most stocks of cetaceans. The latest reviews by the IUCN of the status of the fin whale and the long-finned pilot whale have resulted in a downlisting of these species on a global level. A new assessment in 2018 confirmed the status of humpback whales as LC (least concern) on the global IUCN redlist. The reviews by IUCN are i.a. based on the data from the NASS surveys coordinated by NAMMCO.

The NAMMCO Observation Scheme

The NAMMCO Observation Scheme provides a mechanism for overseeing whether recommendations made by NAMMCO are implemented and national regulations adhered to. This scheme has gone through a comprehensive internal review to assess its performance. The recommendations of this review were presented and adopted at the Council meeting.

The study: *Local seal or imported meat? – LCA of environmental impacts of food choices in Greenland*
Following the 2012 Ministerial Meeting of NAMMCO emphasizing the increased importance of marine mammals as a food resource, NAMMCO carried out in 2012-2017 the project *Marine Mammal as Food Resources*. In 2017 a pilot Life Cycle Assessment study was initiated with the Swedish Research Institute RISE: *Local seal or imported meat? – LCA of environmental impacts of food choices in Greenland*. The study quantifies the relative environmental impacts of consuming marine mammal products versus other and imported meat proteins, with Greenland as first example. The report was presented at the meeting.

ANNEX 1: REVISED PROVISIONS OF THE NAMMCO INSPECTION AND OBSERVATION SCHEME FOR THE HUNTING OF MARINE MAMMALS IN MEMBER COUNTRIES

SECTION B - INTERNATIONAL OBSERVATION SCHEME

General provisions

1. The purpose of this Observation Scheme is to collect reliable information on all kinds of hunting activities in the NAMMCO Member Countries. The objectives are to
 - a. provide a mechanism for NAMMCO to oversee whether recommendations made by NAMMCO are implemented and national regulations and adhered to
 - b. provide a foundation for the member states to evaluate whether a recommendation is serving its purpose or not
 - c. contribute to the improvement of the national regulation of hunting activities in the Member Countries
2. These objectives will be reached by NAMMCO appointing observers to observe hunting and inspection activities in NAMMCO member countries and the Committee on Inspection and Observation reviewing the observation activities and the implementation of NAMMCO recommendations in national legislations (see section 1).
3. The information collected through the Observation Scheme shall be made available to any NAMMCO body requesting it.
4. Observations of hunting activities can take place on board a vessel or on shore, including flensing, storage, landing or delivering of the catch.
5. NAMMCO/the Council decides annually the scope of observation priorities for the coming year. The Secretariat is responsible for the practical administration and coordination of these activities.
6. Deployment of observer according to this Scheme cannot be refused.

The Observer

7. "Observer" means a person who is authorized and certified by the NAMMCO member countries to observe, monitor and collect information on all hunting related activities. The observer shall be independent and impartial, and have the knowledge, skills and abilities to perform all of the duties, functions and requirements specified in this Scheme.

Duties of the Member Countries

8. Member countries shall take appropriate measures to ensure that observation of the relevant hunting activities can be carried out properly and efficiently. They shall require its hunters (cf. Section 4) to permit observers appointed by NAMMCO to perform their tasks and duties according to this Scheme.
9. Member countries, together with NAMMCO, will concur to take appropriate action to ensure safe working conditions, the protection, security and welfare of observers in the performance of their duties, consistent with international standards and guidelines.
10. Member countries shall ensure that their observers have no financial or beneficial interest in and, are paid in a manner that demonstrates financial independence from, the subject being monitored.

Duties of the observer

11. The observer shall perform such work, including for scientific purposes, as NAMMCO may request.

12. The observer shall execute their duties and functions in an unbiased manner on the basis of the guidelines adopted by NAMMCO (Appendix 2 – Guidelines to Section B). Observers are responsible to NAMMCO and can neither seek nor receive instructions from any other authority.
13. The observer has no authority of jurisdiction and cannot intervene in any activities connected with the hunting activities.
14. The observer shall check licences and relevant certificates, logbooks, all rooms on board or on land, hunting equipment and communication equipment which are relevant for the work. If an electronic monitoring system is mandatory the observer shall check the system certificates, that the seals of amplifiers and control boxes are not broken, and that the system is activated. Sealed components shall not be broken by the observer.
15. If a national inspector is present at the time of the observation, the observer shall also oversee whether the inspection is done according to national regulations.
16. The observer shall no later than 8 days after the end of the employment period submit a written report to NAMMCO on a NAMMCO observer report form.
17. The observer shall ensure confidentiality of information collected under this Scheme.
18. The observer shall introduce themselves to inspectors at sea, or in port upon arrival of the vessel.

Duties of the observation subject

19. Each hunter (cf. section 4 and 13) shall extend such cooperation and assistance as may be required to enable the observers to carry out their duties. This cooperation shall include providing the observer with such access as may be required to the hunting operation and catch, including storage, flensing site, landing or delivering site.
20. The observer is to be provided food and accommodations of a standard no less than provided to the hunters/crew.
21. The observer is to be included in all emergency drills conducted.
22. The master of a vessel shall notify the observer when an inspection party has signalled their intent to board the vessel.
23. Masters of hunting activities (cf. section 4) shall not obstruct, intimidate, interfere with, influence, bribe or attempt to bribe an observer in the performance of his/her duties.

Duties of the Secretariat

24. The Observer Scheme is administered by the Secretariat, in accordance with guidelines set down by NAMMCO.
25. The Secretariat prepares an annual report of the Observation Scheme for the review of NAMMCO. The report shall include all relevant information and comments.
26. The Secretariat shall send a copy of the observer's reports to the member country in which the observations have taken place.

GUIDELINES TO SECTION B - INTERNATIONAL OBSERVATION SCHEME

OBSERVERS

Appointment of observer

The Council appoints observers for one year at a time.

Member countries develop a list of candidates for the following year and send it to the Secretariat by 1 June. Member countries may nominate non-nationals as observers.

The list shall include information on the qualifications of the candidates. The Secretariat circulates by 15 June a combined list of suggested candidates to member countries for approval. In the event that a member country wishes to make a reservation to any candidate, this must be done before 15 August. It is understood that a reservation to the appointment of a particular candidate is a reservation to his/her appointment as a NAMMCO observer in any area of activity. The Secretariat then circulates the list of candidates approved by all member countries to the Council for appointment by 1 September.

Competence, training etc. of observers

The requirements for the professional, linguistic and safety at sea qualifications of the observers are the following: Observers must have at least the same level of professional competence as that required of inspectors in the country where the observations are to take place. Exemption from this requirement can be given by the country where the observations are to take place.

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.

In order to ensure that the persons appointed as observers are sufficiently informed about the relevant hunting regulations and the duties of national control personnel, observers shall participate in whatever training courses are compulsory for control personnel in the member countries where the observations are due to occur. If such courses are not held, or if the observer is unable for other reasons to participate in such courses, the observer must receive other relevant training, developed in co-operation between the national authorities and NAMMCO.

Duties of the observer

Observation activities can be carried out in four areas:

- observation of whaling carried out with the use of a harpoon gun or of flensing of whales taken with a harpoon gun
- observation of sealing or forms of whaling other than with harpoon guns, or the flensing of animals from such hunting
- observation of the landing/delivery of marine mammal catches
- observations of national marine mammal inspection activities

The observer must check all the points listed for the hunt observed. Check lists are developed for every specific hunt.

Reports

No later than eight days after the end of the employment period the observer must submit a written report to the NAMMCO Secretariat. The report shall consist of the individual hunt event check list, NAMMCO hunting form (active hunting days etc, statistics) The language of the report shall be either English or a Scandinavian language.

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 Control Scheme to any other parties than the Secretariat.

ADMINISTRATION OF THE SCHEME**Plans for observation and activities**

By 1 October each year the Secretariat in cooperation with CIO develops a proposal for the Council for the scope and range of observation activities during the following year in accordance with budgeted funds for these activities. The Council shall approve this proposal and appoint the observers by 1 November. The Secretariat, in co-operation with control authorities in respective member countries, then develops a specific plan for observation activities. The 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 shall only be known to the control authorities in the relevant member countries and the Secretariat.

Employment of observers

When a detailed plan of observation activities for the year is finalized, those observers who will be called upon for active observation will receive an employment contract from the Secretariat. When both parties sign this, 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. He/she shall then receive a letter from the Secretariat confirming his/her completion of duties according to the Scheme.