

NAMMCO



THE 23RD MEETING OF THE COUNCIL

REPORT

3-5 February 2015, Reykjavik, Iceland

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NAMMCO

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REPORT OF THE 23RD MEETING OF COUNCIL

3-5 February 2015, Reykjavik, Iceland

1. OPENING PROCEDURES

1.1 Welcome address

The meeting was opened with a welcoming address by the Chair of Council, Ásta Einarsdóttir (Iceland).

Following this, participants (NAMMCO/22/1) were welcomed.

1.2 Admission of Observers

The Chair welcomed all observers, noting representatives from Canada, Denmark, Japan, the Russian Federation, and in addition representatives from intergovernmental organisations: the International Whaling Commission (IWC), Northwest Atlantic Fisheries Organisation (NAFO), North East Atlantic Fisheries Commission (NEAFC) and the South East Atlantic Fisheries Organisation (SEAFO).

Regrets had been received from the EC-DG Environment, and the North Atlantic Salmon Commission (NASCO).

1.3 Opening statements

Opening statements were presented by member nations of the Faroe Islands, Greenland, Norway and Iceland; Canada, Denmark, Russia and Japan also made an opening statement. All statements are contained in Appendix 3.

1.4 Adoption of agenda

The agenda (NAMMCO/23/2) was adopted without amendments (Appendix 1). Documents relating to the agenda points are listed in Appendix 2.

1.5 Meeting arrangements

The General Secretary, Christina Lockyer, welcomed everyone on behalf of the Secretariat, and explained a number of housekeeping matters, Secretariat support available, the availability of a small meeting room for use by delegates and committees during the week, the schedule of the meeting programme and arrangements for a social event, a dinner, to be hosted by the Icelandic Ministry at the Radisson Blue Hotel Saga.

1.6 Invited speaker

A presentation entitled *The Hunting of Marine Mammals: Conflict, Consensus and a Moral Code* was given by Henry Alexander Henrysson, (Centre for Ethics, University of Iceland). A summary of this presentation is provided in Appendix 4.

There followed several questions relating to both ethical, practical and managerial matters. Henrysson was thanked for his thought-provoking and excellent presentation.

2. FINANCE AND ADMINISTRATION

2.1 Report of the Finance and Administration Committee (FAC)

The Chair of the FAC, Ole-David Stenseth (Norway), presented the report of meetings held during 2014 (NAMMCO/23/4) and 2015. There had been a meeting in January 2015 in Copenhagen where the accounts and budget had been discussed. He explained that the budget 2015 and draft budget 2016 would remain open until after the conclusion of the meetings of the Management Committees and their recommendations and requests were available.

Stenseth reported that the audited accounts from 2014 had been accepted without issues, and that there was a surplus of 337,000 NOK. He noted that it had been agreed that with respect to signatory authority for the audited accounts, the responsibility should be given to the General Secretary.

Previously, in 2013, the General Reserve had been discussed and the FAC had recommended that NAMMCO should aim for a General Reserve representing 10% of operating expenses – presently estimated to approximately NOK 600,000 – within 5 years (2018). It was thus recommended that the budget should be determined according to this plan in order to build up the General Reserve.

In reporting on T-NASS 2015, difficulties achieving financial goals had been experienced. External funding was now being sought and any results will be reported as soon as possible, the earliest being in March 2015.

A number of problems had been encountered with the Host Agreement, such as the Diplomatic ID numbers provided for staff members from outside the EU, which created difficulties in utilising the social benefits negotiated in the Host Agreement. Clarification was now needed on such items.

In relation to staff matters, a change in the existing pension scheme had been approved, in line with new regulations within Norway.

The NAMMCO website incorporating the stock status sites were being upgraded.

Amendments to the Rules of Procedure regarding membership of the Scientific Committee, allowing participation of 6 scientists per country at meetings, had been approved but required Council endorsement.

The Chair of Council invited comments to the report, and subsequently the **report was accepted and its recommendations and conclusions endorsed.**

2.2 Audited accounts 2014

The Chair highlighted that the 2014 accounts (NAMMCO/23/4.1) had closed with a surplus of 337,000 NOK. In addition the auditors' report had been received without further comment, so that the accounts were in good order.

Comments:

The accounts (NAMMCO/23/4.1; Appendix 5) were approved and **adopted** by Council.

2.3 Budget 2015 and Draft Budget 2016

The Chair introduced the 2015 budget and draft budgets for 2016 (NAMMCO/23/4.2). Explanations of the budget lines and the rationale for determining them were presented.

The special focus was on rebuilding the General Reserve which should be increased to a level of 10% of the annual operating budget in the next 5 years.

Comments:

The Council **adopted** the budget 2015 (Appendix 5) and the draft budget 2016 as contained in NAMMCO/23/4.2 revised.

2.4 Other business

None.

3. SCIENTIFIC COMMITTEE

3.1 Report of the Scientific Committee (SC)

The Chair of the Scientific Committee (Thorvaldur Gunnlaugsson, Iceland) introduced relevant parts of the SC report (NAMMCO/23/5) relating to information on Cetaceans. Regarding Working Group (WG) activities, the Catch Allocation WG on narwhal and beluga will meet again this year in March. The Large Whale Assessment WG was postponed because of the ongoing work in the IWC.

By-catches of porpoises in Iceland had decreased in the last decade. In the period 2009-2013, an average estimate of 2,000 animals per year was reported. By-catch of harbour seals was estimated 705 in 2013, and of grey seals 140 in 2013.

Reporting on the Council requests to the SC -

R.3.1.7 relating to fin whale assessment was pending completion of the IWC RMP work to be completed at IWC 66. Testing with 60% tuning is to come. A shift in distribution of fin whales around Iceland had been noted with movement further south later in the season.

R.3.3.4 relating to common minke whale assessment was pending the meeting of the Large Whale Assessment WG in late 2015. The Central stock however was lower than previously.

R.3.4.11 relating to narwhal and beluga assessment, there had been much progress on knowledge of distribution from results of satellite tagging.

R.3.4.9 relates to the Disturbance Symposium focusing on narwhal, beluga and walrus, and plans for this are going ahead for a scheduled meeting in autumn 2015.

R.3.7.2 relating to killer whales in West Greenland awaited more information. The SC had received no catch information on killer whales from Greenland. Photo ID studies had matched animals linking Iceland and the Shetlands. A switch in diet of killer whales had been noted in the Norwegian Sea.

R.3.10.1 relating to a comprehensive assessment of harbour porpoises throughout the Northeast Atlantic awaited more information from the Faroes and West Greenland on catches and abundance but may be possible after the completion of NASS 2015 (renamed this meeting from T-NASS 2015).

Studies of genetic estimates from recapture indicated that sightings of bowhead whales off West Greenland can be very negatively biased.

For blue whales, an increase had been reported around Svalbard. Biopsy sampling was ongoing around Iceland.

The Planning group for (T-)NASS 2015 had met during 2014 and currently the proposed surveys included pilot whales around the Faroes, fin whales southwest of Iceland, and common minke whales in the central area of the North Atlantic and Jan Mayen areas. Here the survey design executed by Iceland would be based on the use of mackerel boats and coastal survey vessels; however, the survey would use the Norwegian method on board. Aerial surveys were also planned. Drones were being tested for use in surveying pilot whales around the Faroes.

Comments:

Norway noted that since the SC had met, there had been an update of the (T-)NASS plans. Norway was also concerned over the by-catches in Norway, which were very high.

The vice-Chair of the Scientific Committee (Tore Haug, Norway) then introduced relevant parts of the SC report (NAMMCO/23/5) relating to information on Seals and Walrus. He noted that involvement

with the ICES Harp and Hooded seals Working Group (WGHARP) had continued (formerly the ICES/NAFO WG), and it had been proposed that a stronger and more formal affiliation with ICES should be sought in this WG. The Secretariat reported that subsequent correspondence with ICES had now resulted in the start of formalising official cooperation between ICES and NAMMCO in this working group (NAMMCO/23/INFO 01). This is also reported later under item 10.1. Seal management in Canada was currently local since the ICES-NAFO WG had dissolved, and been overtaken by WGHARP. However, now that NAMMCO will become an official partner in this WG, Canada may now revert to WGHARP for advice. Terms of Reference would be developed to include fisheries interaction and hunting in the future.

Haug reported on environmental issues of concern regarding gillnet by-catches of both harbour porpoises and also seals. The by-catches amounted to higher takes of animals than actual whaling off Norway. The By-catch WG would be scheduled back to back with the WG on Coastal Seals during 2016.

There were reports from Russian colleagues on receding ice that had resulted in reduced pupping production in the White Sea. Harp seals in East Canada now had a pup production less than half that of 4 years ago. Norway reported a reduction in pup production also in the Northeast Atlantic. Harp and hooded seals were dependent on ice for breeding, and in Svalbard there were big problems.

In Norway, grey and harbour seals were surveyed annually in different areas, with a comprehensive abundance estimate every 5 years.

For walrus, there were 3 stocks in Greenland. There had been modelling difficulties *e.g.* for the Baffin Bay stock, but now there was a recent survey to add information that may enable a revised assessment.

3.2 Trans-North Atlantic Sightings Survey (T-NASS 2015) – now NASS 2015

There was a brief presentation of the most current status of T-NASS 2015 (NAMMCO/23/6) by Jill Prewitt.

The SC recommended that the “T” be removed from T-NASS, given that there will not be coverage in the West Atlantic. The NAMMCO project remains the same, but will be called NASS-2015 going forward.

Funding

The Faroe Islands have received approval for the requested funds for both the national and extension surveys for pilot whales. Iceland has received approval for $\frac{3}{4}$ of the requested funds for both the national and extension surveys. Norway reported that the funds are available to conduct their planned mosaic survey (the national survey) but not the extension area of Jan Mayen. Greenland will likely not have more information on funding before June 2015.

A proposal for full funding of the TNASS-2015 extension surveys will be submitted by NAMMCO to the Norwegian Ministry of Foreign Affairs under the scheme “Nordområdesatsingen” before the end of February 2015. The decision on funding is expected in March. Norway and Greenland expressed that it may still be possible to plan and conduct the extension surveys with this short funding notice, but that survey platforms (ships and aircraft) may not be available. The Faroe Islands and Iceland will continue as planned regardless of the late funding decision.

Survey Area

The proposed survey areas remain the same as the proposal presented previously (Fig. 1), with the exception of the blue solid block in Northeast Greenland, which will not be conducted.

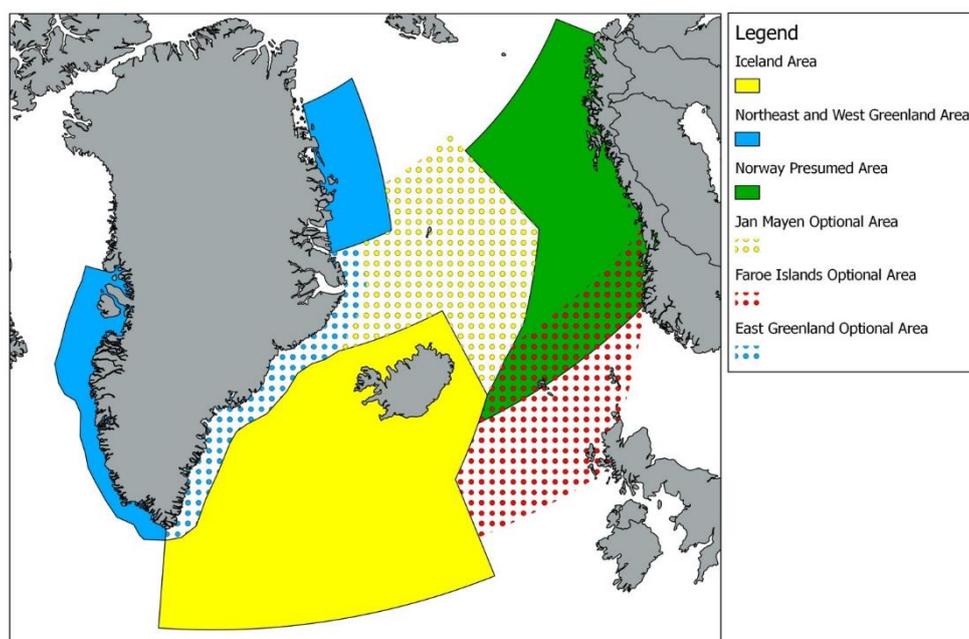


Figure 1. Extension of the T-NASS 2015 and associated surveys. The size of the areas is estimated to be 235,529 km² for Northeast Greenland, 726,044 km² for the Jan Mayen area, 2,860,193 km² for the Iceland area, 934,722 km² for the Norwegian area, ~768,235 km² for the Faroe Island area, 233,659 km² for the East Greenland area and 225,285 km² for West Greenland.

Equipment Purchases

A few key pieces of equipment that require time for testing have been purchased. These include 1) a drone and camera for the pilot whale surveys in the Faroes, 2) a voice and data recording system and 3) a device for measuring angles; both 2) and 3) are for the aerial surveys in Greenland and Iceland. These were purchased using the remaining 2014 funds for this project.

Comments:

There was agreement to rename the project NASS-2015. Some parts of the survey would go ahead in 2015 as planned but the remaining parts might be postponed. Final decisions would depend both on funding application through the Norwegian proposal being successful and also whether ship time and other logistics would be feasible at reduced notice.

3.3 Priorities and Work plan of the Scientific Committee (SC) in 2015-2016

Jill Prewitt, the Scientific Secretary, reported on the schedule of WGs recommended by the SC, and these are listed below.

Working groups

1) Walrus Working Group (WWG)

The WWG should convene a one-day meeting in March 2015 to update advice on sustainable takes of walrus in the Baffin Bay stock. If feasible the meeting could be conducted as a teleconference and participants would include Wiig (Chair), Witting, Heide-Jørgensen, Hansen, Lydersen, Acquarone, Ugarte and Stewart.

2) JCNB/NAMMCO Joint Scientific Working Group

The next JWG meeting will be held in March 2015 in Ottawa, Canada. One of the tasks at the start of the meeting is for the Catch Allocation subgroup to complete the model. The main meeting will update the assessment of narwhal and belugas.

3) Large Whale Assessment (LWA WG)

A Large Whale Assessment meeting was previously planned for the fall of 2014. This was postponed to the fall of 2015, awaiting work to be completed by the IWC on the fin and common minke whale *Implementation Reviews*. The NAMMCO LWA WG will plan on meeting in the fall of 2015 in hopes that the work on the IWC SC will be complete.

4) Disturbance Symposium

Planning for a Disturbance Symposium that will deal with the impacts of human disturbance on narwhal, beluga and walrus is underway. Preliminary plans are to hold the meeting in early October 2015 in Copenhagen. Kit Kovacs has agreed to Chair the meeting and Mads Peter Heide-Jørgensen is the NAMMCO Convenor. The primary objectives of the Symposium will be to 1) present an overview of the information currently available; and 2) make recommendations for both restrictions of anthropogenic disturbances and future studies. The conclusions will be available to stakeholders shortly after the meeting in the form of a report with specific recommendations. Participants may also be invited to submit papers stemming from the symposium for publication in a special volume of the *NAMMCO Scientific Publications* series.

Several external experts will need to be invited. A first announcement of the meeting will be sent to prospective participants soon. Prewitt reported that the University of Leeds had only recently informed about their own interest to hold a meeting on a similar topic with many of the same invited experts, but were interested in cooperation and liaison with NAMMCO. The NAMMCO SC and Symposium planning group would be consulted on this, as well as look into funding sources.

The following meetings are planned for early 2016:

5) By-catch WG

With new information available on by-catch, the SC recommended convening a By-catch Working Group. This would be a technical WG that could focus on discussing the methods that are being used to collect the data and extrapolate the results, and decide if further work is required.

Suggested Terms of Reference:

By including external expertise from fisheries and marine mammal science, the WG would

1. Identify all fisheries with potential by-catch of marine mammals
2. Review and evaluate current by-catch estimates for marine mammals in NAMMCO countries.
3. If necessary, provide advice on improved data collection and estimation methods to obtain best estimates of total by-catch over time.

The SC suggested that the By-catch WG could meet just prior to the Coastal Seals WG and recommended that Geneviève Desportes be appointed convenor.

6) Coastal Seals

A Coastal Seals WG (Chair: Kjell Tormod Nilssen) meeting has been tentatively scheduled for February 2016 to address R-2.4.2 and R-2.5.2.

The Terms of Reference for the meeting will be for the WG to:

1. assess the status of all populations, particularly using new abundance estimate data that are available from Iceland and Norway.
2. address by-catch issues (grey seals) in Norway, Iceland, and the Faroe Islands
3. re-evaluate the Norwegian management plans (which have been already implemented) for grey and harbour seals.

Comments:

Work Plan of the SC for 2015 and 2016:

After discussion in the FAC and Management Committees regarding the requests from Council and the needs of members, in relation to the budget, the work plan was **approved** for the SC in 2015 with indications of priorities in 2016.

3.4 Other business

The amendment to the Rules of Procedure (NAMMCO/23/13) was **approved** by Council.

4. NATIONAL PROGRESS REPORTS

National Progress Reports (NPR) had been received from member countries (NAMMCO/22/NPR-F, NAMMCO/23/NPR-G, NAMMCO/22/NPR-I, NAMMCO/22/NPR-N; (Section 4) and also from observer countries Canada, Japan, and the Russian Federation, all of whom were thanked for their contributions.

Comments:

Greenland commented that there was a need for structure in delivering the NPR. In the future, when the NAMMCO Secretariat requests members to submit NPR reports, there should also be a copy of the request sent to the contracting contact members to ensure that there is a good liaison and delivery of the NPR in good time.

5. MANAGEMENT COMMITTEE FOR CETACEANS

5.1 Report of the Management Committee (MC) for Cetaceans

The Chair of the Management Committee for Cetaceans, Ulla S. Wang (Faroe Islands), presented the report (NAMMCO/23/7). Past requests for advice from the Scientific Committee and their status were discussed for the species considered on the agenda, and also past proposals for conservation and management. There was one new proposal for conservation and management. There four new (amended) requests for advice from the Scientific Committee (see item 5.2 below).

There was discussion on the planned **Disturbance Symposium** addressing request R-3.4.11. Presently narwhal, beluga and walrus are on the agenda. The SC members attending this meeting discussed *ad hoc* a recent offer from a research group from the University of Leeds in the UK to join forces in planning the Disturbance Symposium. This group, and the members of the Disturbance Symposium Steering Committee, recommended to the MC that the Disturbance Symposium Steering Committee discuss with the group from the University of Leeds whether their objectives overlap with the NAMMCO objectives to warrant collaboration on the symposium.

The MC endorsed this suggestion to broaden the scope of the meeting, and continue to discuss the possibility of collaboration with the University of Leeds group.

Concerning T-NASS 2015, the MC also noted the interval between sightings surveys has exceeded the recommended interval (6 years) and is approaching the maximum recommended (10 years) and hopes that the now renamed **NASS-2015** will continue as scheduled in 2015. The MC notes that results from NASS-2015 will take some time but hopes that results will come as soon as possible.

Agenda items in common with the MC for Seals and Walrus are discussed under item 6 below.

Proposals for Conservation and Management

There was an amendment to one very old proposal for conservation and management, **3.5.1 regarding northern bottlenose whale**. The Faroes noted that the wording of the proposal is incorrect - there is not

a direct traditional coastal drive hunt, but rather stranded animals that are found alive are permitted to be taken. The MC **endorsed** the changing of the wording in the proposal to remove “traditional coastal drive hunt” and replace this with “strandings”.

With respect to proposal **3.3.6 regarding narwhal**, the MC strongly **recommends** that “struck and lost” data be collected from all areas and types of hunt and that all “struck and lost” animals be included in the advice.

Comments:

In conclusion, the Council **took note of the report and accepted its recommendations** to member nations.

5.2 Recommendations for requests for advice from the Scientific Committee

New requests and amendments:

R-3.1.7 concerning fin whales was amended as requested by Iceland to include a 0.6 tuning level.

R-3.2.4 concerning Greenlandic humpback whales should be reiterated because of the cessation of the 2009-2015 scientific advice for the quota.

R-3.4.4 concerning common minke whales should now include an application of a 0.6 tuning level.

R-1.7.11 concerning T-NASS 2015 (now NASS 2015) should be reiterated and amended to include humpback whales. The request now reads as follows: “Once the survey has been completed, the Scientific Committee is requested to develop estimates of abundance and trends as soon as possible, with the primary target species (fin, common minke, humpback and pilot whales) as a first priority, and sei whales as a secondary species.”

The Council **noted** these amendments to requests and **endorsed** them. It is anticipated that all above requests will be addressed during 2015 through the Large Whale Assessment WG.

5.3 Other business

None.

6. MANAGEMENT COMMITTEE FOR SEALS AND WALRUSES

6.1 Report of the Management Committee for Seals and Walrus

The Chair of the Management Committee for Seals and Walrus, Hild Ynnesdal (Norway), presented the report (NAMMCO/23/8). Past requests and their status were discussed for the species considered on the agenda, and also past proposals for conservation and management. There were no new proposals for conservation and management, and one new request replacing older requests for advice from the Scientific Committee.

Regarding walrus, the MC **endorsed** the SC recommendation to update advice on sustainable takes of walrus from the Baffin Bay stock now new information was available, and that this be organised through a one-day teleconference.

In a **joint session of both Management Committees for Cetaceans, and Seals and Walrus**, note was taken of the report from the SC with respect to marine mammals – fisheries interactions, and that requests R-1.1.2 and R-1.4.1 to 1.4.6 were all outdated, and that request R-1.1.5 took the place of R-1.1.3. The series of requests R-1.4.1 to 1.4.6 are all regarding the economic aspects of marine mammals-fisheries interactions. The SC regards these requests also as **outdated**. Should the MC still like these issues addressed, a new, more specific request should be drafted. The SC also noted that socioeconomic impacts are included in a large-scale ecosystem modelling project (MAREFRAME) which includes marine mammals in Icelandic and adjacent waters. The MC further agreed to recommend to Council the request that the SC review results from MAREFRAME project as described above.

Concerning Environmental questions, R-1.5.1 (radioactive material entering the North Atlantic ecosystem), was considered outdated by the SC and this was endorsed by the MC.

Comments:

Greenland reported that with respect to walruses, “Struck and Lost” was estimated to be 15% in Baffin Bay, and in the Qaanaaq management area the struck and lost rate is placed to 3 % after a consultation with hunters and decision made by the Cabinet. Greenland also informed that the report on traditional and ecological knowledge of walrus will be reported at the next NAMMCO meeting.

The Council **noted** the report and its **recommendations** to member nations.

6.2 Recommendations for requests for advice

R-1.4.7 One new request was tabled under Economic Aspects of Marine Mammal-Fisheries Interactions. This requested the “SC to undertake a review of the large-scale ecosystem modelling project MAREFRAME which included marine mammals in Icelandic and adjacent waters, on completion.”

The Council **endorsed** this request.

6.3 Any other business

Trade Issues and the EU Ban on importation of sealskin

This issue was discussed in the Management Committee for Seals and Walruses. However, Leif Fontaine of KNAPK in Greenland gave a statement regarding Inuit Sila against the seal ban (Appendix 6). He noted the coastal peoples’ right to hunt seal, and that since the EU ban, sealing was on the verge of collapse as this was a vital source of income. There had been a 90% loss in the market worth 5 million DKK. Seal hunting was sustainable in the N. Atlantic and had been given support from the Government of Greenland, Copenhagen Fur and Great Greenland companies. All were united in the strategy against the ban and anti-sealing campaigns, including the Greenlandic political parties. It was necessary to change public opinion, and re-establish sealing as a normal resource and improve the Inuit way of life. Inuit peoples of Canada, Russia and Alaska were also united in this matter, and supported by Nunavut and Iqaluit and the government in Ottawa in Canada. As the ban affected peoples’ livelihoods, funding would be used to promote a strong campaign within the EU and voice against animal rights organisations, demanding compensation for damage to businesses and hunters, and restore confidence in Greenlandic sealskin as a product.

Comments:

Denmark stated its support of Greenland in this action. Sealing was a legitimate activity to be recognised.

7. HUNTING METHODS

7.1 Report of the Committee on Hunting Methods

The former Chair of the Committee on Hunting Methods, Eyþór Björnsson (Iceland) presented the report (NAMMCO/23/9). Two meetings took place in 2014 including a telephone meeting and the annual meeting in November 2014. Updates of hunting regulations were reported by the Faroes including use of the spinal lance where there was a revised dimension specified for the blade. The traditional knife is only to be used for dissection and bleeding after the kill. Greenland reported a new Executive Order for large whales. Nothing new was reported in Iceland nor Norway.

Time to Death (TTD) data were collected in Norway for minke whales in 2011 and 2012, and data on time to irreversible unconsciousness / TTD in seals in 2013 and 2014; and in Iceland, fin whale TTD data were collected in 2014. There are no current plans for TTD data collection in the Faroes.

In 2012, Council endorsed plans for a TTD data workshop/seminar, noting especially that future voluntary reporting of TTD data to the Committee should be modelled around the Norwegian manner of presenting these kinds of data, and tasked the Hunting Committee to organize a seminar to focus on data collection, analysis and presentation. Since then, a workshop focusing on practical hands-on methods to process TTD data has been envisaged.

Comments:

Norway expressed concerns about the practical issues of TTD information at such a workshop where there would be a need for specialist knowledge and also oversight.

Japan indicated a wish to participate in such a TTD workshop. The Chair responded that the Hunting Committee Report stated that invitations would be issued to Japan, Russia and Canada.

The new Chair of the Committee on Hunting Methods – Nette Levermann (Greenland) – reported that the workshop would schedule one day focusing on Icelandic data and another on Greenlandic data. The workshop would be planned back-to-back with the Scientific Committee meeting, to ensure that members would be available for expertise.

Council accepted the report and **endorsed** the recommendations from the Committee on Hunting Methods

7.2 Manual on Hunting of Marine Mammals

Nette Levermann (Greenland) presented the Manual on hunting of small whales in Greenland (NAMMCO/23/14). Like the other manuals, the set-up is with a main focus on safety information and square boxes highlighting the most important information from that section.

There is a section on the anatomy in relation to the killing, followed by a description of the hunting methods and equipment used. Illustrations are included showing the target sites for the 6 species hunted. Finally a section describes improvements made in the hunting gear.

The plan is to send this manual together with an introductory letter to all who have reported catches of a small whale in the last 4-5 years, in total 2,000 manuals. This now concludes production of all manuals on whale hunting and killing. All manuals are online and are in different languages.

Comments:

The meeting expressed satisfaction in the completion of this important work.

7.3 Other business

None.

8. THE JOINT NAMMCO CONTROL SCHEME

8.1 Report of the Committee on Inspection and Observation

The Chair of the Committee on Inspection and Observation, Nette Levermann (Greenland), presented the report (NAMMCO/23/10) from 2014.

Regarding monitoring, the Faroe Islands do not have national inspectors although the hunt is regulated through the “Sysselman” and the foremen leading each hunt, and this ensures the control and monitoring. Norway confirmed that the electronic monitoring system (the blue box) continues to collect hunting data on each whaling vessel, and that inspectors are only used in cases of possible infringements. In 2014 no inspectors had been active on the whaling vessels. 23 licenses were given for the 2014 season of which

21 vessels participated which is an increase of 3 boats from 2013. The hunting period was from 1/4-25/9, no infringements reported.

With respect to sealing, there is a 100% control and monitoring effort as it is mandatory to have inspectors on board all vessels. Three vessels were active in 2014 in the West Ice, mainly in Greenlandic waters. The hunting season was from 10 April to 30 June but all vessels were back before 17 May. No infringements were reported.

Iceland informed that they had two inspectors on the fin whale hunt during two trips over a 7 days period. Two inspectors were also monitoring the common minke whale hunt for 4 days. Iceland collected TTD data in the 2014 season including post-mortem examinations. Due to bad weather and technical problems with the hunting vessels, it was only possible to get enough data on the fin whale hunt.

Greenland informed that the wildlife officers as part of the regular national control have followed and controlled large whale hunts and beluga and narwhale hunts. The coverage is normally less than 2% of the hunting activities on large whales. In 2013, there were 6 reported infractions of national legislation on large whales. The infractions were related to the use of common minke whale grenade for fin/humpback whale and cold harpoon used for common minke whale as secondary weapon.

Member countries were asked to supply the Secretariat with information on qualification requirements of the national inspectors. Based on these inputs the Secretariat will compile an overview that will be circulated together with all other documents in the nomination process related to the Observation Scheme every year.

The committee elected a new Chair, Ulla Svarrer Wang (Faroe Islands), and the vice-Chair will be Norway.

The report was accepted and approved.

8.2 Report of the Observation Scheme in 2014

Charlotte Winsnes presented NAMMCO/23/15 – the report from the Secretariat. Whaling and sealing in Greenland had been the focus of the observation scheme in 2014. One observer was contracted for the period 17 August to 5 September. No violations had been observed, and reports had been submitted to the Secretariat. Poor weather had hindered observation, but also there had been a technical communication issue between observer and hunters.

Comments:

Norway commented that technical communication problems should be addressed in the future.

Greenland also commented on how to improve communication. Help from the Greenlandic authorities might be sought, especially with language difficulties.

8.3 Observation planned in 2015

Referring to NAMMCO/23/10, Winsnes reported the scope for 2015 is whaling in the Faroe Islands, budgeted with NOK 200,000. The suggestion is to send two observers, one from Greenland and one from Iceland, each covering different 25 days periods. Based on available information on pilot whale drive statistics, the high season is May to September – 5 months or 150 days. The suggested observation effort represents 1/3 of the high season and the Hunting Committee had considered this to be good coverage.

8.4 Other business

None.

9. ENVIRONMENTAL QUESTIONS

Climate change and ice retreat

Norway reported on the plight of hooded and harp seals – both are ice-breeding seals. Dramatic ice retreat has been recorded since 1870 in the N. Atlantic, and now the ice edge is right close to the coastline. The effect on seal populations – now close to shore, is that polar bears are a threat, and are changing their diet from ringed to harp and hooded seals. The same story occurs in Eastern Canada. Exposure of seals on ice floes favours killer whale predation, and also pups cannot survive cold in the water if they tumble off floes. Seal mothers may also migrate northwards and then come into contact with polar bears. In Svalbard, ringed and bearded seals use ice as substrate while feeding. Now the seals are experiencing problems and instead of sea ice, seals depend on glacial ice floes. Bowheads, belugas and narwhals are also exposed to ice changes. These species are now found off Svalbard, and join in competition with existing species. Oil and gas and shipping routes are affected by ice retreat and thus encounters with whales are more frequent. Noise arises from seismic activity and this should be a topic for the scheduled Disturbance symposium. The present increase in bowheads off West Greenland has been surmised as the result of overflow from Alaska, but this is uncertain. Common minke whale migration has also been linked to the capelin distribution shift off Iceland.

10. EXTERNAL RELATIONS

The General Secretary (Christina Lockyer) introduced (NAMMCO/23/11) and presented summaries of 12 observer reports from attendance at meetings of the IWC 65th Annual Scientific Committee meeting, 12-24 May 2014, Bled, Slovenia, the IWC 65th Commission meeting and Sub-Committee meetings/ WG Whale killing and Associated Welfare Issues, 11-13 Sept. 2014, Bernardin, Potorož, Slovenia, the NASCO 31st Annual Meeting, 3-6 June 2014, Saint Malo, France, the NEAFC 33rd Annual Meeting, 10-14 Nov. 2014, London, UK, the NAFO 36th Annual Meeting, 22-26 Sept. 2014, Vigo, Spain, the 4th Meeting of the Arctic Council SCTF, 30 Sept.-2 Oct. 2014, Tromsø, Norway, the IWC Workshop on Impacts of Increased Marine Activities on Cetaceans in the Arctic, 6-7 March 2014, Anchorage, USA, the UN-FAO Global Summit - Global Oceans Action Summit for Food Security and Blue Growth, 22-25 April 2014, The Hague, Netherlands, the 4th PAME Ecosystem Approach to Management Workshop: Integrated Ecosystem Assessment (IEA), June 16-18 2014, Vancouver, Canada, the 11th Meeting of the South East Atlantic Fisheries Organization (SEAFO-X), 1– 6 December 2014, Windhoek, Namibia, the Regional Fishery Body Secretariats Network (RSN-5), 7 June 2014, Rome, Italy, and the Thirty-first Session of the FAO Committee on Fisheries (COFI 31), 9 – 13 June, Rome, Italy.

Lockyer noted the importance of NAMMCO's presence at such meetings, both from the point of view of visibility and also for making interventions. She thanked observers for their contributions where the Secretariat had been unable to participate.

Comments:

Greenland also noted the importance of visibility of NAMMCO at such meetings, and reported on the activities of the Arctic Council WG CAFF where the ringed seal had been referred to. Future NAMMCO involvement might likely be important here, should the ringed seal be brought up again as a topic.

Loftsson (Iceland) reported on the notice of the third Arctic Circle Assembly meeting scheduled for 16-18 October 2015 in Reykjavik, Iceland. The Arctic Circle meets annually and is a high profile meeting with government representation. The meeting in 2015 would include breakout sessions and proposals for submissions were welcomed with a deadline 1st June 2015.

10.1 Cooperation with international organisations

ICES

Lockyer reported on the formalisation of cooperation between NAMMCO and ICES regarding the seal WG, WGHARP, which was the successor to the former ICES/NAFO WG on harp and hooded seals

(NAMMCO/23/INFO 1). This was a very desirable step and recognition of NAMMCO's important role in seal scientific and management advice.

10.2 Other business

None.

11. INFORMATION

The General Secretary presented NAMMCO/22/12. The document reported on attendance by Secretariat members at two scientific meetings: the 28th Conference of the European Cetacean Society, 5-9 April 2014, Liège, Belgium, and the 8th Conference on Marine Mammals of the Holarctic, 22-26 September 2014, St Petersburg, Russia – the first time NAMMCO had attended one of these biennial meetings. Such scientific meetings are important for the Secretariat to maintain scientific networking and contacts and keep abreast of new research. The St Petersburg conference was also an opportunity to secure cooperation with the Russian Marine Mammal Council in co-convening the workshop/seminar on Global review of Monodontids. The rationale for such cooperation was based on the following proposals

- The proposal is for a 3-day scientific symposium - workshop, with invited experts on monodontids, and about 50 international participants
- The focus of the scientific symposium - workshop would be a comprehensive review of all aspects of the biology and study of belugas and narwhals in all regions where they occur
- The scientific symposium-workshop should be held in conjunction with the 2016 Conference on Holarctic Marine Mammals – before or after the event
- The rationale being that this conference is attended by many Russian experts researching belugas, and would attract a high attendance of relevant experts
- External funding would be sought to support attendees internationally as well as from within Russia, and an organising committee has already been established
- A scientific report would be produced after the event, to be published online together with presented scientific papers in the free access NAMMCO Scientific Publications Series site at <http://septentrio.uit.no/index.php/NAMMCOSP/index>

The final item in NAMMCO/23/12 was notice of the Norden- and Faroese Government-sponsored International Conference on Growth in Blue Bioeconomy, to be held in Tórshavn, Faroe Islands, 2-3 June 2015. This conference may be particularly relevant for NAMMCO in respect of marine mammals and food security.

11.1 Scientific Publications

The Scientific Secretary (Jill Prewitt) summarised the activities in the online publications. The journal website (<http://septentrio.uit.no/index.php/NAMMCOSP/index>), as of 30 January 2015, has had almost 4,000 visitors from 97 countries.

The *Walrus of the North Atlantic* volume 9 has now been finalised with all papers now online, and has been published in hard copy. A copy has been distributed to each delegation. Additional copies are available upon request from the Secretariat. The volume 10 on *Age estimation of marine mammals with a focus on monodontids* has 8 papers published online as “online early versions”. Additional papers will be online soon. Professional typesetting of completed papers will begin shortly. All previous volumes are now accessible on the journal website.

The Scientific Committee (SC) had discussed the future of the *NAMMCO Scientific Publications* series. Ideas for future volumes include papers from the scheduled Disturbance Symposium, Global Review of Monodontids, and unpublished T-NASS papers.

The SC had also discussed whether the journal should be opened up for non-themed papers. This would likely involve additional workload for the Editorial Board, as papers would need to be assigned to an

editor for the peer review process. The Scientific Secretary will discuss this with the Editorial Board soon and will report back to the SC.

Comments:

Greenland expressed satisfaction in this new walrus publication.

11.2 Progress on Stock Status list – website

The General Secretary reported that the second phase contract with GDNatur, Denmark, was completed, meaning that the entire project was now finished. The species for which a comprehensive account is now available include fin, common minke, beluga, pilot whale, narwhal, ringed seal and walrus. Remaining species have a brief general account. The information had initially been compiled on a specially designed Google webpage, but is now being integrated into the upgraded NAMMCO website (see below item 11.3). Work is not finalised but is expected soon in 2015.

11.3 Upgrading of the NAMMCO website

The General Secretary reported that complete upgrading of the NAMMCO website had been ongoing. The new site is expected to go online soon in 2015, together with the stock status information (above 11.2).

12. ANY OTHER BUSINESS

12.1 Marine Mammals and Food Security

A report on progress was presented by Amalie Jessen (Greenland) who was the Chair of the planning group for this topic. The planning group had met in January 2015 and set specific goals for the future development of this project which had received funding from NORDEN.

Jessen recalled the Ministerial Meeting in 2012 where there had been an emphasis on increased focus on marine mammals as a food resource. A Planning Group was established at NAMMCO 22 to advance this theme. As a result the Planning Group had outlined two main parts – firstly, production of a background document reviewing and compiling the existing material on the topic, and secondly, to communicate the message. No conference has been scheduled. The approach for the background document was to compile and structure it in a way that it could be dynamic so that updating would be easy. The main themes to be addressed were –

- Stock status
- Resources used today
- Food security in general in relation to human population growth
- Ethics
- Health aspects
- Hunting methods, efficiency, safety, etc.
- Ecological aspects
- Creative food
- Commercial marketing.

The second part required a strategy involving expert help, to develop the message.

The agreed schedule was for the Secretariat to prepare a first draft of the background documentation by June 2015 and furthermore, to look into funding resources.

12.2 Notifications by Japan

Japan informed the meeting about two important scheduled events.

1. Proposed Plan for the New Scientific Whale Research Program in the Antarctic Ocean (NEWREP-A). A workshop to address this planning would be held in February 2015, and Walløe, representing Norway, would be participating in this workshop.

2. Meeting on the Sustainable Use of Marine Living Resources including Cetaceans, to be held in Tokyo in autumn 2015. Japan noted that this topic was increasingly becoming a world focus because of the issue of food security, but with negative attitudes towards cetacean use.

13. CLOSING ARRANGEMENTS

13.1 Elections

Norway proposed Iceland (Ásta Einarsson) to continue one term more. Iceland proposed Greenland (Amalie Jessen) as vice-Chair. Both accepted and were applauded by the meeting.

13.2 Press Release

The General Secretary presented the draft press release prepared by the drafting group (including Guri Male-Breigutu – Norway and Nette Levermann - Greenland) appointed on day 1 of the Council meeting. The participants were urged to comment and approve the draft so that Council could endorse the text. After the presentation and taking on board some comments, observer countries were encouraged to associate with any points that they considered relevant and wished to identify with.

The finalised approved press release is included in Appendix 7, and was placed on the NAMMCO website on the evening of 5 February 2015. The text was distributed to Council, meeting participants, range state governments, national and the international media, and international organisations.

13.3 Next meeting

The next meeting will be hosted by the Secretariat in Norway at a venue yet to be determined. The date will likely be in the second week of February 2016.

The Chair of Council thanked all delegates and participants for a productive meeting, and declared the meeting closed.

AGENDA

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
- 1.6 Invited speaker – Henry Alexander Henrysson – title: *The Hunting of Marine Mammals: Conflict, Consensus and a Moral Code*

2. FINANCE AND ADMINISTRATION

- 2.1 Report of the Finance and Administration Committee
- 2.2 Audited accounts 2014
- 2.3 Budget 2015 and Draft Budget 2016
- 2.4 Other business

3. SCIENTIFIC COMMITTEE

- 3.1 Report of the Scientific Committee
- 3.2 T-NASS 2015
- 3.3 Priorities and Work plan of the Scientific Committee in 2015-2016
- 3.4 Other business – adoption of new text for the SC Rules of Procedure

4. NATIONAL PROGRESS REPORTS

5. MANAGEMENT COMMITTEE FOR CETACEANS

- 5.1 Report of the Management Committee for Cetaceans
- 5.2 Recommendations for requests for advice
- 5.3 Other business

6. MANAGEMENT COMMITTEE FOR SEALS AND WALRUSES

- 6.1 Report of the Management Committee for Seals and Walrus
- 6.2 Recommendations for requests for advice
- 6.3 Any other business - Canada, Norway and Greenland to give an update on the WTO-case on seal products

7. HUNTING METHODS

- 7.1 Report of the Committee on Hunting Methods
- 7.2 Hunting Manuals
- 7.3 Other business

8. THE JOINT NAMMCO CONTROL SCHEME

- 8.1 Report of the Committee on Inspection and Observation
- 8.2 Observation in 2014
- 8.3 Observation planned in 2015
- 8.4 Other business

9. ENVIRONMENTAL QUESTIONS

10. EXTERNAL RELATIONS

- 10.1 Cooperation with international organisations
- 10.2 ICES and seal working groups
- 10.3 Other business

11. INFORMATION

- 11.1 Scientific Publications
- 11.2 Progress on Stock Status list - website
- 11.3 Upgrading of the NAMMCO website

12. ANY OTHER BUSINESS

- 12.1 Marine Mammals and their Role in Food Security - update

13. CLOSING ARRANGEMENTS

- 13.1 Elections
- 13.2 Press Release
- 13.3 Next meeting.

LIST OF DOCUMENTS

NAMMCO/23/1	List of Participants
NAMMCO/23/2	Agenda
NAMMCO/23/3	List of Documents
NAMMCO/23/4	Report of the Finance and Administration Committee
NAMMCO/23/4.1	Audited accounts 2014
NAMMCO/23/4.2	Budget 2015 and forecast budget 2016
NAMMCO/23/5	Report of the Scientific Committee
NAMMCO/23/6	T-NASS 2015 Proposal
NAMMCO/23/7	Report of the Management Committee for Cetaceans
NAMMCO/23/8	Report of the Management Committee for Seals and Walrus
NAMMCO/23/9	Report of the Committee on Hunting Methods
NAMMCO/23/10	Report of the Committee on Inspection and Observation
NAMMCO/23/11	External Relations
NAMMCO/23/12	Information
NAMMCO/23/13	Amendment to the Scientific Committee Rules of Procedure
NAMMCO/23/14	Manual on hunting of small whales in Greenland
NAMMCO/23/15	Inspection and observation in 2014 and planned in 2015
NAMMCO/23/INFO 1	Letter from ICES to NAMMCO regarding WGHARP
NAMMCO/23/NPR-F	National Progress Report Faroe Islands
NAMMCO/23/NPR-G	National Progress Report Greenland
NAMMCO/23/NPR-I	National Progress Report Iceland
NAMMCO/23/NPR-N	National Progress Report Norway
NAMMCO/23/NPR-C	National Progress Report Canada
NAMMCO/23/NPR-J	National Progress Report Japan - compilation
NAMMCO/23/NPR-R	National Progress Report Russian Federation

**OPENING STATEMENTS BY
MEMBER DELEGATIONS AND OBSERVER GOVERNMENTS**

WELCOME ADDRESS BY THE CHAIR OF NAMMCO COUNCIL

Delegates, Observers and Guests

It gives me great pleasure to open the 23rd Annual Meeting of NAMMCO here in Reykjavik where the Ministry of Education and Culture resides. Iceland takes great pleasure in hosting this important event in the NAMMCO calendar.

I would like to express my gratitude to the Secretariat and my colleagues here in Reykjavik, for carrying out good work in preparing this meeting and providing us with excellent meeting facilities. This year brings about big changes in the Secretariat. Our present General Secretary, Christina Lockyer, who has been with us since March 2005 and for the past 10 years, is leaving us at the end of this month. This will be her last Council meeting. Already NAMMCO has announced the new General Secretary who is Geneviève Desportes, many of you may know Geneviève as she has been greatly involved in the Scientific Committee of NAMMCO. The work of the Secretariat will thus continue efficiently under the leadership of our new appointee.

The work done by the Hunting Committee in producing the new hunting manuals has been noted internationally and is now completed. In September 2014, the Secretariat presented this work at the IWC's workshop on whale killing, and demonstrated the quality and authority of NAMMCO in this field.

NAMMCO has followed through with the idea of promoting marine mammals in the arena of food security – an idea seeded at the Ministerial meeting in Svolvær, Norway, on the occasion of the 21st anniversary of the NAMMCO Council meeting. External funding has since then been awarded by NORDEN to help in this project, and at this meeting, we will learn more about the details of how this will unfold.

Finally, the planning of the Trans North Atlantic Sightings Survey in 2015 has been a huge exercise in cooperation between member nations to coordinate funding and finding methods to integrate information on the abundance of all shared whale stocks. Continuation of such surveys are of vital importance for the sustainable management of cetacean stocks in the NAMMCO area. Despite some financial setbacks during 2014, the scheduled surveys will go ahead and be completed by the end of 2016.

FAROE ISLANDS – OPENING STATEMENT

Madam Chair, Delegates, Observers, dear Friends

The Faroe Islands consider NAMMCO cooperation to be of great importance. I mentioned last year that NAMMCO must develop and grow in the future. I also mentioned the importance of the scientific work produced by NAMMCO. This is a platform we wish to build on.

The Faroe Islands are experiencing a series of attacks on our whaling practices – currently and probably in the foreseeable future, too. International lobbyists bring critical questions into various parliament questions as well as to the European Parliament. These efforts are without exception ill- founded and

lacking of coherent facts. The aim is clear: Primitive and blood-thirsty islanders must bring their murderous traditions to immediate stop!

It is an ongoing struggle to meet these attacks with constructive information that may explain the real nature of affairs. Our EU mission in Brussels makes tremendous efforts in this respect.

However, to quote a late, respected statesman: “They are many, and we are few!” Our efforts need to build on clear, scientific ground; there must be cooperation. Alone, there is so much we can do while with an organisation like NAMMCO in the background it is our sincere hope that we may continue to develop and coordinate efforts that will further our legitimate rights. Our right to sustainably harvest our surrounding oceans.

Sea Shepherd visited the Faroe Islands last year and the promise to return this year with increased force. This is a very tangible and real challenge. The Faroe Islands will, as a rule, welcome all visitors, even those who represent strong opinions on our whaling traditions. We respect different opinions as we expect others to respect ours. But we will not, however, permit unlawful behaviour. We will be sure to fill you in on the developments as they unfold.

We look forward to the coming TNASS 2015. Strengthening our scientific ground must always be paramount in our efforts to sustain our practices. It therefore essential that all member countries make the coordinated surveying efforts top priority in all our countries.

For a number of years NAMMCO has enjoyed the privilege of being headed by our General Secretary, Dr Lockyer. The Faroe Islands wish to thank Christina for her contribution to our organisation and all the good work she has been in charge of for so long.

Finally, we want to thank Iceland for hosting this annual meeting. We look forward to some good discussions and presentations here. As mentioned before, we look forward to the coming sightings survey, which will be very important to us. The survey will produce qualified estimates, which in turn will serve to support sustainable management of our stocks. We appreciate that knowledge is essential for ensuring future sustainable utilisation of our stocks.

Thank you.

GREENLAND – OPENING STATEMENT

Mrs Chair, Ladies and Gentlemen,

Sustainable and responsible management of Whaling and Sealing:

Greenland is proud of the substantial progress we have made to strengthen NAMMCO cooperation and acknowledging the importance of maintaining sustainability in the North Atlantic and the important leadership role of the best practice in regional management of marine mammals in taking concrete actions to respond to new opportunities and challenges.

For nearly 23 years Greenland has with other member countries reaffirmed the commitments outlined in the NAMMCO agreement to sustainable development, including economic and social development through improved management and research conditions on marine mammals. We have also debated socioeconomic and cultural well-being for the inhabitant’s co-existence with marine mammals. We are engaged in the debate of food security to show that marine mammals are under-estimated protein source that could benefit the world population.

NAMMCO areas are inhabited regions with diverse economies, cultures and societies, but we have been able to work closely with each other to reach our main purpose in NAMMCO, which is sustainable use of all marine resources. NAMMCO does not categorize countries to certain group of people or categorize the hunts to aboriginal, small-type whaling or commercial whaling or sealing. The key word is sustainable use. NAMMCO also recognizes the differences each country leaves under. Unfortunately, some other countries and international unions and organizations are eager to pinpoint some of our differences in a negative manner. The marginalization of whaling and sealing to “do not touch” due to the stated “public moral” and perceptions based on feelings is an on-going challenge. The final conclusions from the WTO case on sealskin ban are one example where European societies try to split NAMMCO countries, not respecting the facts and realities. Yet, last word has not been said; we once again can expect actions from the European countries regarding our seal hunting.

We are aware of NAMMCO areas stand at the threshold of significant changes, with increased economic activity, changes to lifestyles and impacts on local inhabitants and changes to ecosystems. It is therefore important that NAMMCO countries overcome the challenges by facilitating for instance T-NASS through commitment, dialogue, cooperation and interaction within the Council and relevant Committees that benefit peoples in NAMMCO countries.

Greenland also welcome the recent success of finalization of stock status and hunting manuals and recommend Council to consider whether best practices from these events could inform the broader work of the Council.

A stronger NAMMCO as a regional management organization requires stronger Scientific Committee and other Committees, which can benefit the future work for the Council. Greenland is therefore committed to find ways where we can enhance the capacity of NAMMCO as a regional management organization.

ICELAND – OPENING STATEMENT

Madam Chair, delegates, observers and dear friends.

On behalf of the Icelandic Government, I have the honour and pleasure to welcome you to Iceland to the twenty third meeting of the Council of NAMMCO.

First, I would like to extend special thanks to Christina Lockyer for her devotion and diligence in carrying out the duties of the General Secretary of NAMMCO over the last ten years. Iceland greatly appreciates her work and valuable contribution to NAMMCO. I would also like to express our gratitude to the Secretariat that has done a good work in preparing this meeting and providing us with excellent meeting facilities.

NAMMCO is of great importance for Iceland, as sustainable utilisation of marine resources is of fundamental significance for the economic survival of the Icelandic people. In fact we have no alternative but to give sustainable utilisation of marine resources such a high status, as one of the main pillars of Iceland’s economy is our responsible, technical and scientifically based management of the marine resources.

Marine mammals are of course an integral part of Iceland’s ocean policy as they form a large component of the marine ecosystem. With respect to conservation and management, marine mammals should be considered in the same way as all the other components of the ecosystem, with a long-term objective of sustainable management.

In recent years, Iceland has been exposed to increasing pressure to stop its whaling activities, not only from anti-whaling NGO's but also from most of the EU member states. In addition, Iceland has been certified under the Pelly Amendment by the US secretary of the Interior as Iceland reported at last year's meeting. In general, this pressure has particularly pertained to the fin whaling where allegations have been made that fin whales in the North Atlantic are endangered and that Iceland's catch levels are unsustainable. These allegations are in strong contrast to the conclusions and recommendations by the Scientific Committee of NAMMCO, which have been approved by the NAMMCO Council. These scientific assessments and the resulting management advice provided by NAMMCO have formed the main basis for decisions on the Icelandic harvesting levels of fin and common minke whales.

Iceland appreciates very much and places a strong emphasis on the management advice given by the Scientific Committee of NAMMCO. At the same time, Iceland feels that this high quality scientific work could be highlighted more by NAMMCO, especially when discussions related to this work are prominent in the world press. In our opinion, NAMMCO's visibility and influence could be increased by more active participation in the various international fora and in the world press. By taking on a more proactive role, NAMMCO would render more support to its member countries in their continuous battle against wrongful accusations by powerful bodies in the world media.

The series of North Atlantic Sightings Surveys have been of paramount importance for NAMMCO as an organisation and its member countries. The continuation of this series in 2015 is of vital importance as the time since the last survey in 2007 is approaching the maximum acceptable for responsible management.

Iceland also welcomes the work undertaken by the Scientific Committee towards estimation of bycatch rates of marine mammals, particularly for the fisheries in Iceland and Norway. In this important field, there is clearly room for improved management.

Iceland welcomes the progress made in developing the NAMMCO website for Stock Status of marine mammals. In particular we would like to acknowledge the contribution of the newly appointed General Secretary of NAMMCO Geneviève Desportes to this project. I would like to use this opportunity to congratulate and welcome her to this new position.

Finally, I am confident that this meeting, like past meetings, will be fruitful and constructive, built on an objective, and science-based approach.

NORWAY – OPENING STATEMENT

Madam Chair, Delegates, Observers and Guests - Dear friends

It is a pleasure to express our appreciation to the Government of Iceland for hosting the 23th Annual Meeting of NAMMCO and for providing us with such convenient facilities here in Reykjavik.

We are happy to see that NAMMCO, over the last years, has strengthened its position as a well-functioning management body that generates high quality advice to its members, observers and other interested parties.

Through NAMMCO we have created an instrument and an environment for researchers and managers that enable us to fulfill our need to cooperate and thereby meet our international obligations under the Law of the Sea.

Nevertheless we must ask ourselves if the scope and quality of our organization meet our future needs, and enable us to strengthen both the understanding and acceptance of our way of life in the international community.

NAMMCO Council Report 2017

NAMMCO's work on animal welfare and hunting methods is a prime example of high quality advice that hands-on management needs. I would like, once again, to commend the Committee on hunting methods. The relevance and quality of its work are reflected in the fact that all whaling nations now use NAMMCO for guidance in this field.

It is Norway's goal to secure and further develop our organization in this respect. We need to be at the forefront of what constitutes relevant and reliable knowledge.

Progress reports have also this year been submitted by Canada, Japan and Russia. This is a sign of strengthening cooperation between our countries that Norway very much welcomes. And we would like to repeat our wish for a closer cooperation between these countries and NAMMCO.

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

CANADA – OPENING STATEMENT

Madame Chair, distinguished delegates, fellow observers and guests:

Canada is pleased to participate as an Observer in this 23rd meeting of the NAMMCO Council. I would like to take this opportunity to thank our Icelandic colleagues for hosting this meeting.

NAMMCO continues to be an organization that is well-known for providing strong and impartial science advice on marine mammals and has shown a dedication to the sustainable management of marine mammals and I look forward to productive discussions over the next three days.

JAPAN – OPENING STATEMENT

The delegation of Japan would like to thank the Government of Iceland for its hospitality and the NAMMCO Secretariat for the meeting arrangements. It is our view that cooperation between NAMMCO and Japan is vital for achieving the sustainable use of marine living resources including cetaceans. Japan recognizes various achievements of NAMMCO as an organization for international cooperation related to the sustainable use of marine living resources based on science, in conformity with international law and with respect for the needs of coastal communities and indigenous people. Japan therefore highly appreciates the invitation to attend this important meeting.

As you know, on 31 March 2014 the International Court of Justice (ICJ) delivered its Judgment in the case concerning "Whaling in the Antarctic" (Australia v. Japan: New Zealand intervening). In the Judgment, the ICJ found that the second phase of Japan's whale research program in the Antarctic (JARPA II) did not fall within the provisions of Article VIII, paragraph 1, of the International Convention for the Regulation of Whaling (ICRW) and that therefore Japan did not act in conformity with its obligations under paragraphs 7(b), 10(e), and 10(d) of the Schedule to the ICRW. The ICJ decided that Japan shall refrain from granting any further permits in pursuance of the JARPA II.

Japan was disappointed with the Judgment but has faithfully observed it. However, there were a number of positive aspects in the Judgment including the firm confirmation that "sustainable exploitation of the whale resources" remains as one of the objectives of the ICRW and "[a]mendments to the Schedule and recommendations by the IWC may put an emphasis on one or the other objective pursued by the Convention, but cannot alter its object and purpose" (paragraph 56). The ICJ also noted that "Article VIII expressly contemplates the use of lethal methods", and that resolutions and guidelines adopted by the Commission "do not establish a requirement that lethal methods be used only when other methods are not available" (paragraph 83). The ICJ further found "that the use of lethal sampling per se is not unreasonable in relation to the research objectives of JARPA II" (paragraph 224) and that a special

permit program involving the sales of whale meat, taken alone, is not outside the scope of Article VIII (paragraph 94).

Subsequent to the Judgment, on 18 April, 2014, Japan's then Minister of Agriculture, Forestry, and Fisheries, Mr. Yoshimasa Hayashi issued the following policy statement concerning the future whale research programs.

“The ICJ judgment reaffirms that one of the purposes of the International Convention for the Regulation of Whaling (ICRW) is the sustainable exploitation of whale resources. In light of this, Japan has confirmed its basic policy of pursuing the resumption of commercial whaling, by conducting research whaling, ...”

The statement also informed that Japan had decided to cancel JARPA II and reduce the scale of its research program in the Northwestern Pacific in 2014 and that Japan would further an earnest review of a whale research program in the Antarctic with the aim of submitting a new research program to the IWC Scientific Committee by autumn 2014.

I would also like you to note that Prime Minister Shinzo Abe has stated at the Diet that Japan would continue to explore the resumption of commercial whaling, while conducting research whaling based upon international law and scientific evidence in order to gather scientific data that is essential for the management of whale resources.

Accordingly, on 18 November 2014 the Government of Japan submitted the proposed plan for a new research program in the Antarctic Ocean, namely the New Scientific Research Program in the Antarctic Ocean (NEWREP-A) to the Chairman of the IWC Scientific Committee and the IWC Secretariat. The proposed research plan was circulated to all IWC members and is available at the web site of the Fisheries Agency of Japan (<http://www.jfa.maff.go.jp/j/whale/pdf/newrep--a.pdf>).

The submission of the proposed research plan which has fully taken account of the reasoning and conclusions of the ICJ Judgment, has initiated the IWC process to review the plan in line with Annex P; Process for the Review of Special Permit Proposals and Research Results from Existing and Completed Permits. A small specialist workshop which will take place this month in Tokyo will review and comment on the plan and produce its report for consideration by the Scientific Committee to be held in May 2015.

At the 22nd Meeting of the Council in February 2014, Japan expressed its heartfelt sympathy to the people of Greenland following the denial of its proposed aboriginal whaling quotas. Japan is pleased that this matter was resolved at the 65th meeting of the IWC, but it is regrettable that Japan's proposal on small-type coastal whaling has not yet been adopted by the IWC. Furthermore Japan would like to express our deep concern about two resolutions adopted at the 65th meeting of the IWC: Resolution 2014-5 intended to increase the involvement of the Commission in respect of special permit research programs and Resolution 2014-4 which is intended to redirect the work of the Scientific Committee towards “conservation related matters”. Regrettably, these resolutions will only increase the level of conflict within the IWC.

Finally, as in the past, our delegation wishes to inform you of Japan's intention to make its best efforts to reaffirm the unity among countries supporting the sustainable use of marine living resources and to mobilize their efforts to cope with the next meeting of the IWC in 2016. Japan's efforts will include organizing a meeting in Tokyo in autumn 2015 on the Sustainable Use of Marine Living Resources including Cetaceans. Japan looks forward to your cooperation in our efforts.

Thank you.

RUSSIAN FEDERATION – OPENING STATEMENT

Dear NAMMCO Chairman and Vice-Chairman, Members of NAMMCO Secretariat, delegates, colleagues, observers, ladies and gentlemen,

It is a great honor for me and my colleague Olga Zyatneva from Russian Fisheries Agency to represent the Russian Delegation at 23rd Meeting of the NAMMCO Council.

On behalf of the Russian Delegation, I would like to thank the NAMMCO Secretariat and Icelandic authorities for hosting this annual meeting in the Reykjavik nice port city and for the excellent arrangements, and also for the preparations for this meeting.

We would like to commend the excellent work undertaken by different NAMMCO bodies and in the first NAMMCO Secretariat and Scientific Committee including different working groups during the inter-sessional time. Also we would like note that NAMMCO has very good cooperation with different countries, and not only observer countries, marine mammals companies and different North Atlantic organizations and Commissions; in the first it is NAFO, NEAFC, and also with ICES and IWC.

It is very important that the NAMMCO position on marine mammals has for many years been based on a strong ecosystem approach only and hence from it all marine mammals stocks can be stably exploited on the basis of scientific results and surveys and also from precautionary principles only. For this reason, here a very important place belongs to the results of the International Trans North Atlantic Sighting Surveys (so-named T-NASS).

We would like tell you once more that the Russian Federation is very interested in long term cooperation with NAMMCO, and we hope that this cooperation will develop.

We have a full agenda ahead of us during this week. We are looking forward to a successful and productive work during this Meeting.

Thank you very much for your attention!

SUMMARY OF THE PRESENTATION BY THE INVITED SPEAKER

The Hunting of Marine Mammals - Conflict, Consensus and a Moral Code

Henry Alexander Henrysson,
Centre for Ethics, University of Iceland, 101 Reykjavik, Iceland

In recent years, we have witnessed sporadic outbursts of conflicts in the public dialogue on the hunting of marine mammals. Although this conflict has not been particularly robust in the Nordic countries recently, it seems as if a stout polarisation between the two main views of hunting and preserving these mammals has become even more evident than before. On the one hand we have seen the rise of a mostly urban dialogue asking for a total ban on the hunting and utilisation of marine mammals while, on the other hand, the more traditional view of hunting has kept its share of following in the more remote areas. The rhetoric of both sides can be staggeringly difficult to comprehend at times which has made it quite hard to solve this moral dilemma of whether this hunting can be morally permissible. Leaving aside some well-known theories on environmental ethics, this talk focuses on the arguments of both sides in order to assess whether an ethical consensus can be reached and what it would entail. In particular, this talk suggests that we should seek ways to meet our primary moral obligation of making an effort to understand both sides – or as many sides as possible – when trying to seek a way forward out of a moral dilemma.

In this talk, I discuss what I take to be the five main attitudes of the participants in the public dialogue whether the hunting of marine mammals is morally justified or not. I then move on to introduce what appears to me as being the seven main types of arguments for these different attitudes or positions. Finally, I see if applying a set of seven questions which I see as necessary for a critical analysis of each type of argument. This talk argues that most of the arguments expressed in the public discourse regarding the hunting of marine mammals are both fallacious and factually limited. However, it also stresses that this should not come as a surprise; the public discourse on any contested matter has gaps and holes in it, even when one leaves out the downright idiotic arguments. In fact, all the arguments mentioned in this talk are in many respects soundly portrayed and based on good moral intuitions; they are not ‘wrong’ or ‘incorrect’. Thus, the role of the critical analysis is not to *debunk* arguments; neither is its role to provide the answer to a pressing dilemma. What applying this analysis – a dose of critical thinking – can teach us is how we can move forward instead of feeling as if we should always ‘stick to our guns’. The fact is that there is no ‘killer argument’ available when it comes to making a choice between the alternatives in such a complicated problem. This talk urges stakeholders to realise that there are good reasons both for and against hunting. Neither side can associate itself with the ‘voice of reason’.

This talk ends with a discussion on a notion that pervades any theoretical discussion of bioethics. This is the notion of ‘trust’. Surely, we can, and should, clarify and tune our discourse on the question whether the hunting of marine mammals is ever morally justified. We will, however, most probably never all agree on a position. The public perception is always going to be in conflict. As soon as we realise this, the next step should be to ask ourselves how we can proceed from here and, indeed, establish *trust* between the stakeholders. The answer is not simply to concede some of our demands and meet in the middle. In this talk I argue that in the case of hunting, the one doing the act – the hunter – needs the trustworthiness more than the counterpart. Insisting on the right to hunt comes with an obligation – one is obligated to do it *properly*. And what is ‘proper’ is best established by a written code of conduct which ensures for example effective monitoring and enforcement of specific rules. Polarisation is, after all, nothing but a lack of effort meeting this obligation of making an effort to understand each other. The hunting of marine mammals in the Nordic region may gain a moral and an identifiable status if a consensus is sought between various stakeholders. This consensus would be based on a mutual understanding whatever the basic differences in attitudes towards hunting of marine mammals.

AUDITED ACCOUNTS FOR 2014 AND BUDGET FOR 2015**Accounts 2014 and budget 2015**

Income	Accounts 2014	Budget 2015
Contributions Faroes	526,025	536,545
Contributions Greenland	526,025	536,545
Contributions Iceland	1,052,059	1,073,100
Contributions Norway	2,104,102	2,146,184
Interest received	45,883	40,000
Sale of publications	0	5,000
Employers tax covered by Norway	270,570	250,000
Employees' tax	876,208	690,000
Total income	5,400,872	5,277,374
Expenditure		
Staff related costs	3,773,430	3,480,000
Staff travel and subsistence	247,484	333,000
Meetings	149,377	90,000
Office rent	213,488	220,000
Communications & office supply	114,307	100,000
Information and printing	185,569	190,000
Accounts and auditing	105,239	80,000
Observation Scheme	94,664	200,000
Scientific Committee	52,702	276,000
TNASS2015	105,844	100,000
Other expenses	16,008	100,000
Hunting Committee	5,402	100,000
Project Marine Mammals as food		150,000
Total expenditure	5,063,514	5,419,000
Yearly Balance	337,358	-141,626
Previous year liquidity (surplus/loss)	0	237,358
Transfer to general reserve	-100,000	-95,732
Transfer from general reserve		
Present year liquidity (surplus/loss)	237,358	0
General Reserve	367,908	463,640

STATEMENT FROM KNAPK REGARDING INUIT SILA

Dear Friends

Thank you for giving me the opportunity to talk today.

As you know, seal hunting is of great importance for Greenland and for the livelihood of many people living in coastal areas around the Arctic. Coastal people's right to hunt and exploit marine mammals and utilize the fish stocks has always been a firmly established principle in the Organization of Fishermen and Hunters in Greenland, KNAPK.

Over the years, the campaigns from animal rights organizations have injured sealing industry in Greenland and other countries. The European import ban on sealskin is no exception. The sad truth is that our ancient profession is on the verge of collapsing.

For too long have the people of the international community not wanted to listen to us. We have hoped things would change. We have hoped our hunters could once again earn a decent living from hunting a small part of the abundance of seals in our waters. In KNAPK we have come to the realization that we need to make our voice heard.

That is why we, in cooperation with Master Vision in Copenhagen, formed the campaign INUIT SILA with the purpose of informing first the Danish people then the rest of Europe, about the sustainable seal hunting in the North Atlantic. This could not have been done without the support we receive from the people in Greenland and from our politicians, who are united in this course. We are grateful for the impressive support from the Government of Greenland as well as from market players like Copenhagen Fur, Great Greenland and International Fur Federation. Most of all, we appreciate that all have united behind the strategy that this is a battle of perception, to reverse the anti sealing campaigns and annul the EU legislation. First we need to change the perception of the average consumer in Europe and elsewhere.

Until now, this work in INUIT SILA, has led to a massive change in the understanding of seal hunting in Denmark. All political parties have united in this, and from the fur retailers we hear that they see the perception has changed and consumers no longer question the ethics of sealskin.

In KNAPK we see this as the first steps of a long journey. A journey that will lead us to re-establishing the seal as a legitimate prey animal and as an attractive product. Hopefully along the way, we will also succeed in educating the people we meet, people who themselves live far from nature, about our way-of-life and our dependency on all nature's resources.

Our aim is to unite all Inuit seal hunters in this battle, from Greenland, Canada, Alaska and Russia. I am proud to say that we have taken the next steps already. Together with INUIT SILA Copenhagen, I visited Nunavut in January this year, to ask our fellow Inuit seal hunters to join us in this battle. I am deeply touched by the warm welcome we received, from the federal government offices in Ottawa to the Inuit organizations in Nunavut to the local hunters in Iqaluit. I must say I came home with new energy and the firm believe that united we can change this.

The coming actions will be to take the campaign across Europe. We know this is not overcome in a day, but we will slowly, country-by-country, use the strategy and learnings we already have, to spread the understanding and acceptance to important European countries.

Later this year, together with our fellow seal hunters from Nunavut, we will travel to the countries around the Baltic Sea, where local fishermen are also suffering from an unregulated population of seals eating their fish.

We will meet with politicians and journalists and tell them that the ban is jeopardising the lives of a whole people living in the Arctic and North Atlantic.

But, I must also be honest with you, and say that all is not easy. As I see it, there are two things that are crucial at this point.

- We need to secure funding to build a strong campaign organization that can counter the immense propaganda by animal rights organizations.
- We need a strong voice with clear demands from the Greenlandic and Danish governments.

From KNAPK and INUIT SILA we have suggested that the following demands are put to the EU:

- 1) Annulment of the discriminatory EU ban, that has caused Greenland to lose up to 90% of its export of sealskin, worth almost 50 million Euro since 2006.
- 2) An extensive information campaign financed by the EU, with the goal of restoring consumer confidence in Inuit sealskin and thus restoring our exports.
- 3) Compensation for the damage caused. We suggest this is done by investing in new business and income opportunities in the hunting industry and by that creating a future for the hunters who have suffered the most from this.

With this, I would like to thank you for giving me the opportunity to inform you on our work with INUIT SILA. I hope you also see this as a battle for all people who are dependent on the resources given to us by nature. We all know that the seal is perceived as an almost holy animal, and that this idea has led to these anti-sealing campaigns and bans. We know this happened regardless of facts and knowledge, purely on the basis of perception and moral. But what we don't know is which natural resources are next. What will the city-dwellers in Europe ban next, if we don't make them understand our way-of-life?

Thank you for your time.

Leif Fontaine
Vice president of KNAPK
Founder and spokesperson of INUIT SILA

PRESS RELEASE

NAMMCO - the North Atlantic Marine Mammal Commission - is an international body for cooperation on the conservation, management and study of marine mammals in the North Atlantic. The North Atlantic Marine Mammal Commission held its 23rd Council meeting from 3 – 5 February 2015, in Reykjavik, Iceland. The member countries of NAMMCO, the Faroe Islands, Greenland, Iceland and Norway again confirmed their commitment to ensuring the sustainable utilisation of marine mammals through active regional cooperation and science-based management decisions.

The Governments of Canada, Denmark, Japan and the Russian Federation were represented by observers at the meeting, as well as other international governmental organizations within the fields of fisheries (Northeast Atlantic Fisheries Organization (NAFO), North East Atlantic Fisheries Commission (NEAFC), and South East Atlantic Fisheries Commission (SEAFO)) and whaling (International Whaling Commission (IWC)).

Key events and conclusions from the meeting included the following:

- **Ethics of Hunting Marine Mammals**

Professor Henry Alexander Henrysson of the Centre for Ethics at the University of Iceland gave a scholarly and thought-provoking presentation *The Hunting of Marine Mammals: Conflict, Consensus and a Moral Code* during the opening session of the meeting. The talk explored and exposed the popular opinions and taboos with respect to hunting in general but specifically concerning marine mammals. This catalysed many questions, and provided an excellent introduction to NAMMCO's interest in promoting marine mammals as a food resource.

- **Marine Mammals and Food Security**

Following a ministerial meeting in 2012, NAMMCO decided to examine the use of marine mammal products in the context of global food security. A Planning Group established at NAMMCO 22 has now outlined two main goals 1) production of a background document reviewing and compiling existing material on the topic, and 2) ways to communicate the message.

- **Manuals on Whale Hunting**

NAMMCO has now completed all three authoritative manuals: one dealing with large baleen whaling and the use of whaling cannon and the penthrith grenade, a second dealing specifically with the use of the spinal lance and hook in the pilot whale hunt, and just recently, the third and last one that is dealing with hunting of small cetaceans in Greenland. These provide details on use, maintenance, weaponry and ballistics information with a focus on safety for hunters and improved animal welfare. All are available online at www.nammco.no in English language. The manuals are also available in native languages as required for the hunting communities.

- **NAMMCO Scientific Publications – free online**

The journal website (<http://septentrio.uit.no/index.php/NAMMCOASP/index>), as of 30 January 2015, has had almost 4,000 visitors from 97 countries since its launch in August 2013. The *Walrus of the North Atlantic* volume 9 has now been published both online and in hard copy. The volume 10 on *Age estimation of marine mammals with a focus on monodontids* has 8 papers published online as “online early versions”. All previous volumes 1-8 incl. are now accessible on the journal website.

- **Inspection and Observation**

NAMMCO operates an international observation scheme to monitor whether national legislation and decisions made by the Commission are respected. Observers are appointed to report on hunting activities in member countries. The scope for 2015 is whaling in the Faroe Islands.

- **Whale Surveys**

The series of North Atlantic Sightings Surveys (NASS) has been the flagship of NAMMCO and is of vital importance for the sustainable management of cetacean stocks in the NAMMCO area. Member nations are planning the sixth North Atlantic cetacean Sightings Survey (NASS). NASS will be coordinated with other national surveys in the area in the summer of 2015, and the area to be covered extends 1,740,000 square nautical miles including areas around West, Northeast and East Greenland, Jan Mayen Central Atlantic, north and south of Iceland and areas along and to the west of Norway encompassing the area around the Faroe Islands.

- **International Cooperation**

Cooperation between NAMMCO and ICES (International Council for Exploration of the Sea) regarding the scientific seal working group, WGHARP which is the successor to the former ICES/NAFO WG on harp and hooded seals, is in the process of formalisation. This new link with ICES and NAFO is recognition of NAMMCO's important role in seal scientific and management advice.

- **Climate Change – Effects on Ice-breeding Seals**

Of concern to NAMMCO, is the ice retreat with subsequent habitat loss which is a challenge for all ice breeding seals, harp seals included. Harp seals require stable ice for pupping, nursing and the first weeks after weaning when the young develop the capacity to swim and feed. It has been observed that they may respond to poor ice conditions in different ways, depending on the presence or absence of ice at the beginning of the pupping period. If no ice was present, females moved away from their traditional whelping areas to find suitable ice. If small amounts of ice were present, females gave birth even if the ice was too thin to sustain the pups, resulting in high pup mortality. If the predicted warming trends continue, ice-breeding harp seals will encounter more years with poor ice conditions and may eventually adapt by moving to alternative areas. Until then, they will continue to have increased levels of mortality.

- **Scientific Advice**

Scientific advice forms the basis of management advice in NAMMCO, and through the Scientific Committee, many specialist topics are addressed through Working groups. During 2015, topics to be addressed include stock assessments of walrus, narwhal and beluga, fin, common minke and humpback whales, and a special symposium on disturbance to marine mammals in their environment. In addition an expert working group on assessment of large whale killing methods.

- **New General Secretary**

The meeting acknowledged the 10 years of service by the present General Secretary, Dr Christina Lockyer, who will resign 1 March 2015, and thanked her for her good work and long service. It was announced that the new General Secretary, Dr Geneviève Desportes, who has had a long affiliation with NAMMCO through her work in the Scientific Committee, would be commencing her appointment in April 2015.

Regarding Council, the present Chair, Ms Ásta Einarsdóttir (Iceland) was re-elected for a further term of office, as was the vice-Chair, Ms Amalie Jessen (Greenland).