

NAMMCO



26TH MEETING OF COUNCIL

REPORT

7 – 8 March 2018

NAMMCO Council Report 2017

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REPORT OF THE 26th MEETING OF THE COUNCIL

7-8 March 2018, Tromsø, Norway

1. OPENING PROCEDURES

1.1. Welcome address

The Chair of Council, Amalie Jessen (Greenland), welcomed all the participants (Appendix 1) to the 26th meeting of the Council of NAMMCO, and to the premises of the Secretariat.

Jessen noted that NAMMCO had undergone a transition from a teen to an adult management organisation during its 26 years of existence. As Chair, she invited NAMMCO to look to the future and be more visionary in dealing with sound conservation and management of marine mammal resources. Being involved already in the predecessor to NAMMCO, the North Atlantic Committee (NAC) and having witnessed the signing of the 1992 agreement, she had the opportunity of observing NAMMCO evolving into a responsible regional management organisation. There will, however, always be room for improvements to make NAMMCO's work more effective for the benefit of the marine resources and the people utilising marine mammals. She looked forward to the discussions the coming days and hoped for a constructive and visionary meeting.

1.2. Admission of observers

On behalf of the Council, the Chair welcomed the attendance of observers (Appendix 1), noting representatives from Canada, Denmark, Japan, the Russian Federation, the International Whaling Commission (IWC), the Northwest Atlantic Fisheries Organisation (NAFO), the North East Atlantic Fisheries Commission (NEAFC), the South East Atlantic Fisheries Organisations, Nunavut Tunngavik Inc., the IWMC World Conservation Trust and Livelihoods International (LIVIN). The Chair welcomed specifically the representatives of Makivik Corporation, which was granted observer status in January 2018 and was therefore observing at NAMMCO meetings for the first time. Regrets had been received from OSPAR.

The Chair also welcomed the three experts of the NAMMCO Performance Review Panel who were observing the meeting, Caterina Fortuna, Dan Goodman and Russell Smith (see agenda item 2.1.2).

1.3. Opening statements

Faroe Islands, Greenland, Iceland and Norway delivered opening statements, as well as Canada, Denmark, Japan, the Russian Federation, Makivik Corporation, the IWC and Nunavut Tunngavik Inc. The IWMC & LIVIN delivered a joint opening statement. These statements are contained in Appendix 4.

1.4. Adoption of agenda & list of documents

The agenda (NAMMCO/26/02) was adopted without amendments (Appendix 2). The list of documents can be found in Appendix 3.

1.5. Meeting arrangements

The Secretariat of NAMMCO was hosting the Council meeting this year and the General Secretary, Geneviève Desportes, joined the Chair in welcoming all participants to the premises of the Secretariat. She presented the meeting arrangements and practicalities. She drew attention to the screening of a 2016 Canadian / Nunavut documentary film, *Angry Inuk*, written and directed by Alethea Arnaquq-Baril. The multi award-winning film defends the Inuit seal hunt as a vital means for Inuit peoples to sustain themselves. NAMMCO has screened the documentary on several occasions in association with presentations focussing on the ecosystem impact of Arctic whaling and sealing.

1.6. Presentation from Invited Speaker

Makivik Corporation has represented the Inuit of Nunavik, Quebec, since 1978. Makivik asked and was granted observer status to NAMMCO in January 2017. Adamie Delisle-Alaku, the Vice-president of Makivik Corporation and Head of Resource Development was invited to give the following presentation "Marine mammal and Nunavik Inuit". He noted that Makivik had wanted to become observer to NAMMCO for a long time and maybe also to become a member. His presentation underlined the importance of marine mammal resources in the Nunavik culture and the importance of food sharing, as well as the incertitude generated by climate and environment changes. Delisle-Alaku underlined the importance for Makivik of including traditional knowledge holders in the management decision process. The Nunavik Marine Region Wildlife

Board (NMRWB) is the main instrument of wildlife management in the Nunavik Marine Region. It considers both western science and traditional Inuit knowledge, or Inuit Qaujimagatuqangit (IQ), when making wildlife management decisions. Nunavik Inuit have the right to hunt any species of wildlife in the Nunavik Marine Region to fulfil their economic, social and cultural needs, unless NMRWB establishes a limit. Nunavik Inuit harvesting takes priority over other forms of harvesting.

Comments:

The presentation was very well received. Greenland noted that there were many similarities between the realities of Nunavik Inuit as depicted by Delisle-Alaku and those described by Jens Danielsen from Greenland Hunter's and Fishermen's Organization (KNAPK) during the meeting of the Management Committee for Seals and Walrus. There were also similarities of issues with the Marine mammals as Food Resources project. Different avenues for cooperation between Makivik and Greenland were mentioned. Delisle-Alaku was thanked for his interesting and lively presentation.

1.7. Other business

There was no other business.

2. FINANCE AND ADMINISTRATION

2.1 Report of the Finance and Administration Committee

The Chair of the Finance and Administration Committee (FAC), Jóannes V. Hansen (Faroe Islands), presented the activities of the Committee since NAMMCO 25 (NAMMCO/26/04).

The main subjects of relevance to Council included:

- Continuing to enhance NAMMCO's visibility
- Clarification on the internship programme and evaluating the possibilities for secondment arrangements at the Secretariat
- Following the activities of the Scientific Committee, the Committee for Hunting Methods and the Committee on Inspection and Observation
- Establishing the new working group on By-Catch, Entanglements and Live Strandings (BYCELS)
- Relation with non-member parties and other bodies
- Recruitment of a new Scientific Secretary
- Finance related items; the accounting for 2017, and the preparation of the 2018 budget and the draft budgets 2019 and 2020
- SWOTS process for all committees

FAC provided the following advice to Council:

- Approve the 2017 accounts, endorse the 2018 budget and approve the 2019 draft budget.
- Reconfirm the continued prioritisation to update the NAMMCO website, and its use as a hub of all NAMMCO information, communication and outreach activities, both internally and externally
- Endorse the recommendations forwarded to Council by the Committee on Hunting Methods, the Committee on Inspection and Observation and the BYCELS Working Group

Comments:

The Chair thanked Hansen for his presentation and invited comments to the report as well as thanking Hansen for his able chairing of the Committee in the past year.

Council **endorsed** the FAC recommendations.

2.1.1. Audited accounts 2017

Hansen presented the accounts 2017 (NAMMCO/26/05, Appendix 5). They were in line with what was expected both in terms of income and expenditure. The accounts closed with a minus of NOK 121 423, which was covered by funds from the General Reserve. FAC also had reviewed the auditors' report, which included only minor comments.

Comments:

The 2017 accounts were **approved** by Council.

2.1.2. Performance Review

Jessen recalled the decision of Council 25 to undertake a Performance Review of the organisation and the adopted process for conducting such a review. The objectives of the Performance review were:

- To assess the performance and accordance of the organization with the NAMMCO Agreement and other relevant international instruments addressing the conservation and management of marine mammals
- To assess the performance of the Parties in responding to NAMMCO recommendations and proposals
- To propose ways ahead for areas where improvements are required

The review criteria for the Performance Review were developed from the “Kobe Criteria for Reviewing the Performance of RFMOs” (FAO 2015¹) and amended to reflect NAMMCO’s mandate and membership. The Performance Review Panel should be composed of external experts, non-nationals and non-residents of any NAMMCO member countries to ensure objectivity and neutrality. Council had agreed to ask FAO, IWC and NAFO to nominate one expert to the panel.

Dan Goodman (Japan), Caterina Fortuna (Chair of the IWC Scientific Committee, Italy) and Russell Smith (USA) were nominated to the Performance Review Panel by FAO, IWC and NAFO respectively. Due to a delay in the nomination process, the Panel started its work in January 2018. The Panel nominated Fortuna as its Chair.

Fortuna provided a short summary of the work undertaken by the Panel which includes regular meetings via skype both internally and with the Secretariat. The Panel developed a *Modus Operandi* based on the Terms of Reference and the Review criteria adopted by NAMMCO Council and inspired by the Multilateral Organization Performance Network’s methodology MOPAN 3.0². It developed a multi-choice questionnaire, based on the review criteria, and several follow-up questions for different categories of stakeholders. The questionnaire was sent out mid-February to about 80 people (including present and past chairs of Council and committees, delegation members, members of committees, observers and committees’ invited experts). The total response rate so far was over 40%.

Parallel to the Council meeting, the Panel conducted interviews of all Parties’ delegation, chairs and vice-chairs of Council and committees and all present observer delegations, as well as the Secretariat. For its evaluations, the Panel will use all official relevant documents as well as a set of summaries prepared by the NAMMCO Secretariat. The agreed workplan will allow delivering the Panel report by next December and presenting the final report to Council 27.

On behalf of the Panel, Fortuna thanked the Secretariat for its great support and assistance and the NAMMCO community for their, often very in depth and dedicated, answers and its openness. She underlined that it so far has been a very constructive and positive experience.

Comments:

The Chair thanked Fortuna for her presentation and the members of the Panel for having accepted the task. She wished them a successful work and noted that Council considered the Performance review as a very important undertaking for NAMMCO and its future and looked forward to the constructive comments and advices from the Panel. There were no further comments by the Parties.

2.1.3. Other items

The Chair informed that she had initiated, in parallel with the external Performance Review process, an internal review process. All committees were asked to perform a SWOT analysis (Strengths, Weaknesses, Opportunities and Threats) of their committee and the organisation. The aim was to identify strengths which

¹ FAO. 2015. *The implementation of performance review reports by regional fishery bodies, 2004–2014*, by P D Szigeti and GL Lugten. FAO Fisheries and Aquaculture Circular No. 1108. Rome, Italy. Available at <http://www.fao.org/3/a-i4869e.pdf>.

² <http://www.mopanonline.org>

should be further reinforced, weaknesses which should be dealt with, opportunities that were not recognised and threats that the organisation should be aware of. The purpose of this ongoing internal process was to make NAMMCO committees more effective and pro-active in their deliberations.

2.1.4. Budget 2018 and draft budget 2019

Hansen introduced the 2018 budget and draft budget for 2019 (NAMMCO/26/07). Because of two major unexpected expenses related to the Performance Review and the resignation of the Scientific Secretary, and the hiring process and relocation of a new Scientific Secretary, both the 2018 and 2019 budgets show a negative yearly balance of respectively over NOK 540 000 and NOK 300 000. These figures are expected to represent the worst-case scenarios. The negative results can be covered by the general reserve, now budgeted to be decreased to the level of NOK 50 000 at the outcome of 2019. Cuts were made in all budget items, although not impairing the core activities of NAMMCO. Some activities of the Scientific Committee were, however, postponed a year. The sector which was affected the most where the representation and outreach activities.

Comments:

Council **endorsed** the prioritisation of activities proposed by FAC as depicted in the budgets of the different committees. It **endorsed** the 2018 budget and **approved** the 2019 draft budget. It also tasked FAC to follow closely the development of the expenses in 2018 and to consider how to rebuild the general reserve as soon as possible to the level agreed upon of 10% of the general NAMMCO budget, i.e. approximatively NOK 600 000.

2.2. Other business

Election of officers: Greenland is scheduled to take over the Chair of FAC, but is presently chairing the Council, FAC therefore agreed that Hansen would continue as Chair for one year, with Greenland remaining Vice-Chair.

3. NATIONAL PROGRESS REPORTS

National Progress Reports (NPR) for 2016 were received from member countries, prior to the Scientific Committee meeting in November 2017. In addition, and in accordance with last year decision by Council to forward the delivery of NPR to March 1 for the previous year, all parties delivered the NPRs for 2017 (NAMMCO/26/NPR-F-16 & 17, NAMMCO/26/NPR-G-16 & 17, NAMMCO/26/NPR-I-16 & 17, NAMMCO/26/NPR-N-16 & 17, <https://nammco.no/topics/annual-national-progress-reports/>).

National Progress Reports for 2016 were also received from the observer countries Canada, Japan, and the Russian Federation, all of whom were thanked for their contributions.

Comments:

The Secretariat noted that both sets of National Progress Reports and catch reporting had been received by member countries in the requested format. No further comments were made.

4. SCIENTIFIC COMMITTEE

4.1. Report of the Scientific Committee

The Chair of the Scientific Committee (SC), Tore Haug (NO), presented its report (NAMMCO/26/08, <https://nammco.no/wp-content/uploads/2017/01/24th-scientific-committee-meeting-report.pdf>). He 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/26/13-15).

4.1.1. Overall work in 2017-2018

The SC had held two meetings in 2017, an intersessional video meeting in March and its annual meeting in November in Reykjavík, Iceland. Three Working Groups (WG) met in 2017: the Large Whale Assessment Working Group, the NAMMCO-JCNB Joint Scientific Working Group on Narwhal and Beluga and the By-catch Working Group. Additionally, NAMMCO organised a symposium to undertake a Global Review of

Monodontids (GROM, NAMMCO/26/22) and a workshop on “Cetacean Distribution and Abundance in the North Atlantic” in conjunction with the Society for Marine Mammalogy annual conference (as this event was posterior to the 2017 annual SC meeting, it will be included in the 2018 SC report).

4.1.2 Cooperation with other organisations

The SC continued maintaining in 2017 close ties with several organisations. Members of the SC participated to the Scientific Committee of the International Whaling Commission (IWC) and to the annual meeting of the Conservation of Arctic Flora and fauna (CAFF) Circumpolar Biodiversity Monitoring Programme (CBMP) Marine, thus contributing to the State of the Arctic Marine Biodiversity Report (SAMBR).

The SC forwarded to the 23d Advisory Committee (AC 23) of the Agreement on the Conservation of Small Cetaceans in the Baltic, North East Atlantic, Irish and North Seas (ASCOBANS) an invitation to cooperate with the Norwegian Institute of Marine Research (IMR) and NAMMCO in organising a symposium for reviewing the status of harbour porpoises in the North Atlantic. To the disappointment of the SC, AC 23 decided not to engage in any cooperation on the organisation of the harbour porpoise symposium.

4.1.3 Proposed workplan for 2018

By-Catch WG (April 2018, videoconference)

Chair: Kimberly Murray (NOAA), convener: Geneviève Desportes (NAMMCO)

Terms of Reference:

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

The specific meeting should review the Icelandic and Norwegian by-catch estimates, which had been presented to the WG at its meeting in 2017 but had not been endorsed. The WG had provided advice on how revising the estimates. The meeting will take place over videoconference, but an in-person meeting may also be scheduled if necessary.

Abundance Estimates WG (22-24 May 2018, Copenhagen)

Chair: Daniel Pike (CA / NAMMCO), convener: Rikke Hansen (GL)

Invited participants: Canada, USA, and SCANS-III expertise.

Terms of Reference:

- Review the following abundance estimates and trends:
 - Norwegian minke last cycle estimate
 - Pilot whale 2015 estimate, and trends in abundance
 - Icelandic/Faroes shipboard dolphin 2007 and 2015 estimates
 - Norwegian last two survey cycles estimates of all non-minke species, including large baleen whale, sperm whale, killer whales and dolphins
 - An overall (FR, GL, IS NO) Central North Atlantic minke whale estimate
 - Icelandic/Faroes shipboard sperm whales 2007 and 2015 estimates
 -

Walrus WG (23-25 October 2018, Copenhagen)

Chair: Rob Stewart (CA / NAMMCO), convener: Mads Peter Heide-Jørgensen (GL)

Terms of Reference:

- As a first priority, address request R-2.6.7 – provide assessments of, and advice on sustainable removals from, all stocks of walrus in Greenland covering the period from 2019 to 2023, with the advice for Qaanaaq starting in 2021. External experts should be invited from Canada, Alaska and Russia
- In conjunction with this, also consider request R-1.6.5: Greenland requests that struck and loss rates are subtracted from future advice on sustainable removals in Greenland, with the advice being given as total allowable landings
- [The SC has recommended that catch statistics include correction for struck but lost animals for different seasons, areas, and catch operations] Provide advice on the best methods for collection of the desired statistics on losses (Request R-1.6.4)

- Discuss whether there is any new information to answer request R-2.6.3: to provide advice on the effects of human disturbance, including fishing and shipping activities, in particular scallop fishing, on the distribution, behaviour and conservation status of walrus in West Greenland. (The Disturbance Symposium held in 2015 provided some information in relation to this request, however the SC agreed to keep this request ongoing and to ask the WWG for further advice on this issue)

Joint IMR/NAMMCO Harbour Porpoise Symposium (early December 2018, Tromsø)

Chair: Ulf Lindstrøm (IMR), convenor: Geneviève Desportes (NAMMCO)

IMR and NAMMCO will organise a symposium on harbour porpoises, where the results from the recent IMR harbour porpoise projects will be presented. The aim is to review the conservation status of harbour porpoise in the North Atlantic, 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.

Killer whale review – Contract work

The last review of North Atlantic killer whales was in 1987. The SC recommended that NAMMCO contract a scientist to prepare for the next SC meeting the review of all available information and current research activities on abundance, stock structure, and movements of killer whales in the North Atlantic. Vikingsson and Ugarte should coordinate with the contracted scientist, and the SC encouraged the participation of Canadian scientists to contribute information.

Harbour porpoise Working Group

Chair: Bjarni Mikkelsen (FO)

The SC deemed that this working group, originally planned for 2018 and aiming at conducting an assessment of harbour porpoise stock(s) should be postponed to 2019 to await the finalising of data collection and analysis in all countries, including by-catch estimates.

Scientific Committee 2018 Meeting

2018 will be the 25-jubilee year for the Scientific Committee which had its first meeting in 1993 in Tromsø. Norway will host the meeting which will be held on board the coastal steamer, *Polarlys*, from 13-16 November 2018.

Haug also presented the list of other working group meetings recommended by the SC for informing its answers to the current requests for advice from Council.

- ICES/NAFO/NAMMCO WG on harp and hooded seals
- Coastal seals WG
- Bearded seal WG
- Ringed seal WG
- Pilot whale WG
- Satellite tagging symposium

4.1.4 Other business

There was no other business.

Comments to 4.1:

The Council noted the report and thanked the SC Chair and SC members for their work. Council **agreed** with the proposed work plan pending time and budget considerations.

Canada asked whether vessel strikes were considered by NAMMCO and whether the By-Catch WG was tasked to provide answers to the US by-catch/MMPA related demands. Canada was informed that vessel strikes have not been directly considered by NAMMCO, as it did not appear to be a significant problem for the species and areas considered by NAMMCO, but that they were occasionally reported with the catch data. Iceland commented that the countries were waiting for the By-Catch WG and SC conclusions on by-catch rate and risk in member countries. These would inform the answer that each member country would individually formulate in response to the US demand.

Russia asked Norway for the status of the results of the minke whale survey on the Barents Sea. The survey had been successful. Norway had got permission to access part of the Russian zone, which was positive and thanked Russia for this access. The partial access, however, may influence the comprehensiveness of the total abundance. The analysis was not completed yet but should be finalised in time for the IWC Scientific Committee in May.

4.2. Adoption of priorities and work plan for the SC in 2018-2020

Council agreed to the following schedule for WG's in 2018, 2019 and 2020:

2018	2019	2020
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Abundance Estimates WG - By-Catch WG - Walrus WG - Joint IMR/NAMMCO harbour porpoise symposium <p><u>Contracted work:</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Review of North Atlantic killer whales - Analysis of all remaining TNASS and NASS data, for species for which an abundance estimate is possible. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Harbour porpoise WG - NAMMCO/JCNB joint WG on narwhal and beluga & workshop on impact of climate change on management advice - Joint ICES/NAFO/NAMMCO WG on harp and hooded seals - Satellite tagging workshop (postponed from 2018) 	<p>Postponed from 2019</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Coastal seal WG - Pilot whale WG <p><u>Likely postponed to 2021</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Bearded & ringed seals WG

4.3. Other business

Haug presented a project proposal from the SC on the development of a tag for satellite tracking of cetacean in the North Atlantic. The common minke whale was the target species as i) there has been so far little tagging success for this species and distribution in winter remains largely unknown, ii) with the reasoning that what works for minke whales will also work for all larger whales and likely also for many smaller cetaceans, like pilot whales.

The project which is three-fold entails a) the technical development of the tag, b) a programme to study movements and changes in occurrence of common minke whales in the North Atlantic and c) a shared NAMMCO data base of tracking data. The proposal described how a joint NAMMCO satellite-tracking program could be developed and what would be required to reach a point where the technique can be used as an efficient and reliable field technique. The total cost of all three elements was tentatively evaluated to NOK 2 300 000 NOK.

Minke whales and/or the tagging of smaller species like pilot whales are of interest to all NAMMCO member countries and the project represented a good opportunity for a closer research cooperation among SC members. The SC had agreed that a small group of SC members (led by Heide-Jørgensen, GL) should discuss the steps to move forward with the proposal, if Council supported the proposal.

Comments:

All member countries expressed their support to the project. They saw it as an important technical development which will generate better information on minke whale movements but possibly also other species, therefore engendering better science and by the same token a better management of whale stocks. Therefore, and because it is a joint project involving all NAMMCO countries, it constitutes a good opportunity and flagship for NAMMCO.

Council tasked FAC to consider the projects financial implications and propose avenues for funding. Desportes indicated that the 2018 budget allowed the chair of the project to meet tag developers at the next meeting of the European Cetacean Society.

5. COMMITTEE ON HUNTING METHODS

5.1. Report of the Committee on Hunting Methods

On behalf of the Chair of the Committee on Hunting Methods (CHM), Guðni M. Eiríksson (IS) who was unable to attend, Kathrine A. Ryeng (NO) presented the activities of the Committee since Council 25 (NAMMCO/26/09, <https://nammco.no/wp-content/uploads/2018/03/report-for-web-chm-14-february-2018-.pdf>).

Member countries reported on new and upcoming regulations, quotas, catches, number of active vessels, hunting periods, irregularities in whaling and sealing activities, as well as strandings. Iceland had continued to take TTD (time to death) measurements in 2017.

The Committee started a review of all recommendations and responses from member countries and NAMMCO arising from workshops and expert group meetings over the years. This review should be finalised in 2018. The Committee continued their discussions on ways of reducing struck and lost (S&L) rates. A referenced overview table presenting S&L rates in the different regions and hunts will be prepared as working tool. The Committee discussed ways of collecting S&L data and agreed to investigate whether self-reporting by hunters through filming during the hunts would be possible.

The Committee discussed which hunts should be prioritised for collecting of S&L and agreed on the following:

- For Greenland, to collect S&L data on narwhal and beluga
- For Iceland, to collect S&L data on harbour and grey seal
- For Norway, to collect S&L data on harp seal

NAMMCO 24 had tasked the Committee to organise a workshop to develop alternative means of collecting standardised TTD data for baleen whale hunts that are less costly than the standardised procedure presently used by Norway and Iceland. The Committee reiterated that this standardised procedure was the best and most accurate method. Acknowledging, however, its high cost implications and the fact that it was not applicable to all hunts, the Committee decided to investigate whether self-reporting by hunters could be useful. Self-reporting would likely not be as reliable, but it would represent a good supplement to the recommended 10-year intervals of standardised collections. It would provide information in the 10-year interval on possible upcoming issues related to the efficiency of hunts. To that end, Norway will undertake preliminary studies in the 2018 minke whaling season.

The Committee agreed that comparing hunting efficiency in terrestrial and marine mammal hunts would be informative and discussed the possibility of organising a workshop on this issue.

Greenland had produced an animation video on the handling of the penthrite Whale grenade-99 (screened at NAMMCO 25) and asked the Committee for comments on the narratives of the video. The Committee very much welcomed this initiative and agreed that it would be beneficial to all hunters handling penthrite grenades. It recommended that the video be finalised for the use of all concerned NAMMCO countries.

The Committee agreed to forward the following recommendations to Council for future work:

- Looking further into the possibility of implementing self-reporting methods to describe the killing efficiency of the hunt
- Convening a workshop on alternative methods to collect data on the efficiency of the hunt
- Finalising the narrative to the video on the handling of the penthrite Whale grenade-99 for the use of all interested NAMMCO countries

Comments:

Iceland expressed its thanks to Ryeng for presenting the report on behalf of the Chair. Council **endorsed** the recommendations forwarded by the Committee. Member countries announced that they would address the recommendations provided regarding the collection of S&L data.

5.2 Any other business

Norway asked whether Canada had considered the recommendation provided by the 2015 Expert Group on Time to Death and endorsed by Council 24, that Canada should consider using the hunting methods developed in Alaska for bowhead hunting in order to reduce TTD, which were much higher in Canada. In response to the question, David Lee (NTI) made the following statement:

- NTI appreciates the comments and recommendations provided by the 2015 Expert Group meeting on assessing time to death data from the large whale hunts
- NTI supports the primary recommendations and the use of the penthrite grenade to reduce time to death and struck and loss for hunts of bowhead whales
- NTI continues to communicate regularly with an expert (Dr Egil Ole Øen) to discuss ways of improving methods for the bowhead hunting in Nunavut
- NTI continues to work with a veterinarian (Dr Pierre-Yves Daoust) to document bowhead whale hunting in Nunavut
- NTI has communicated with some Inupiat and staff from the Department of Wildlife Management of the North Slope Borough to initiate sharing of knowledge on bowhead hunting
- NTI provides training to hunters on hunting methods and a hunt plan is required by any community requesting permission for bowhead hunting
- "Inuit are very aware of the time it takes for an animal like the bowhead to be killed. Inuit have a very strong belief that any animal no matter how small or big not be made to suffer. If you are going to use the animal, then you kill it as soon as possible " - Paul Irgaut

Lee also noted that, contrary to Alaska, NTI does observe the hunts with respect to TTD. He informed that he would forward the reiterated concern of NAMMCO with regards to TTD in bowhead hunting.

Stas Olpinski (Makivik Corporation) informed that Makivik was cooperating with Nunavut on hunting methods for bowhead whales. Although the present primary killing method in Nunavik was the use of the penthrite grenade, Makivik was also exploring the use of the lance as this was the traditional hunting method. It remained very conscious, though, of the importance of insuring that the whales are dispatched as quickly as feasible.

6. COMMITTEE ON INSPECTION AND OBSERVATION

6.1. Report of the Committee on Inspection and Observation

The Chair of the Committee on Inspection and Observation (CIO), Ulla S. Wang (FO), presented the report (NAMMCO/26/10, <https://nammco.no/wp-content/uploads/2018/03/report-for-wb-cio-16-february-2018.pdf>).

The Committee discussed the observation activities carried out in 2017 and those planned for 2018 (see Items 6.2 and 6.3 respectively). Members of the Committee also reported on the national control effort, monitoring type and data collection.

The discussion focused on a report prepared by the Secretariat, which reviewed the implementation of the NAMMCO International Observation Scheme since its inception in 1998. The implementation of the Scheme had been reviewed previously in 2005.

The review, based on the observers' mandatory and voluntary reports and the annual reports of the Secretariat to Council, focused on the implementation process, the coverage achieved, i.e., the percentage of hunting effort observed, and the rate of infractions. It presented recommendations for improving the implementation of the Scheme and rendering it more effective and efficient. The review was guided by criteria established by international instruments relevant to NAMMCO as well as guidelines, standards and practices from other regional fisheries bodies.

The Committee agreed that a review of the Observation Scheme and its implementation was more than timely and that the report constituted a valuable input and starting point for this review. At present, the review was a work in progress and the report constituted an internal working document which would not be presented to Council at this year's meeting. Committee members agreed to initiate an internal review process as an input to the Committee's deliberations and noted that such a review needs to both look at the text of the Provisions and

the implementation of the Observation Scheme.

The Committee agreed to recommend to Council to continue the review of the Observation Scheme with the aim of providing recommendations at the next Council meeting.

Comments:

Council expressed their appreciation of and **support** to this review of the Observation Scheme. It tasked the Committee to continue the review, with the aim of presenting the results and recommendations at the next Council meeting. The review should both look at the text of the Provisions and the implementation of the Observation Scheme.

6.2. The Joint NAMMCO Control Scheme

6.2.1. Observation scheme in 2017

The Deputy Secretary, Charlotte Winsnes, presented the 2017 observation activities (NAMMCO/26/11), which had Icelandic whaling as scope. There had not been any fin whaling in Iceland in 2017, therefore the only hunt observed was the minke whale hunt.

The only 2 active whaling vessels were observed. The observer participated to four hunting trips, observed several chases and the kill of 2 whales. No struck and lost were observed and no violations reported.

Comments:

Council noted the report.

6.2.2. Observation scheme planned for 2018

Document NAMMCO/26/11 presented the planned observation activities for 2018, which had pilot whaling in the Faroe Islands as scope.

Comments:

With reference to agenda item 6.1 above, Council agreed that in view of the ongoing review process of the Scheme, efforts and resources would best be concentrated on the review. Observation activities should be cancelled in 2018 and resume in 2019 or 2020, taking into consideration the conclusions and recommendations of the review.

6.2.3. Other business

Election of officers, the Faroe Islands stepped down and Norway will assume the next chairmanship.

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

7.1. Report of the BYCELS Working Group

The Chair of the Working Group on BYCELS, Kathrine A. Ryeng (NO) presented the report (NAMMCO/26/12, <https://nammco.no/wp-content/uploads/2018/03/report-bycels-15-february-2018.pdf>).

The BYCELS WG, established by NAMMCO 25, held one meeting where it considered the terms of reference forwarded by Council and elected Kathrine A. Ryeng as Chair.

The WG discussed the types of fishing gears representing the highest risk for by-catch and entanglements, the by-catch problem globally and the animal welfare implications of by-catch/entanglements and by-catch mitigation.

Prevention was identified as the ultimate goal, and the Group recognised that there was no single global solution for large whale entanglements, but that it required local solutions.

The WG agreed to review what was done in other organisations, with the aim of developing a set of NAMMCO guidelines that could inform member countries.

The WG also discussed the rationale behind the euthanasia of live stranded animals. It agreed that for large whales, euthanasia, if feasible, was the best solution from an animal welfare perspective, whereas for small whales and pinnipeds the situation might be different.

The WG agreed to forward the following action plan to Council:

- To prepare an overview of the extent of by-catch, entanglement and disentanglement, live and dead strandings in member countries
- To review IWC guidelines and others (e.g. guidelines existing in Norway) on by-catch, entanglement and disentanglement and live strandings with the aim of identifying procedures and actions for recommendation to NAMMCO members
- The Secretariat to inform relevant networks on the existence of BYCELS and ensure that NAMMCO is in the information loop on matters of interest to BYCELS

The WG agreed that at present the expertise it encompasses was sufficient for the tasks at hand and that external expertise would be sought when special issues required it.

Comments:

Council noted the report. The BYCELS WG was thanked for its work and tasked to proceed with the presented action plan.

7.2. Other business

There was no other business.

8. JOINT MANAGEMENT COMMITTEES

8.1. Report of the joint meeting of the Management Committees

The Chair of the joint meeting of the Management Committees (MCJ), Nette Levermann (GL), presented the report (NAMMCO/26/13 <https://nammco.no/wp-content/uploads/2018/03/report-of-the-joint-management-committee-meeting-2018-nammco26.pdf>).

8.1.1. Ecosystem Approach

Levermann reviewed the Council requests for advice from the SC: R-1.5.3 (impact of the Mary River project), R-1.5.4 (effects of non-hunting related anthropogenic stressors), R-3.4.9 (effect of human disturbance on belugas, narwhals and walrus) and noted that the requests were discussed separately under the updates from the SC.

The MCJ received an update of the SC discussion of R-1.5.4, where the SC noted that this request could not be answered in general and recommended that all upcoming working groups consider request R-1.5.4, for example by routinely adding non-hunting impacts to their agendas. The MCJ asked for clarification on the impact of the workload of the WGs if non-hunting impacts were added to the WGs agendas. Haug replied that adding this item to the agendas would either require not discussing some other items or prolonging the meetings.

The MCJ endorsed the recommendation to add non-hunting impacts to the future agendas of the SC WGs.

8.1.1.1. Disturbance

The NAMMCO-JCNB JWG discussed the Mary River project at their meeting in 2017 and stated “The JWG expressed concern regarding development of mining activities and associated ship traffic on the Eclipse Sound narwhal stock. No similar example of such a high level of shipping and development has occurred in a high-density narwhal habitat, so there is little precedent to inform an assessment of the impacts.”

Canada acknowledged the interest of NAMMCO to obtain information on how projects such as these are approved in Canada and provided an update on the Mary River project.

The MCJ endorsed the recommendation of the SC that all information on the Mary River project be presented to the JWG, and for someone from the Fisheries Protection Division in Canada to attend the next NAMMCO-

JCNB JWG in 2019. Canada informed the MCJ that they will work with the NAMMCO Secretariat to determine which potential impacts and related indicators are of specific interest for updates concerning the Mary River project. In terms of DFO participation at future JWG meetings, Canada indicated that it would investigate this possibility and report back to the Secretariat.

The MCJ endorsed the recommendation that cumulative effects should be considered when new shipping and icebreaking activities were proposed for narwhal and beluga habitat areas.

8.1.1.2. Climate change

Climate change is discussed in the SC each year, and is also dealt with in many of the WGs, including WGHARP, NAMMCO-JCNB JWG, etc. Haug gave a presentation to the MCJ on the impacts of climate change on future fish and marine mammal harvests in the North Atlantic.

8.1.1.3. Marine mammal – fisheries interaction

The requests under this agenda item were reviewed: R-1.1.5 (update on interactions between marine mammals and commercially exploited marine resources), R-1.1.8 (dynamic changes in spatial distribution due to ecosystem changes and functional responses), R-1.2.1 (establishment of multispecies models for management purposes for the North Atlantic ecosystems, including marine mammals), R-1.2.2 (monitoring stock levels and trends of all marine mammal stocks), R-1.4.7 (reviewing the results of the MareFrame ecosystem management project). MCJ noted that R-1.1.5, R-1.1.8, and R-1.2.2 have become part of the working procedures of the SC and should remain as standing.

The MCJ endorsed the recommendation of the SC that a small group review the results of MareFrame and present a review to the next SC meeting. This review may provide answers to R-1.2.1 and R-1.4.7. It was further discussed that the heading over these requests “Economic aspects of marine mammal-fisheries interactions” may not be within the competence of the SC. The MCJ suggested that the SC comment on whether considering the “economic aspects” should remain in their purview.

By-catch

The SC’s By-Catch WG held meetings in 2016 and 2017 and forwarded multiple recommendations to member countries, which were discussed and endorsed by the MCJ (see <https://nammco.no/wp-content/uploads/2018/03/web-proposals-for-conservation-and-management-updated-15march2018.pdf>).

Fish Farms

The MCJ endorsed the recommendation from the SC that Norway and Iceland obtain reliable and complete reporting of all removals, including those around fish farms.

Consumption of resources by marine mammals

Haug presented a summary of the project “Exploring marine mammal consumption relative to fisheries removal in the Nordic and the Barents Seas” which provided valuable information for the discussions on ecosystem approach to management. This project highlighted the large component represented by marine mammals in the ecosystem and their role in the ecosystem, and the importance to the hunts in the North Atlantic. The MCJ was looking forward to the publication of the results.

8.1.2. Procedures for decision making on conservation and management measures

8.1.2.1. Struck and Lost

The SC agreed to ask the WGs to indicate when more reliable struck and lost (S&L) were a priority for improving the assessment and would make the most significant difference in terms of quota allocation, so the collection of S&L data could be prioritised for these hunts. The WG should then give recommendations on how to better obtain S&L data for the targeted hunts.

8.1.2.2. Catch validation

As an update to a previous recommendation (SC/23) that catches be validated on a yearly basis, Greenland informed the MCJ that a quality review of the catch data provided by hunters is now performed yearly.

Comment for 8.1:

Council took note of the report from the MCJ. It particularly noted that SC had agreed to provide advice on the prioritisation of the collection of S&L data and the best way of collecting them.

Council noted also the recommendations forwarded by the MCJ to member countries and was looking forward to reliable estimate of by-catch and by-catch risk in the different member countries.

There were no new requests by Council for advice from the SC on joint issues.

Council thanked the Committee for its work and took note of the Proposals for Conservation and Management and Recommendations for Research to member countries, endorsed by the MCJ – see agenda item 12 & 13 below.

8.2. Other business

No other business was raised.

9. MANAGEMENT COMMITTEE FOR CETACEANS

9.1. Report of the Management Committee for Cetaceans

The Chair of the Management Committee for Cetaceans (MCC), Nette Levermann (GL), presented the report (NAMMCO/26/14 <https://nammco.no/wp-content/uploads/2018/03/report-of-the-management-committee-for-cetaceans-mcc-2018-nammco26.pdf>).

9.1.1. NASS

The MCC had recommended that the SC start with the planning of the next NASS and develop a tentative budget as the first priority. The MCC awaited a budget proposal for the next NASS before it could endorse the recommendation for the timing of the next NASS.

The MCC had endorsed

- The previous recommendation (SC/23) that surveys should be repeated more frequently in areas where declines have been observed
- The recommendation that attempt to get trans-Atlantic coverage for the next NASS. The MCC further noted that they would like to include Russia in this effort

Comment:

Norway noted that NASS was an important endeavour for NAMMCO. It should be developed in such way that the planning encompasses both the ambition of the SC and the ability of the managers to secure finances. Norway and Iceland favoured the participation of the Russian Federation to the exercise, like in 2007 and ask Russia for its comment. Vladimir Zabavnikov (Russian Federation) confirmed that Russia was interested in participating to the next NASS as well as in all the stages of the preparation, as they did in 2007. They planned to conduct a survey for seals and whales in the Barents Sea for looking at fisheries interactions.

Council supported the Russian participation as well as a western extension, so a new trans-Atlantic NASS could be achieved. Collaboration with other European and American surveys, if possible, should also be attempted. Council charged the SC to starting the planning of the next survey and prepare a tentative budget to be submitted to the FAC and next Council meeting.

9.1.2. Conservation and Management measures for whale stocks

The MCC was also presented with an update from the SC on the status of all stocks of cetaceans within the remit of NAMMCO, as well as updates on past requests for advice from the SC. Their status was discussed. The MCC did not forward to Council any new requests for advice on cetaceans from the SC. Past proposals for conservation and management were also discussed.

Comment for 9.1:

Council thanked the Committee for its work and took note of the Proposals for Conservation and Management and Recommendations for Research to member countries, endorsed by the MCC - see agenda item 12 & 13 below.

9.2. Other business

With regards of the quality of the advice provided by the SC regarding future catch levels of humpback whales in west Greenland (R-3.2.4-amended 2014), Norway reiterated that it was essential to all NAMMCO Parties that the SC adhere to what NAMMCO had decided to base its management advice on, i.e., science and sustainability. This should be the base for all management advices. Clearly, the advice provided by the SC for humpback whale, encompassing the use of a “Needs Statements” did not.

Iceland strongly supported Norway on this issue and proposed the adoption of a new request to the SC, requiring the SC to conduct a review of the management procedures used by the Committee for generating management advice. Iceland would propose the Request for adoption under Point 12, after consultation with the parties on the text.

10. MANAGEMENT COMMITTEE FOR SEALS AND WALRUSES

10.1. Report of the Management Committee for Seals and Walrus

The acting Chair of the Management Committee for Seals and Walrus (MCSW), Nette Levermann (GL), presented the report (NAMMCO/26/15 and Section 2), highlighting the main recommendations and requests for advice to the SC.

The Committee was presented with an update from the SC on the status of all stocks of pinnipeds within the remit of NAMMCO. Jens Danielsen (Greenland Hunter’s and Fishermen’s Organization, KNAPK) delivered a statement (<https://nammco.no/wp-content/uploads/2018/03/report-of-the-management-committee-for-seals-and-walruses-mcsw-2018-nammco26.pdf>, page 11), based on his more than 40-year experience as a hunter. He described hunting methods for different seasons and species, some reflecting regulations other traditions, the ways seals were utilised including conservation methods and by-productions. He also informed about the dramatic implications on hunting and income opportunities experienced by the hunters because of climate change and the EU seal ban.

No new request for scientific advice was tabled but the Committee reviewed and endorsed the following recommendations from last year, some with time revisions.

Harp and hooded seals:

- The meeting of the ICES/NAFO/NAMMCO WG on harp and hooded seals was postponed to 2019 to allow for the analysis of the 2017 and 2018 surveys to be completed and considered at the meeting

Ringed seals & bearded seals:

- Greenland to conduct satellite telemetry on ringed seals and collect samples for genetics.
- The SC to convene back to back a ringed seal WG and a bearded Seal WG in 2020/2021

Grey seals:

- Faroe Islands to give high priority to the research recommendations given by the 2016 Coastal Seals Working Group
- Norway to conduct more frequent abundance surveys, particularly in areas of decline

Walrus:

- The Walrus WG planned for fall 2018 should address the four active requests for advice pertaining to the species. The results and conclusions of the WG should be dealt with at the 2018 SC meeting

The Committee noted that should Greenland wish to have a Proposal for Conservation and Management endorsed prior to the 2019 management committee meeting, the MCSW could endorse the advice intersessionally.

Comments for 10.1:

Council noted the deliberations of the Committee on species and stocks of seals and walrus as well as the Recommendations for Research to member countries and the Proposals for Conservation and Management (see <https://nammco.no/wp-content/uploads/2018/03/web-proposals-for-conservation-and-management-updated-15march2018.pdf>).

Iceland reiterated its appreciation and thanks to Nette Levermann for having stepped in as chair in place of Guðni M. Eiríksson.

Council thanked Guðni M. Eiríksson for his able chairing of the Committee for the last two years and noted that NO would assume the chairmanship for the next two years.

10.2. Update on the EU seal ban and Inuit exemption

Greenland informed on events arranged by a Danish member of the EU parliament and by the Danish Representation in Bruxelles in November 2017 where the QR code label system was presented. The Governments of Greenland, Canada, and Nunavut are working together on the QR-Code initiative.

Greenland delivered the following statement:

After the introduction of the EU ban on sealskin products in the 1980's and again in 2010, various efforts and stages have been utilized to share knowledge of the utilization of the seal and other marine resources. However, in spite of the existence and use of written documentation and hearings within the EU, a picture of lack of knowledge and understanding both inside the political system and among ordinary citizens was evident. It is the intent that the new information scheme bridges this lack of information and knowledge.

The entire Naalakkersuisut (Government of Greenland) gives political support to an initiative proposed by the tannery Great Greenland Inc. regarding a new information scheme for items produced of sealskin and uncut sealskin – an information scheme supported by the European Commission.

The information scheme is intended to utilize fabric labels with QR codes (Quick Response) and stamps. They are supposed to function as an information tool to enlighten EU citizens / consumers as well as customs authorities about the origin and legality of the product as a supplement to the required certifications as included in the EU seal regime.

Besides identifying the legality of the sealskin, the scheme will contribute to informing on the conditions of the Greenlandic hunters and the cultural traditions. Through that effort, Greenland will try to strengthen a correct perception of the sale and purchase perspectives around Inuit sealskin in Europe. The concept should secure the understanding that it is completely justifiable to buy Inuit sealskin. This aspect is of essential importance for the continued support to Greenlandic seal hunters, their rights and the conditions attached hereto.

Comments:

Council thanked Greenland for its update. Council strongly supported the initiative taken by Greenland, Nunavut and Canada, which should help EU citizens to understand the situation created by the EU ban on seal products and the consequences it has for Inuit communities.

10.3. Other Business

There was no other business.

11. ENVIRONMENTAL QUESTIONS & ECOSYSTEM APPROACH TO MANAGEMENT

The Chair referred to the discussions of the joint meeting of the Management Committees (NAMMCO/26/13, <https://nammco.no/wp-content/uploads/2018/03/report-of-the-joint-management-committee-meeting-2018-nammco26.pdf>).

11.1. Sealing in an ecosystem perspective

The Chair had asked Desportes to present the talk she gave at the EU Parliament event related to the QR code (see under point 10.2), which looked at Arctic sealing in a global ecological perspective and in the light of Blue Economy.

The presentation detailed the definition and implication of the Blue Economy “*improved human well-being and social equity, while significantly reducing environmental risks and ecological scarcities*” (UN DESA 2014) and the characteristics needed for activities to qualify as components of a blue economy (World Bank Group 2017). It examined whether Arctic Sealing and the EU seal ban could qualify as components of the blue

economy, and what their relative global ecological impact was by comparing their societal footprint (expected to be high in the blue economy, with high benefits to the society and increased social equity) and ecological footprint (expected to be low in the blue economy, with as little disturbance of the environment as possible). The presentation concluded that Arctic sealing did qualify as a component of blue economy while the seal bans did not. At the contrary, it increased both the local and the global clothing ecological footprint.

Council and observers commended Desportes for her presentation, which provided a logical “blue lens” evaluation framework for activities.

Norway thanked for a very interesting and comprehensive presentation related to blue economy, which has become the driving force in modern politics. It suggested to also extend the scope of the comparison to hunting activities of other member countries.

The Faroe Islands thanked for the presentation and noted that they had arranged together with the Nordic Council of Ministers a Blue Fashion Challenge³ where 10 established Nordic designers were asked to create cloths using natural products such as sea weeds, seal and fish skins. The event sought to explore how fashion designers from Nordic countries can contribute to a more sustainable textile industry, by promoting the use of materials that are bio-based and abundant in the marine environment.

Iceland encouraged this exploration as the fashion and textile industry is the second most polluting industry, after the oil and gas industry.

Stas Olpinsky (Makivik) suggested to include Inuit food preferences, the nutritional value, health benefits and price of seal meat compared to food alternative in the listing of positive factors.

Gil Thériault (LIVIN) thanked Desportes for her presentation and pointed out that the seal ban and the whitecoat ban were arbitrary, based on emotion, and did not rest on any scientific and conservation bases. Seals are apex predators and overpopulations are detrimental to commercial fish stocks: Population growths should therefore be controlled like for other apex predators. Thériault also pointed out, that in terms of ecosystem cost, the water footprint of one kilo of beef meat was over 1000 times higher than that of one kilo of seal meat. The environmental impact of the fishing industry is less than that of organic farming; that of sealing should be even less, thus making it one of the “bluest” forms of food production.

Japan thanked for the presentation which provided a lot of information in a clear and logical way, making it accessible to any public. It represented a useful framework for assessing the blueness of activities and it should be used for other activities as well.

11.2. Challenges from whale watching developments

Parties provided updates on the development of whale watching activities in their countries.

Faroe Islands informed that there was no whale watching activities in the Faroe Islands.

Greenland informed that the Government of Greenland, the Greenland Institute of Natural Resources (GINR) and the municipalities were attentive to the situation. The focus of the public was on the area of Nuuk, resulting in an article published in 2016 and presenting the latest knowledge from the GINR and the Government of Greenland. The GINR did not carry out specific research project on this topic in recent years but continued to collect information on the whales observed in the Nuuk fjord system. In Greenland, whale watching is disturbing both the fishing industry and fishing surveys.

Iceland informed that there was a general concern about the blooming of the tourism industry, which three years ago passed the fishing activity in terms of export revenues. Whale and seal watching activities were peaking in parallel to the tourism industry. Iceland was closely monitoring what is happening in Norway and will also be considering the issue.

Norway informed of recent developments with an expansion of activities specifically in Northern Norway.

³ http://www.honnunarmidstod.is/media/PDF/Blue_Fashion_Challenge_Designers_Kit.pdf

Whale watching was presently self-regulated in Norway. The Ministry was, however, considering the issue and assessing whether there is a need for any regulations.

11.3. Other business

There was no other business.

12. ADOPTION OF NEW REQUESTS FROM COUNCIL TO COMMITTEES FOR ADVICE

The list of new requests for advice to Committees which had been proposed by the Management Committees and the Parties was presented (NAMMCO/26/18).

Committee on Hunting Methods

With respect to alternative methods for collecting standardised TTD data:

- To further look into the possibility of implementing self-reporting methods to describe the killing efficiency of the hunt
- To convene a workshop on alternative methods to collect data on the efficiency of the hunt

Committee on Inspection and Observation

- To continue the comprehensive review of the implementation of the Observation Scheme and to provide recommendations for possible improvements at the next Council meeting. Such a review need to both look at the text of the Provisions and the implementation of the Observation Scheme

Working Group on BYCELS - Action Plan

- To provide an overview of the extent of bycatch, entanglement and disentanglement and live and dead strandings in the member countries
- To review IWC guidelines and other guidelines (e.g. from Norway) on by-catch, including entanglement and disentanglement and live strandings, with the aim of identifying procedures and actions for recommendation to NAMMCO member countries

Scientific Committee

- To conduct a review of the management procedures used by the Committee for generating management advice (RMP, AWMP, Bayesian assessment, Hitter Fitter, etc). The Committee should advise on which procedure is the most suitable for each species (or category of species) with the data that is currently available, while also meeting the management principles of NAMMCO. The Committee should further advise where additional data could allow for more suitable management procedure(s) to be implemented

Comments:

Council **adopted** these three new Request for Advice to the NAMMCO Committees as well as the action plan presented by the BYCELS WG.

13. NEW PROPOSALS FOR CONSERVATION AND MANAGEMENT

The list of new proposals for Conservation and Management to Parties (NAMMCO/26/19) formulated by the Management Committees was presented to Council for information.

Regarding hunting methods

- For Greenland to collect Struck and Lost (SL) data on narwhal and beluga
- For Iceland to collect SL data on harbour and grey seal
- For Norway to collect SL data on harp seal

With respect to video penthrite grenade-99:

Greenland has developed in collaboration with Henriksen Mekaniske Verksted (manufacturers of the grenade) an instruction video on handling of the penthrite grenade-99 on harpoon guns.

- For member countries to support the completion of the video on penthrite grenade-99

The Management Committees also formulated recommendations for research and data collection necessary to the Scientific Committee for elaborating or consolidating its management advice and therefore better informing future management. The list of new recommendations as well as the answers of countries to older

recommendations for research and proposals for management and conservation (NAMMCO/26/MC-05) can be found here: <https://nammco.no/wp-content/uploads/2018/03/web-proposals-for-conservation-and-management-updated-15march2018.pdf>

Comments:

Council took note of the new proposals for conservation and management.

14. MARINE MAMMALS AS FOOD RESOURCES (MMFR)

14.1. Report of the MMFR Project

The 2012 Ministerial Meeting emphasised the importance of increasing the focus on marine mammals as a food resource. NAMMCO 21 (2012) established therefore a Planning Group (PG) to develop a two-sided project a) the production of a background document reviewing and compiling existing material relevant to the topic, and b) the development of a strategy for communicating the message to different target audience.

The Chair of the PG, Amalie Jessen (GL), presented the group's report (NAMMCO/26/16). Since NAMMCO 25, the main activities were as follows:

- Organisation of a Breakout Session (BOS) at the Arctic Circle Assembly in October in Reykjavík, Iceland (See Doc NAMMCO/26/17 for details): "*Sustainable marine resources: a piece of the Blue Economy puzzle in the Arctic?*" which was attended by ca. 120 people
- Participation at several conferences/events, with presentation dealing with different aspects of marine mammals as food resources (See Doc NAMMCO/26/20 for details)
- Contact taken with Tromsø University and teacher seminars to initiate a communication project with a kid/youth focus, with development of a special site on the website and special teaching material
- The background document, "Marine Mammals: a Multifaceted Resource", which was published on the website in April 2017, is being updated and aimed at being published
- Initiation of a life cycle assessment pilot project, comparing the ecological cost of consuming locally hunted seal meat and importing meat in Greenland, in collaboration with the Swedish Institute RISE

The PG agreed that the main goals of the project were successfully reached and agreed to finalise the project by the end of 2017, except for a LCA analysis, which will therefore constitute the last part of the project.

The planning group agreed to recommend to Council:

- To consider the project as finalised, except for the LCA analysis
- To continue with organising side events or meetings/conferences with an emphasis on marine mammal as food resource, particularly from a story telling perspective and focussing more on the human dimension
- To continue targeting the kid/youth age group through dedicated outreach. To this aim the Secretariat should continue its efforts to engage with the teacher schools and communication (any kind) departments of universities/high schools
- To explore the possibilities for a food event based on marine mammals

Comments:

Council took note of the advance of the project and adopted the Planning Groups recommendations. It commended the progress accomplished in terms of visibility of the issue.

14.2. Other business

There was no other business.

15. EXTERNAL RELATIONS

15.1. Cooperation with international organisations

Desportes introduced NAMMCO/26/17, which presented summaries of observer reports from the Secretariat's and NAMMCO's observer attendance at meetings of other organisations and ten conferences/events in 2017. Attendance to meeting of other organisations included the ASCOBANS 23d Advisory Committee (Brest, FR), the CAFF Board Meeting (Fairbanks, AK), the CAFF Circumpolar Biodiversity Monitoring Programme

(CBMP) Marine Annual Meeting (Anchorage, AK), the Norwegian Marine Mammal Committee (*Sjøpattedyrutvalget*, Tromsø, NO), the Nordic Council of Ministers Nordic Meeting (*Nordistmøtet*, Oslo, NO), the Norwegian Small Whalers Union (Solvær, NO), the environmental think tank Think.dk (Copenhagen, DK), where NAMMCO delivered presentations with different focus. In addition, Iceland represented NAMMCO at the 39th annual meeting of NAFO, Norway at the 36th annual meeting of NEAFC and Faroe Islands at the 34th annual meeting of NASCO.

The Secretariat is also member of the Program Advisory Committee to the 2nd Arctic Biodiversity Congress hosted and arranged by the CAFF and the Finnish Ministry of Environment in October 2018 in Rovaniemi (Finland). CAFF Executive Secretary, Tom Barry, presented to the annual SC meeting his view on how to increase the scientific cooperation between NAMMCO SC and CAFF initiatives, such as the CBMP.

Following up on the decision of NAMMCO 24 to strengthening its scientific cooperation with other organisations dealing with marine mammals and the invitation forwarded to ASCOBANS MoP8 to an enhanced scientific cooperation, NAMMCO Secretariat had forwarded to ASCOBANS AC 23 the invitation to cooperate on the organisation of the joint IMR/NAMMCO harbour porpoise symposium seeking at reviewing the conservation status of harbour porpoises in the North Atlantic. AC 23 decided however not to engage in a scientific cooperation with NAMMCO and not to participate in the organisation of the harbour porpoise symposium.

Comments:

The Chair thanked the Secretariat for its active role and good work in outreach and representation and encouraged it to continue. She underlined that cooperation with international organisations was very important to NAMMCO as challenges to the sound conservation of marine mammals are numerous. Also, this cooperation and any outreach activities contribute to render NAMMCO's face more visible externally.

The Faroes supported this and underlined the importance for NAMMCO of being a transparent and visible body.

LIVIN was looking forward to an increased collaboration with NAMMCO, both with regards to scientific-based management advices and to outreach activities.

Council noted with regrets the refusal of ASCOBANS to cooperate with NAMMCO on scientific matters regarding shared stocks of an iconic species for ASCOBANS, which clearly is subjected to significant levels of anthropogenic impacts, both direct and indirect removals, pollution and other anthropogenic disturbances.

15.2. Other business

There was no other business.

16. INFORMATION AND COMMUNICATION

The Chair reminded Council that it adopted a Communication Strategy at NAMMCO 25 and endorsed a two-year Communication Plan.

The Chair noted that a lot of communication and outreach activities had taken place since the last Council meeting, with regular posting of news and activities on the new website and on Facebook, presentations at many conferences and events, some outside the normal NAMMCO network, and new publications both addressing the scientific community and a larger public.

16.1. Website

The Chair noted that the opening of the new, more advanced and more user-friendly website and the completion of the stock status list were points on the Communication Plan.

Winsnes gave an update on the new NAMMCO website launched at the last Council meeting. Numerous positive feedbacks were received both from internal and external users. It was still a work in progress. Although most species stock status were uploaded, with priority given to presently exploited species, there were still

some species underway, which should be uploaded in the coming months. It was underlined that a website will always require updating as new information becomes available and the more comprehensive the site the more extensive updating is required.

Since the activities on the website started being registered, on September 1, 2018, NAMMCO has taken quite a leap forward. There are over 1,300 first time user between September 1 and December 31, and 3,270 until March 01, 2018. Facebook is very much a feeder for the website and responsible for a quarter of the web audience. One intriguing difference between Facebook and the website is that Facebook followers are mostly men (53%), whereas web users tend to be women (64%). The age distribution of the viewer is relatively young with 50% of the viewers in the age class 25-44.

16.2. Social media

Desportes gave an update on social media. The NAMMCO Facebook page (NAMMCO/26/17) contained both internal information (related to NAMMCO events, meetings, projects, new assessments, activities) and external news (generated by other bodies and related to marine mammals, conservation-related issues, publication of scientific reports and articles, conference announcements). In average, posts received 300 likes, but many boosted posts reach between 5000 and 36.100 persons. NAMMCO should consider boosting posts at a much larger scale, as soon as a post seems to generate some interest.

The largest interest was centred on vacancies and internships but the post from December - pointing to Desportes' article "Which is more blue - Arctic sealing or the EU ban" - gives an idea of the opportunities offered by Facebook for disseminating to a larger public its unique information, knowledge and position regarding marine mammals.

16.3. Other events

Desportes provided an update on other outreach activities since the last Council meeting. The Secretariat had participated in an active way (organiser and presenter) to different conferences and events (NAMMCO/26/17 & 20).

The Secretariat attended Arctic Frontiers (Tromsø, NO, where NAMMCO was co-organiser of one scientific session and delivered a talk), the annual meeting of the European Cetacean Society and associated workshops (Middelfart, DK, NAMMCO was author or co-author of two posters), the conference on Sustainable Utilisation of Marine Mammals (Copenhagen, DK, organised by members of the Danish Parliament, where NAMMCO delivered a talk), the biennial World Seafood Congress (WSC, Reykjavík, IS, where NAMMCO delivered the only talk dealing with marine mammals as food resource), the Arctic Circle assembly (Reykjavík, IS, where NAMMCO had taken the initiative of co-organising a breakout session with the Inuit Circumpolar Council (ICC), Nunavut Tungavik Inc. and WWF arctic Program and delivered a talk), the biennial conference of the Society for Marine Mammalogy (Halifax, CA, where NAMMCO hold a booth), the EU parliament event on "*How can we support Indigenous people – The initiative of a QR code*" and the event organised by the Danish EU representation on "*A new way to support indigenous people*" (Brussels, BE, where NAMMCO delivered talks), the international high-level conference on "*SDGs in the Arctic – Local and global perspective*" (Copenhagen, DK), and the Venice Human Rights Cultural Festival (HRCF, Venice, IT, where NAMMCO delivered a talk and participated to a debate).

Following the event at the EU parliament, Desportes was asked by Euroactiv to write an article "*Which is more blue, Arctic Sealing or the EU Seal Ban?*"⁴ based on her presentation.

Desportes noted that it had represented a fruitful experience to present NAMMCO issues in new not like-minded fora (e.g. Parliament events, Venice HRCF, WSC). It was important for NAMMCO to be pro-active and factual in communication and use strong media support. She noted that the 2016 Nunavut documentary *Angry Inuk* (Alethea Arnaquq-Baril) had been screened in association with NAMMCO presentations at different events focussing on the ecosystem impact of Arctic whaling and sealing, and that the trustworthiness

⁴ The article can be accessed [here: https://www.euractiv.com/section/economy-jobs/opinion/which-is-more-blue-arctic-sealing-or-the-eu-seal-ban/](https://www.euractiv.com/section/economy-jobs/opinion/which-is-more-blue-arctic-sealing-or-the-eu-seal-ban/)

of the documentary made it a powerful support for getting a message across.

Comments to 16.1, 16.2 and 16.3:

The Chair noted the increased activities on the Facebook site and the higher traffic on the website and news, and that both sites increased the visibility of the organisation. Seconded by the Faroe Islands, she commended and thanked the Secretariat for its continued outreach effort, which increases the visibility and knowledge of NAMMCO. Both sites also participated in educating stakeholders.

16.4. Scientific Publications

All volumes of the NAMMCO Scientific Publications were accessible on the journal website⁵. The journal was indexed and easy to find during a bibliography search and the journal website was well visited from all other the world.

The volume 10 on Age estimation of marine mammals with a focus on monodontids had 11 papers and two workshop reports published online as “online early versions”. A single paper was still missing, but the volume should be completed by the end of April.

The next volume, a cetacean survey volume, will contain all the remaining abundances from TNASS 2007 and new abundance results from NASS2015-16, as well as trend analysis for some species. The editors were Pike, Guldborg Hansen and Desportes, 17 papers were committed, of which one was ready for publication and one was under review.

The GROM report had been published on the website. A publication was being prepared, with the plan of publishing it together with some of the stock reviews and a genetic review in a peer-reviewed journal within the end of the year, likely as a NAMMCO Scientific Publication.

Comments:

The Council noted the update.

16.5. Other business

Japan communicated that the Japanese Institute for Cetacean Research had established a framework for publishing peer reviewed publications and would be welcoming publication from the NAMMCO community. NTI reiterated its appreciation of the recent outreach effort of NAMMCO, and in particular the initiative of organising the “Blue Economy” breakout session “Arctic sealing: threat or blue prospect?” at the 2017 Arctic Circle Assembly and inviting ICC, NTI, WWF Arctic programme to join the organisation.

17. ANY OTHER BUSINESS

Japan urged IWC Members in NAMMCO to actively participate in the discussion on the “Way Forward of the IWC” in order to rectify its stagnated and dysfunctional situation. It also called for support by IWC Members in NAMMCO during discussions on Japan’s scientific whale research programs, i.e. NEWREP-A and NEWREP-NP at the coming IWC Scientific Committee in April/May.

Japan also informed about the Sustainable Use meeting, which will be held 21-22 June in Tokyo and encouraged NAMMCO Members/Observers to attend to discuss various issues necessary for achieving sustainable use of marine living resources, including marine mammals.

18. CLOSING ARRANGEMENTS

18.1. Press release

A press release, summarising the main highlights of the 2018 Council Meeting was adopted (<https://nammco.no/wp-content/uploads/2018/03/press-release-8-march.pdf>).

18.2. Next meeting and closing of meeting

The next meeting will be hosted by the Faroe Islands, likely in Tórshavn, and Jóannes V. Hansen introduced

⁵ <http://septentrio.uit.no/index.php/NAMMCOSP/index>

NAMMCO Council Report 2017

a short advertisement film on the Islands.

Before closing the 26th Annual Meeting, the Chair thanked all for a good meeting, the Secretariat for hosting the meeting and its staff for its efficient support. Council thanked the Chair for her able chairing.

Lastly, on behalf of the Council, the Chair reiterated a big thank to Jill Prewitt for her excellent job as Scientific Secretary and wished her good wind and luck in her coming life in Alaska.

The Report of the 26th Council Meeting of NAMMCO was adopted by correspondence on 10 April 2018.

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AGENDA

1. OPENING PROCEDURES

- 1.1. Welcome address
- 1.2. Admission of observers
- 1.3. Opening statements
- 1.4. Adoption of agenda & list of documents
- 1.5. Meeting arrangements
- 1.6. Presentation from Invited Speaker

“Marine Mammals and Nunavik Inuit”, by Adamie Delisle-Alaku, Makivik Corporation, Quebec, Canada.

- 1.7. Other business

2. FINANCE AND ADMINISTRATION

- 2.1. Report of the Finance and Administration Committee
 - 2.1.1. Audited accounts 2017
 - 2.1.2. Performance review
 - 2.1.3. Other items
 - 2.1.4. Budget 2018 and draft budget 2019
- 2.2. Other business

3. NATIONAL PROGRESS REPORTS

4. SCIENTIFIC COMMITTEE

- 4.1. Report of the Scientific Committee
 - 4.1.1. Overall work in 2017
 - 4.1.2. Cooperation with other organisations
 - 4.1.3. Proposed workplan for 2018-2019
 - 4.1.4. Other business
- 4.2. Adoption of priorities and work plan for the SC in 2018-2019
- 4.3. Other business

5. COMMITTEE ON HUNTING METHODS

- 5.1. Report of the Committee on Hunting Methods
- 5.2. Other business

6. COMMITTEE ON INSPECTION AND OBSERVATION

- 6.1. Report of the Committee on Inspection and Observation
- 6.2. The joint NAMMCO Control Scheme
 - 6.2.1. Observation scheme in 2017
 - 6.2.2. Observation scheme planned for 2018
- 6.3. Other business

7. WORKING GROUP ON BY-CATCH, ENTANGLEMENTS AND LIVE STRANDINGS

- 7.1. Report of the Working Group on By-Catch, Entanglements and Live Strandings
- 7.2. Other business

8. JOINT MANAGEMENT COMMITTEES

- 8.1. Report of the meeting of the Joint Management Committees
- 8.2. Other business

9. MANAGEMENT COMMITTEE FOR CETACEANS

- 9.1. Report of the Management Committee for Cetaceans
- 9.2. Other business

10. MANAGEMENT COMMITTEE FOR SEALS AND WALRUSES

- 10.1 Report of the Management Committee for Seals and Walrus
- 10.2 Update on EU seal ban and Inuit exemption
- 10.3 Other business

11 ENVIRONMENTAL QUESTIONS & ECOSYSTEM APPROACH TO MANAGEMENT

- 11.1 Sealing in an ecosystem perspective
- 11.2 Challenges from whale watching developments
- 11.3 Other business

12 ADOPTION OF NEW REQUESTS FOR ADVICE FROM THE COUNCIL

13 NEW PROPOSALS FOR CONSERVATION AND MANAGEMENT

14 MARINE MAMMALS AS FOOD RESOURCES (MMFR)

- 14.1 Report of the MMFR Project
- 14.2 Other business

15 EXTERNAL RELATIONS

- 15.1 Cooperation with international organisations
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16 INFORMATION & COMMUNICATION

- 16.1 Website
- 16.2 Social media
- 16.3 Other events
- 16.4 Scientific publications
- 16.5 Other business

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18 CLOSING ARRANGEMENTS

- 18.1 Press release
- 18.2 Next meeting

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NAMMCO/26/02	Agenda & annotated agenda	1.4
NAMMCO/26/03	List of Documents	All
NAMMCO/26/04	Report of the Finance and Administration Committee	2.1
NAMMCO/26/05	Audited accounts 2017	2..1.1
NAMMCO/26/06	Performance Review	2.1.2
NAMMCO/26/07	Budget 2018 and draft budget 2019	2.1.4
NAMMCO/26/08	Report of the Scientific Committee	4
NAMMCO/26/09	Report of the Committee on Hunting Methods	5
NAMMCO/26/10	Report of the Committee on Inspection and Observation	6.1
NAMMCO/26/11	Report of the NAMMCO observation scheme 2017 season and plans for 2018 season	6.2
NAMMCO/26/12	Report of the Working Group on By-catch, Entanglements and Live Strandings	7.1
NAMMCO/26/13	Report of the Joint Management Committees	8.1
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NAMMCO/26/15	Report of the Management Committee for Seals and Walrus	10.1
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OPENING STATEMENTS⁶

OPENING STATEMENT – GREENLAND

Madam Chair, Ladies and Gentlemen,

NAMMCO 26

First of all, thank you for the warm welcome we have received here in beautiful Tromsø. This meeting marks the 26th time the North Atlantic Marine Mammal Commission (NAMMCO) has gathered together to address issues on the conservation and management of marine mammals. In that period of time, a lot of work which we can be proud of has been done. Through joint effort, we all have improved our management systems for the sustainable utilization of our marine resources.

The best available knowledge

Our knowledge of our marine mammal stocks has been steadily improving, and thus improving the management advice. The foundation of that has been the weeks and months spent doing field work by the scientific community in collaboration with local hunters and fishermen. The view from Greenland is that the best available knowledge is attained by combining the two knowledge systems of local, indigenous knowledge with the scientific data. Then it is up to the politicians to make the final decision.

Issue solving

When an issue rises, NAMMCO takes action. The latest example of this is the forming of The Working group on by-catch, entanglements and live stranding (WG BYCELS). BYCELS was formed to deal with issues regarding animal welfare, and it demonstrates the commitment of the Commission to deal with all matters regarding the welfare and better responsible utilization of marine mammals.

The next 25 years

Last year in Nuuk, Greenland, we celebrated 25 years since the official start of NAMMCO. The last 25 years has presented NAMMCO with challenges regarding climate change, interactions with fisheries, hunting methods, tourism and public opinion. Greenland is grateful for the continued support and dedication shown by the member countries.

The desire to improve has always been there. And with the next 25 years on mind, NAMMCO last year initiated two projects to further develop NAMMCO. Firstly, an external independent Performance Review of the Commission was commenced. Greenland hopes that the initiative will strengthen our efforts to improve conservation and management of marine mammals. And secondly, an internal SWOT-analysis process was agreed upon, to identify the Strengths, Weaknesses, Opportunities and threats of NAMMCO. Hereby showing what has and what has not been achieved with our present means and structure, and move towards an even stronger NAMMCO for the future. Greenland is excited to see the result of the work done by the panel at NAMMCO 27.

We hope for a positive and constructive meeting.

Qujanaq – Thank you.

OPENING STATEMENT – ICELAND

Madam Chair, delegates and observers

Iceland is pleased to be here in Tromsø for the 26th Annual Meeting of NAMMCO. Iceland places great emphasis on the sustainable management on the living resources of the ocean, both domestically as well as regionally, based on the best available science.

⁶ Faroe Islands Opening Statement was not submitted

Iceland firmly support the regional approach as the appropriate model for international cooperation on sustainable management living marine resources and that NAMMCO is the fora in the respect for advising on management of marine mammals in the North Atlantic. It can also be noted on the importance of this cooperation that NAMMCO's contracting parties are among those nations that are most reliant on the sustainable management of the oceans.

NAMMCO's scientific cooperation is its mainstay and has through the years laid the foundation for responsible and sustainable management of marine mammal's resources by NAMMCO members.

In this respect we note the performance review that NAMMCO is undergoing and the opportunity that the results of that review bring to strengthen NAMMCO's work even further.

We would like to thank the Secretariat for their efficient preparation of this meeting, and Norway for „supplying“ us with the beautiful surroundings here in Tromsø and look forward to a fruitful meeting.

OPENING STATEMENT - NORWAY

Madame Chair, Delegates, Observers and Guests - dear friends

Welcome you to the city of Tromsø, the Arctic capital of Norway.

NAMMCO at 26 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 off 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.

At this meeting we are particularly looking forward to the report from the first meeting in the Working Group on by-catch, entanglement and live strandings - because animal welfare and human safety is important – and because we have the competence to achieve something meaningful.

We likewise look forward to the reporting and publication of the results from the project exploring the consumption of marine mammals in our waters – because we believe this will strengthen our ambitions of a more holistic approach to marine mammals and their role in the ecosystem.

We further hope we can agree on a review of the observation scheme and its implementation in order to strengthen the knowledge and insight that this tool can provide.

The Scientific Committee is doing an excellent and important job and it is therefore very promising that we now are seeing solid recruitment to the committee from almost all of the Parties.

Progress reports have also this year been submitted by Canada, Japan and Russia. This is strengthening the cooperation between our countries, something that Norway very much welcomes. I look forward to and wish you all a fruitful meeting.

OPENING STATEMENT - CANADA

Madame Chair, Distinguished delegates, fellow observers.

Canada is pleased to participate as an Observer in this 26th meeting of the NAMMCO Council and would like to thank NAMMCO for bringing us together. These are important meetings that inform our positions on the research, management and conservation of marine mammals in the North Atlantic. Furthermore, we would also like to thank the NAMMCO Secretariat for hosting this meeting in Tromsø, Norway (tusen hjertelig takk), and to the Secretariat for their hard work, responsiveness and solid communication to bring us together for NAMMCO 26.

Canada recognizes NAMMCO as a credible and respected international organization that provides a regional mechanism for developing common positions on the management and conservation of marine mammals in the North Atlantic. Canada also values the importance of collaborating with our international partners on the science and management of marine mammals. Equally so, we value fostering and maintaining our close relationship with NAMMCO participants to ensure a coordinated approach to research and conservation efforts.

Canada has Indigenous subsistence harvests of bowhead whales, beluga, narwhal, walrus and seals which take place in communities in Northern Québec, Labrador, Nunavut and the Northwest Territories.

Ringed seals, with a current population estimated at 2 million, are harvested in Canada's North primarily for subsistence purposes by Indigenous communities. Harp and grey seals, however, are the only commercially harvested seal species in Canada; with harp seals accounting for the majority of seals harvested. The Northwest Atlantic harp seal herd, which resides primarily in Canada, is estimated at approximately 7.4 million seals and grey seals are estimated at approximately 425 thousand. Harp and grey seals are harvested in Atlantic Canada, primarily in Newfoundland and Labrador, but also in small numbers in Québec as part of the commercial harvest.

The livelihoods of many Canadians depend on marine mammal resources and the ecosystems within which they exist. The interaction between marine mammal harvesters and the resources they harvest is also an important aspect of harvester livelihoods and those who depend on these resources. Respecting this, sustainable use and conservation are integral to the management of these resources.

In order for Canada to be the best it can be on the international stage of marine mammal management, it is essential that our global partners understand and respect the special partnerships with Indigenous peoples that form our approaches to management in Canada. In Canada's North, we have a saying that, "one does not go hunting alone". At the heart of this mantra are success and survival – two goals that are reached through collaboration, co-operation and mutual support. This is our model in Canada. This is co-management.

Through our co-management approach, Canada continues to work on ensuring that harvests of marine mammals are based on the best available scientific information, Inuit Qaujimagatuqangit (IQ), local and traditional knowledge bases in order to provide long-term social and economic benefits to the communities whose livelihoods depend on these resources.

As you know, Canada is considering its status within NAMMCO. Respecting Canada's unique context and special Indigenous-Crown relationships, which should be regarded as offering strength to international marine mammal science, conservation and management efforts, this discussion is one that, by necessity, has to happen fully and completely at home first. One does not go hunting alone. These discussions in Canada are happening and will help inform Canada's consideration of its status within NAMMCO.

In the meantime, however, we are here, we are innovative, and appreciate the opportunity to share these perspectives with you. Canada is, of course, looking forward to continued bilateral engagement with NAMMCO members within other fora, such as the Convention on International Trade in Endangered Species of Wild Fauna and Flora (CITES), the Canada/Greenland Joint Commission on the Conservation and

Management of Narwhal and Beluga (JCNB) and through the work of the International Whaling Commission, where Canada is an Observer.

We are looking forward to positive discussions over the next two days and continue appreciating the opportunity to join you all for the NAMMCO Council Meeting. Thank you, Merci, Qujannamiik, Matna and Koana.

OPENING STATEMENT - DENMARK

Thank you, Madame chair, – dear delegates, fellow observers - ladies and gentlemen.

First of all, I would like to thank the NAMMCO Secretariat for welcoming us here in Tromsø. It is always a pleasure to be here.

General remarks

From the Danish side we very much welcome the work of NAMMCO. Over the years, NAMMCO has proved to be a good example of regional cooperation on the management of living marine resources. NAMMCO is an important supplement to other fora and organization dealing with marine mammals. The IWC and NAMMCO have crosscutting tasks and interests. It is therefore natural and positive that the cooperation between the two is enhancing.

IWC

When it comes to the IWC, the Danish government works very closely together with the Faroes and Greenland to pursue our common interests.

As you all know, our primary concern in the IWC is Aboriginal Subsistence Whaling. This year, our main focus will of course be on the renewal of the Greenlandic quotas. But we are also focusing on broader issues – especially the introduction of a rights based for Indigenous Peoples. It is a very important agenda that was discussed in depth at an ASW workshop in Manitoq in 2015. The ASW stakeholders are meeting once again in Alaska next month to follow up on that workshop. The aim is to deliver substantial input on the long term ASW issues to the IWC meeting in Brazil later this year.

Seals – EU

For almost a decade the Danish and Greenlandic governments have worked together to minimize the negative effects of the EU's sealskin regulation – and we will continue to do so.

Last year, the main exporter of sealskin in Greenland, Great Greenland, and the Greenlandic government introduced the idea of QR code system that will make it possible for the European public to be fully aware of the legality of seal products from Greenland. We are pleased that the European Commission has welcomed this initiative, and we are looking forward to seeing it work in practice. Of course, this initiative does not eliminate all the negative effects of the sealskin regulation, but we believe it is a step in the right direction.

Seals – Denmark

Finally, I would like to give you a short update on the population of seals in Denmark. Over the last 15 years the number of harbour and grey seals in Denmark have increased quite dramatically. This is of course a positive development. However, the seals are also damaging fishing equipment and fish stocks around the country. This is of great concern to the Danish fishing industry and other stakeholders.

Therefore, the Danish government is currently working on a new management plan for seals to secure the right balance between the different interests that are at stake. This plan will be launched in the near future.

I am looking very much forward to learning more about the work of NAMMCO in the days to come.

Thank you for your attention.

OPENING STATEMENT - JAPAN

At the outset, Japan would like to thank the Secretariat of NAMMCO for hosting the important meeting of NAMMCO Council, with great hospitality and efficiency. We recognize that NAMMCO has made great achievements in the conservation and management of marine mammals including cetaceans, and in this regard, Japan fully supports “NUUK DECLARATION” adopted at the last Council meeting, which reaffirmed that NAMMCO fulfils its role as an appropriate international organization in accordance with the UNCLOS. Japan wishes to further contribute to this organization irrespective of its status as an observer.

Japan shares with NAMMCO various important agendas for management and conservation of whale resources. One of those agendas, for example, is the establishment of science-based catch limits. Japan has been and will be committed to the collection of scientific information which contributes to setting safe catch limits of various whale species such as minke whale, Bryde’s whale, sei whale and fin whale in the Antarctic Ocean and in the western North Pacific. As you all know, Japan has been conducting two research programs in those areas (New Scientific Whale Research Programs in the Antarctic Ocean and North Pacific: NEWREP-A and NEWREP-NP) in order to collect relevant scientific information for this purpose. In order to strengthen its science-based approach, Japan is eager to further enhance collaboration with NAMMCO and its members. It is really necessary for us to seriously consider the establishment of sound science-based catch limits for achieving sustainable use of whales, inter alia, at its vicinity.

Our common goal of sustainable use of cetaceans is envisaged to be shared at the IWC as well. However, it is regrettable that the goal has been neglected by some Members of the IWC for a long time. Any international organization that cannot pursue and even neglects its own objectives and purposes cannot be considered normal. In order to rectify such abnormal and dysfunctional situation, the real issue which has been hindering the IWC from pursuing its objectives and purposes, i.e. the fundamental difference in positions on whales and whaling, has to be sincerely discussed at the IWC. Unless IWC Members sincerely tackle this fundamental issue and find a relevant solution, the IWC would just lose its reason d’etre.

In order to alleviate the long standing stagnated situation, at the last IWC Commission meeting in 2016, it was agreed to initiate so-called “Way Forward of the IWC” process so that all the IWC Members could make frank exchange of views on the fundamental issue of “whales and whaling” in order to find “a way forward of the IWC” that would be beneficial to all the IWC Members including those which support sustainable use of whales and those which wish to achieve full protection of whales. In this regard, Japan would greatly appreciate for your active participation in the discussions at the “Way Forward” process.

Finally, Japan would like to reconfirm its strong view that effective collaboration between Japan and NAMMCO is a vital force to promote conservation and sustainable use of marine living resources including cetaceans in international fora. 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 – RUSSIAN FEDERATION

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

It is a great honour for me to represent the Russian Federation as observer at the 26th meeting of the NAMMCO Council. Thank you very much for the invitation!

On behalf of the Russian Federation, I would like to thank the NAMMCO Secretariat and Norwegian authorities for hosting this annual meeting in the Tromsø which is a very beautiful place above the Arctic Circle. Thank you very much for the excellent arrangements, and also for the preparations to this meeting.

I would like to commend the excellent work undertaken by the different NAMMCO bodies and especially the NAMMCO Secretariat and Scientific Committee including different working groups during the intersessional time. Also, the Russian Federation would like to note that NAMMCO has very good cooperation with different countries not only observer countries, marine mammals companies and different North Atlantic organisations and Commissions such as NAFO, NEAFC, ICES and IWC.

NAMMCO's position on a strong ecosystem approach and the precautionary principle based on scientific results and surveys ensures responsible exploitation of marine mammals. Results coming from the International Trans North Atlantic Sighting Surveys have been instrumental to achieve this.

NAMMCO's strong ecosystem approach and management based on science and monitoring, coupled to precautionary principles, ensures the responsible exploitation of marine mammals. Results coming from the International Trans North Atlantic Sighting Surveys have been instrumental in supporting this.

I would like to tell you once more that the Russian Federation is very interested in long term cooperation with NAMMCO, and I hope that this cooperation will be developed further.

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

Thank you very much for your attention.

OPENING STATEMENT – INTERNATIONAL WHALING COMMISSION

Madame Chair, Delegates, Secretariat, and Observers.

I want to thank the NAMMCO Secretariat for inviting the IWC to attend this meeting in the beautiful Arctic city of Tromsø. My name is Rebecca Lent, and I recently joined the IWC as the Executive Secretary. This is my first NAMMCO meeting and also my first opportunity to officially represent the Secretariat, and I look forward to learning more about your Commission.

In an era of growing challenges from an ever-broader range of human impacts – by-catch, ship strikes, noise and other environmental hazards – we are all the more motivated to collaborate on our shared mission. Our staff and funding resources are unfortunately not growing as rapidly as these threats, at a time when we need even more science and other tools to ensure healthy marine mammal populations.

That's why I am pleased to highlight areas where NAMMCO and IWC are already collaborating and achieving excellent and practical results. With the guidance of the IWC Chair, Bureau and Contracting Governments, I look forward to working with my counterpart at NAMMCO, Dr. Desportes, to continue to explore areas for joint work. We all benefit tremendously from the synergy of combining the skills and expertise offered by our teams.

Collaboration between NAMMCO and IWC

Over the past few years, NAMMCO representatives have attended the IWC meeting, and this is the third NAMMCO Council meeting attended by the IWC Secretariat. Also, the Deputy Secretary of NAMMCO recently attended entanglement training led by IWC's David Mattila and his Norwegian colleagues in Sortland, Norway. Both of our organizations are undergoing external reviews, and the IWC was pleased to be asked by NAMMCO to nominate a review panel member. Our 'overlap' is even greater when considering our common member delegations for Scientific Committee and Commission meetings, which we believe increases the effectiveness of our efforts.

Stock assessment science and data

We are fortunate to have considerable collaboration on the data collection/sharing and science of stock assessments for cetaceans, which form the fundamental basis for our missions. These common areas include cetacean survey methodology and design, estimating abundance and indices of abundance, and the provision

of robust science-based conservation and management advice. One example is the co-operation on reviewing the abundance estimates and correction factors from recent Icelandic and Greenlandic surveys, with members of both Scientific Committees involved. Although our methods of providing management advice may differ, there is much common ground in the collection and sharing of data needed to assess relevant cetacean stocks. I hope that we can continue to build upon this collaboration to avoid duplication of effort and to ensure improved science.

Continuation of work on cetacean welfare

As with NAMMCO, the IWC scientists and technical experts are working on a programme that takes a holistic approach to cetacean welfare including both hunting and non-hunting related issues. A particular strength of the IWC's programme is its work to develop a global network to respond to entangled whales. The IWC large whale Expert Advisory Group is composed of virtually all of the most experienced entanglement responders and entanglement veterinarians in the world. Through this network, training events have taken place in many countries, some of which are within NAMMCO's geographical remit. Indeed, since 2012 the training has reached around 1,000 people from over 40 countries. We are also planning an upcoming meeting of the Global Network that will focus largely on human safety, given the recent tragic accident in Canada. The IWC's welfare programme is now starting to look at issues arising from other factors such as ship strikes and therefore has commonalities with NAMMCO's proposal to establish a new committee on non-hunting related welfare issues. We also recognise the work undertaken by NAMMCO to improve killing techniques and the presentation on this by the NAMMCO Secretariat at the last IWC meeting.

Continued strengthening of the IWC's management of Aboriginal Subsistence Whaling

The IWC ASW Working Group will meet in a few weeks in Barrow Alaska, with participation of a number of the delegates here at the NAMMCO meeting. This meeting will continue to review and implement the recommendations of the 2015 Maniitsoq Workshop, which also benefitted from NAMMCO participation. These recommendations address the IWC process for agreeing catch limits and the need to better communicate the description of the subsistence hunts. Continued cooperation with NAMMCO will be beneficial to successful implementation of these recommendations, which we believe are also relevant to NAMMCO's mission and work programme.

By-catch Mitigation Initiative

Recognizing the impact of bycatch on marine mammal populations around the world, the IWC has expanded its work on fisheries bycatch with the recent launch of the Bycatch Mitigation Initiative (BMI). This has seen the recruitment of an IWC bycatch coordinator, and the initiative is currently setting up an Expert Panel, which will bring together wide-ranging and multi-disciplinary expertise on bycatch, from fisheries technologists to economists and will help advise the BMI in defining and implementing activities over the next few years. We thank the NAMMCO Secretariat for their nominations for the IWC Bycatch Expert Panel, which should be forthcoming soon. The initiative is currently examining the opportunities for collaboration, including with FAO, RFMOs and other IGOs and in defining the most strategically important activities to engage in. We would welcome discussion with NAMMCO's BYCELS Working Group, on how we could collaborate more closely on bycatch.

Marine Mammal Strandings

Marine mammal strandings is another area of shared interest between our respective organizations. The IWC has recently established a Strandings Initiative, supported by an Expert Panel and Stranding Coordinator that is pursuing work in a range of areas to help build capacity across our member governments for strandings response and investigation. We welcome the opportunity to collaborate and share expertise on this with our colleagues at NAMMCO.

Closing

In closing, I wish to reiterate our commitment to exploring, under the guidance of my leadership, where additional joint efforts on science and technical expertise can be beneficial to our organizations. While our mandates differ in important ways, NAMMCO and IWC might find it more effective when working together where possible and appropriate. I look forward to meeting all of you and to learning from this meeting. Thank you again for your hospitality.

JOINT OPENING STATEMENT
Livelihood International (LIVIN) and IWMC World Conservation Trust

This Statement is made on behalf of LIVIN and IWMC. Because of a conflict of schedule, Eugene Lapointe of IWMC, to his great dismay, is unable to attend NAMMCO26. He asked me to convey his warm and friendly regards to you Madam Chair, to the Secretary and her devoted staff and to his numerous friends involved in the NAMMCO Councils.

Madame Chair,

I was born and raised on a small and isolated sealing community in the middle of the Gulf of St-Lawrence, in eastern Canada.

From there, I have had a front row seat when animalist groups started their smear campaigns against our sealing activities. I've seen media playing the role of public relation machines for those extremists and I've witnessed weak politicians taking the side of multimillionaire US based groups and movie stars instead of protecting their own fragile communities.

I have seen all of them animalists, media and politicians disregarding both science and common sense, and I knew it was a recipe for disaster. Not only for the ecosystem, but also for small rural communities which fully depend on healthy and balanced ecosystem to thrive.

As every real conservationist projected, overprotected seals have overpopulated and now jeopardize the southern Gulf of St-Lawrence's ecosystem and the livelihood of its small coastal communities. Those already fragile communities are paying a high price for the emotionally driven anti-use philosophy sold by animalists to fill their deep pockets.

But if only we were the only victims of that dirty racket. Having less options than we have down south, many Inuit communities have paid in blood the "morally" justified bans on seal products.

And as activists' lies and deceptions worked for seal, why shouldn't they apply it to other charismatic species? Polar bear, elephant, rhino, whale, shark... let's make more money with those as well. We might have to trample on some more small communities who can hardly defend themselves, but who cares?

Well, the majority of us do. The majority of us wants wild resources management based on the best available data and taking into account its impacts on fragile rural communities.

It's unfortunately a very diverse and unorganized majority battling against a very motivated, organized and highly financed minority.

After attending many international meetings dealing with wild resources, my esteemed colleagues and I came to the sad conclusion that NAMMCO might be one of the last international organizations that still base its actions on rationales while considering those who, not only love Nature, but depend on it and try their best to live in harmony with it.

I sincerely hope LIVIN's and IWMC's experiences and expertise can contribute to NAMMCO's hard and crucial mission.

Thank you, madam Chair.

OPENING STATEMENT – MAKIVIK CORPORATION

Thank you the NAMMCO Secretariat for welcoming us to the 26th Meeting of the Commission in beautiful Tromsø.

I am Adamie Delisle Alaku, executive VP of Makivik Corporation, responsible for renewable resources in Nunavik, Canada. I am here with Stas Olpinski, my Director of our Resource Development Department.

Makivik Corporation has been asking the Canadian Government for many years that they join NAMMCO as a member state in order to share knowledge and get involved in marine resources.

We are very pleased to have been accepted by NAMMCO to be accepted in an observer status capacity to represent Nunavik Inuit interests concerning marine mammals on which we rely.

We have a lot of vested interest regarding all our activities related in marine wildlife.

We believe that NAMMCO remains the appropriate and internationally respected organization dealing with management and research concerning marine mammals.

I would like to thank Genevieve for helping us coordinate obtaining observer status and look forward to learning from the members how you conduct your meetings.

OPENING STATEMENT – NUNAVUT TUNNGAVIK INCORPORATED

Madam Chair, Delegates, Observers, ladies and gentlemen,

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

As many of you know, Nunavut Tunngavik Incorporated represents Inuit in the Nunavut Settlement Area and Inuit enrolled under the Nunavut Agreement. The Nunavut Agreement was signed in 1993 by the Inuit of Nunavut and the Government of Canada and is protected by the Canadian Constitution.

Inuit rely on wildlife for subsistence, cultural and spiritual value. Inuit support utilization of wildlife through sound wildlife management. For Inuit, conserving wildlife is about ensuring that we can pass on traditions, knowledge and values to our children. In this regard, NTI appreciates recent efforts by NAMMCO members and the NAMMCO Secretariat to enhance research, education and management of marine mammals. We particularly appreciate the recent outreach effort, such as the recent “Blue Economy” breakout session “Arctic sealing: threat or blue prospect?” that NAMMCO took the lead in organizing at the 2017 Arctic Circle Assembly, and that NTI co-arranged together with WWF Arctic programme.

NTI has also participated in various NAMMCO workshops and Joint Working Groups and recognizes the important contribution of NAMMCO to the conservation of marine mammals. We also expect marine mammals to be affected as ship traffic increases and other changes occur in Nunavut. We look forward to working together to address existing and emerging challenges.

Thank you.

AUDITED ACCOUNTS 2017

All figures in NOK

INCOME AN EXPENDITURE**Income**

Contributions	4,469,280
Employers Tax	250,613
NASS	172,801
MMFR	38,827
Miscellaneous	815
Total income	4,932,336

Expenditure

Staff related costs	3,254,338
Rent of premises	214,986
Meetings	147,240
Travel and subsistence	302,711
Office supply	84,152
Communication	272,355
Accounts & auditing	170,337
Observation Scheme	70,302
Scientific Committee	124,982
NASS	212,801
MMFR	138,827
GROM	35,266
Other expenses	25,462
Total expenditure	5,053,759

OPERATING RESULT**-121,423****BALANCE****Assets**

Outstanding claims	291,215
Bank deposits	3,988,867
Total assets	4,280,082

Equity

Distributable equity	
General Reserve	645,355
Restricted equity	600,000
Total equity	1,245,355

Liabilities

Membership contributions	2,279,392
NASS	484,778
MMFR	120,712
Creditors	113,200
Employers tax	39,645
Total liabilities	3,034,727

TOTAL LIABILITIES AND EQUITY**4,280,082**