

NAMMCO SCIENTIFIC COMMITTEE WORKING GROUP ON ABUNDANCE ESTIMATES

Kerteminde, 13-15 March, 2002

1. OPENING REMARKS

Chairman Niels Olsen welcomed all participants to the meeting (see Appendix 1). He reviewed the terms of reference for the Working Group.

At its 1999 meeting, the NAMMCO Council recommended that the Scientific Committee continue its efforts to co-ordinate future sighting surveys and analyses of the results from such surveys in the North Atlantic. In response, the Scientific Committee convened a meeting of this Working Group in November 2000, for the dual purpose of continuing analysis from previous NASS surveys, and planning a NASS survey for 2001. The Working Group developed a survey plan which incorporated vessel surveys by the Faeroe Islands, Iceland and Norway, and an aerial survey around coastal Iceland, as in previous NASS surveys. This plan was further developed and modified by correspondence among Working Group members and at an additional training/planning meeting held immediately before the survey. The NASS-2001 survey was conducted in June - July 2001.

The main purpose of the meeting was to review survey reports and abundance estimates from the survey, particularly for the target species minke and fin whales. Many of these estimates were only partially complete, so the Working Group was to recommend additional analysis to be conducted. A secondary objective was to evaluate the survey design and procedures used, and make recommendations for future surveys. Finally, the Working Group was asked to plan and schedule the publication of the results from NASS-2001, and those from previous surveys that had not already been published.

2. ADOPTION OF AGENDA

The Draft Agenda (Appendix 2) was adopted without changes.

3. APPOINTMENT OF RAPPORTEUR

Daniel Pike, Scientific Secretary of NAMMCO, was appointed as Rapporteur for the meeting.

4. REVIEW OF AVAILABLE DOCUMENTS AND REPORTS

The documents considered by the Working Group are listed in Appendix 3. Document SC/10/AE/4, Abundance of minke whales from NASS-2001 ship surveys, had not been completed in time for the meeting. An additional document describing the Faeroese ship survey was accepted as SC/10/AE/15. In addition, working papers from previous meetings of the Working Group, and other published documents, were also available as noted.

5. SURVEY REPORTS

Working papers describing the general methodology and results from the 2001 ship and aerial surveys were briefly reviewed by the Working Group. Target species of the surveys were minke and fin whales for the Faeroes and Iceland, and minke whales for Norway. For the first time the Faeroese and Icelandic vessels used identical methodology, a Backlund-Tarvack (BT) mode using 2 independent observer platforms. This involves one platform (the "tracking" platform), searching further ahead to set up "stads" from which the detection function of the other platform (the "primary" platform) is estimated. It requires the primary platform to operate independently of the tracker platform, but not vice-versa.