



MEETING OF COMMITTEE ON HUNTING METHODS

18 October 2016

DOCUMENT **ATTENDANCE OF EXTERNAL EXPERTS TO MEETINGS OF NAMMCO SUBSIDIARY BODIES, PARTICULARLY THOSE DEALING WITH SENSITIVE AND/OR CONTROVERSIAL MATTERS (e.g. STOCK STATUS & ASSESSMENTS, IMPROVEMENT OF HUNTING METHODS & ASSESSMENT OF TTD DATA)**

Submitted by: **Secretariat on behalf of FAC**

Action requested:

- To address three specific questions raised by the FAC
 - Advise FAC on whether the attendance of external experts should be made a principle for meeting of subsidiary bodies, particularly when dealing with potentially sensitive and/or controversial matters such as adoption of abundance estimates, stock status and assessments, improvement of hunting methods and assessment of TTD data.
 - Advise FAC on how External Experts can best be defined.
 - Advise FAC on funding rules for external experts

Background to the document:

The questions were first raised about meetings of the Scientific Committee and its working groups, but are not specific to this committee. Rather, it is a question of the management of the organization, and part of NAMMCO's *modus operandi*.

NAMMCO seeks to ensure that the organisation's limited funds are used to maximise the outcome of meetings, in line with the overriding principle of good management, ensuring full clarity, transparency and visibility of rules and decisions for all concerned.

In the past, the funding practice has not been consistent, particularly for working group meetings of the SC (SCWG). Therefore, the Secretariat requires guidance so that consistent and transparent rules can be applied, and each of the member countries are aware of those rules.

Symposia and Conferences are not covered in this discussion, as these usually involve different funding arrangements, often including many non-NAMMCO participants and also outside funding.

For the remainder of the document and to clarify the different scenarios, SCWG will be used as example.

To inform their discussion, the FAC June meeting agreed to forward the following questions to SC and CHM:

- 1. As a rule, should NAMMCO have external experts participating in all meetings dealing with issues of a potentially controversial character (such as SC assessment/endorsement of abundance estimate meetings or TTD expert meetings)?*
- 2. Who should be considered an external expert? Are all participants that are not a member of the specific NAMMCO committee per definition an external expert, or are there other defining criteria?*
- 3. Which participants to a meeting should NAMMCO pay for?*

However, when discussing the issue of external experts, it is fundamental that the NAMMCO member countries define and agree what is considered the responsibility of each member country with respect to gathering and providing the necessary data/information/analyses that constitutes the essence of a given meeting.

Re. 1 - ATTENDANCE OF EXTERNAL EXPERTS TO MEETINGS OF SUBSIDIARY BODIES

Background:

The involvement of external experts has been proposed as a requirement for NAMMCO subsidiary bodies, particularly when they are dealing with issues of more sensitive and controversial characters, e.g., when the SC is considering stock status and assessment issues, incl. adopting population estimates to be used in these, and when the CHM is considering the efficiency of killing methods and the assessment of TTD data.

Rationale:

The opportunity to invite external experts is a major strength of NAMMCO, and also what separates NAMMCO from most other organisations. The attendance of external experts:

1) Demonstrates objectivity in NAMMCO's work

NAMMCO is a small organisation with its parties having similar views on the use of natural resources, and the reality is that NAMMCO is criticised for having bias. The presence of external experts shows that NAMMCO considers balanced views in its scientific work and when dealing with assessment and improvement of killing methods. It also emphasizes that NAMMCO's advice, scientific or other, is based on the best scientific practices, and NAMMCO is not "cherry-picking" the data.

2) Peer-review process

Similar to the process used in publishing scientific papers in respected journals, the presence of external experts allows for a "peer-review" type of process where scientists/experts who are not involved with the project/research examine the research design, methods, results, and conclusions, and advise on whether best practices were used and logical conclusions were drawn.

3) *Defensibility of the advice in the future*

Although the advice that the SC and the CHM gives to Council is the best advice which can be given at the time when it is formulated (based on the best data, science and technology at the time), natural sciences are not exact sciences. Future research/data collection may indicate that the situation is very different from what a specific advice was based upon. In addition, advances are made in science and technology (e.g., we certainly do not conduct abundance surveys now as we did twenty years ago, or use cold harpoon grenade). In this context one may argue that external experts are the witness that the best science/technology was used at the time the advice was given.

Summary:

By making the participation of external experts required in the work of the committees' subsidiary bodies, in particular in all stock status and assessment work in the SC and other committees, NAMMCO will ensure its credibility and transparency in the outside world and will be able to counter possible critics related to participation and composition of such working/expert groups.

It will also benefit the NAMMCO scientists and experts and their work as increased credibility will influence how their work is being perceived by the larger world.

Furthermore, the presence of external experts enhances the expertise of the NAMMCO Committees and also supports the visibility of NAMMCO, as the invited experts will *de facto* act as ambassador/disseminator of the NAMMCO scientific and advice-giving process.

Re. 2 - THE DEFINITION OF EXTERNAL EXPERTS (EE) - THOUGHTS FOR CONSIDERATION

With regards to the question of transparency within and outside the organisation, it is important to define who should be seen as *external expert*, i.e., bringing objectivity, independence and defensibility to the advice given.

The practice of defining who is an external expert has not been consistent, but generally has been defined as: “experts that are not members of the Committee organising the meeting regardless of nationality.”

For example, an EE could be defined in the following ways or a combination of those:

- 1) Any relevant experts who are not member of the parent committee organising the meeting [e.g., in the case of a SC working group, any scientists not member of the SC] – regardless of nationality, institution and involvement with the data collection / analysis / interpretation of the work to be discussed at the WG/EG.
- 2) Any relevant experts/scientists who are not involved in the data collection / analysis / interpretation of the work to be discussed at the WG/EG - regardless of nationality and institution.
- 3) Any relevant scientists/experts not belonging to/not contracted by an institution from NAMMCO countries or NAMMCO

Re. 3 - FUNDING RULES FOR EE -THOUGHTS FOR CONSIDERATION

The question to address is “which *external experts* should be financially supported by NAMMCO.” Answering this question relies heavily on how the previous question (defining EE) is answered, however the following scenarios are offered for consideration, taking the CSWG as example when needed:

- 1) **NAMMCO offers financial support to **all** EE, regardless of nationality, institutional belonging or what kind of information and expertise they bring to the meeting.**
 - One obvious consequence is that it will require higher budgets for the WG/EG, something that will impact the overall NAMMCO budget and hence members’ contribution.
 - The advantage is that it potentially decreases the pressure on parties’ institutional budgets and secures that all necessary information and expertise will be present at any given WG/EG. In other words, it takes away a possible connection between participation of experts funded by a party and possible budget constraints experienced by that party.
- 2) **NAMMCO **only** offers financial support to those EE who are not involved in the data collection/analysis/interpretation of the work to be discussed at the meeting.**
 - The principle here is that it is the responsibility of the member nation to carry out and present analyses and data that relates to that specific member country for that WG/EG.
 - Often this will involve work carried out by experts that are not members of the committee [scientists that are not members of the SC]. These non-committee members can both be from the member countries or from a non-member country.
 - For example, in the case of the Coastal Seal WG (CSWG), Norway is responsible for bringing to the table all information and data on the relevant seals stocks managed by Norway, likewise for Iceland, Faroe Islands and Greenland. These experts (*nationally-appointed experts (NaE)*) are funded by the respective member countries.
 - Other *experts* on relevant methods, analysis or modelling are invited as reviewers of the analyses performed and the underlying parameters. In addition, in the case of the CSWG, a complete overview of the situation can only be achieved by also getting information from Scotland, Canada and the US, as well as Sweden and maybe Denmark (because stocks are shared with these non-NAMMCO countries). This last group of *experts* are also invited to the WG and NAMMCO offers to fund their participation. Both groups are called *external experts (EE)*.

To summarise, given this second scenario and based on the principal outlined above, NAMMCO will only be responsible for funding the *external experts*, irrespective of nationality. The parties will fund all other experts/scientists (NaE), irrespective of nationality, that contribute information or work related to the member countries.