

NAMMCO Annual meeting 29

Opening Statement

The upcoming meeting of the International Whaling Commission will be different to what it was like in the past: After all, Japan, the spearhead for the sustainable use of whales is no longer party to the Whaling Convention. But we should not become demotivated! Because for the last few years the international community has provided states and organisations favouring the principle of sustainable use with sufficient tools to justify before the IWC and, later on this year, before CITES that conservation and sustainable use are not mutually exclusive, but rather complement each other.

For instance, in 2018 the UN General Assembly adopted the Declaration on the Rights of Peasants and Other People Working in Rural Areas. This Declaration not only justifies the local use of abundant resources, but rather fosters it. Also the recently adopted UN Declaration on the human right to a clean, healthy and sustainable environment underlines the importance of including local communities in the decision-making processes. Not because of good will, but rather because indigenous peoples and local communities hold a wealth of knowledge from their interaction with the natural environment, which is crucial for the development of effective conservation strategies.

Unfortunately, NAMMCO is merely one of few among many international organisations which has recognised the interplay between conservation and sustainable use, also by including traditional knowledge and, indeed, the voices of indigenous peoples and local communities. The importance and timeliness of this approach can not be under-rated and should serve as an example for others. Especially bearing in mind the increasing challenges of climate change, increasing electricity and oil prices as well as increasing living costs, the production and consumption of local foods becomes ever more important. Let NAMMCO therefore be a beacon for the promotion of indigenous and local rights as well as effective conservation of marine mammals.