



Opening statement by Greenland to NAMMCO 29th Annual Meeting 2022, Oslo, Norway

Mr Chair, Ladies and Gentlemen,

First and foremost, congratulations to all NAMMCO member countries, observers, and the Secretariat in the occasion of the 30 years anniversary for the creation of North Atlantic Marine Mammal Commission.

We are very pleased to be here with you after 2 years of virtual meetings. We have both good and less good experiences with virtual meetings. One of the good things is that we use less fuel and thus less gas emissions. Good for everyone, including marine mammals.

We are gathered to address issues on the conservation and management of marine mammals NAMMCO has focussed on the last 30 years. We have gained impressive results and still eager to develop and make it more effective to benefit conservation and management of marine mammals. I am sure everybody is doing their best ability. It has been another busy year dealing with conservation and management issues being a country based its economy and subsistence from marine resources. The COVID-19 has severely impacted the food security.

The important meat supplies

Greenland, being a large coast-based and isolated land is reliant on self-sufficiency. Marine mammals are the most important part of our food as shown in the National Progress Report on the numbers of reported catches. The Government is obliged to provide the framework for food security by law. The government is also obliged to incorporate hunter- and user knowledge in their decision-making processes.

The need for increased focus on hunter and user knowledge

Greenland have followed most of the scientific advice since the establishment of NAMMCO. For the last 6-7 years, there has been clear evidence that there is a need to improve and structure the collection and use of hunter and user knowledge in relation to addressing issues on the conservation and management of marine mammals. There is an imbalanced situation, which increases challenges between scientists and hunters. The situation has a severe impact on the management on marine mammal in Greenland. It is also cause for frustrations in the hunter communities, in meat supply and to our cultural heritage.

I am referring to the clear message and presentation hunters from East Greenland gave to the NAMMCO Annual Meeting in 2021 on their knowledge on narwhal. This year the hunter frustrations are not only seen in East Greenland, but also in North Greenland. Greenland has received other scientific recommendations that could severely impact the hunting communities.

Climate change is a hugely focussed area, and a major cause for the changes we are experiencing as inhabitants in the Arctic. The hunting activities are not the only cause for the changes in distribution and abundance of various species. Therefore, NAMMCO should stress to the relevant organizations dealing with climate change that immediate actions have to be taken to halt the negative impact on marine resources and their habitat.

The best available scientific knowledge

The scientific knowledge of the marine mammal stocks has been steadily improving, and thus improving the management advice and actions in Greenland.

The view from Greenland is that the best available knowledge is obtained by combining the two knowledge systems of hunter and user knowledge with the scientific knowledge in the decision-making processes. Then it will be up to the politicians to make the final decision using the two types of knowledge.

The above-described situation can be solved, focussing the work on structured collection and use of hunter and user knowledge in a greater level. Knowledge of the marine mammal based on 24 hours and year-round observations of wildlife from hunters is valuable and needs to be considered in the decision-making processes, on national and regional level. However, the task is big and should be considered carefully between and with all relevant stakeholders.

Therefore, Greenland would like to work for an increased focus on organized collection and use of hunter knowledge in the decision-making processes in the coming years, also within NAMMCO context, when we are ready to do so.

We hope for a positive and constructive meeting.

Qujanaq – Thank you.