

Distinguished Chair, Delegates, Observers, Ladies and Gentlemen,

It is my pleasure to have the chance to address you here today for the first time at the annual meeting of NAMMCO. On behalf of the Icelandic Delegation I would like to extend thanks to Norway and the Secretariat for all the work in preparing this Annual meeting and for the coordination of all the work carried out on behalf of NAMMCO.

Continued cooperation to enhance the knowledge of the marine mammals in the North Atlantic is without any doubts one of the most valuable work under the NAMMCO umbrella.

As one of the founding members Iceland values the work conducted in the various NAMMCO committees. This is especially the case for the Science Committee, and it is well known through the last decades leading scientists from Iceland have been actively engaged in this work and Iceland will continue to support these activities.

The assessments by the NAMMCO Scientific Committee have formed the main basis for management decisions taken by Icelandic authorities concerning fin and common minke whales.

As NAMMCO has also placed a large emphasis on animal welfare issues the work conducted by the Committee on Hunting Methods is also of importance. This is particularly of importance to Iceland and steps have been taken to strengthen the monitoring of operations at sea.

The existence and proper functioning of NAMMCO is therefore crucial to its member countries and the co-operation is also crucial for the conservation of the marine mammals in the North Atlantic.

Iceland will assess the feasibility of the utilization of marine mammals by taking into the account all the relevant variables prior to any change in management policy.

I look forward to a constructive meeting and fruitful discussion on the matters at hand.

Thank you.