

OPENING STATEMENT FROM THE INTERNATIONAL WHALING COMMISSION

On behalf of the International Whaling Commission, I wish to express our gratitude for the invitation to join this 29th meeting of the Council of the North Atlantic Marine Mammal Commission. Our two organisations share a common mission of cetacean science and stewardship, and I would like to note the collaborative work already underway.

I would like to thank the NAMMCO members who participated in the 2022 IWC virtual Scientific Committee meeting. A key part of the collaboration between our organisations is through scientists, across their research programs and their engagement in meetings and workshops.

NAMMCO and the IWC share interests in managing the increasing threats to whale stocks. Bycatch and entanglement in fishing gear is the greatest single threat, and NAMMCO's BYCELS and IWC's Bycatch Mitigation Initiative seek to expand efforts to monitor and mitigate bycatch through collaborative work with the fishery sector. Whales and other cetaceans also face ship strikes, ocean noise, marine debris, chemical pollution and, of course, climate change. One of the many benefits of partnerships with other organisations such as NAMMCO, is that we are able to raise awareness of these challenges in other fora and find workable solutions.

The IWC oversees aboriginal subsistence whaling that requires robust science and data to underpin the modelling used in its management procedure. As part of this the IWC maintains records of historical and modern whaling catches, hosting the most comprehensive such database for any wildlife resource. The IWC Secretariat is grateful for the contributions from a broad range of countries and researchers including NAMMCO members. The IWC also maintains a table of abundance estimates endorsed by the IWC Scientific Committee. This includes a range of information such as whether the estimate can be used for management, its geographic coverage and confidence intervals. Given NAMMCO's similar use of such estimates this is an area we have identified for increased cooperation.

We look forward to welcoming you to IWC68 which will take place this October in Slovenia after a 4 year gap forced by the Covid-19 pandemic. Thank you, Chair, and we look forward to the discussions over the next three days.