



Opening statement by Greenland to NAMMCO 30th Annual Meeting 2023, Tromsø, Norway

Mr Chair, Ladies and Gentlemen,

What a wonderful food event NAMMCO arranged in October 2022 in Torshavn. It was a success thanks to the host and the Secretariat and the chefs that made the delicious dishes.

We are in the middle of winter in Greenland, so what we need is a couple of positive stories. I read recently in a magazine which says: "Researchers in Greenland have discovered an unusually high number of fin whales and humpback whales in the waters off the coast of East Greenland. This could indicate a tipping point in the eco-system of the ocean. The whales are lured there, because global warming has resulted in less sea ice and warmer water. This helps to change the food chains."

The reaction I heard from the hunters in East Greenland to the news is: "This is not a new for us. We have observed large numbers of large whales, including bowhead whales and other small cetaceans in our waters the last 10-15 years, so we cannot call it for a discovery. But it is true that the numbers of large whales seem to increase and coming closer to the coast.

There are several good examples of successful science-based management over 30 years with NAMMCO that we should be proud of. Negative trends in populations of species such as walrus, narwhals and belugas have been stopped and even reversed due to good management based on advice from the NAMMCO SC.

NAMMCO has also succeeded its work on animal welfare issues through the Committee on Hunting Methods. There have been important works such as Hunting manuals, video-based instructions regarding the use of harpoon cannons and whale grenades. It is very important work, which has been done in good cooperation with hunters and other experts.

Another good information is that the University of Greenland has introduced a new curriculum called "SILA Curriculum", a study of biology on bachelor level - based on Greenlandic wild animals, the nature and the weather. Indeed, a study curriculum we certainly need in Greenland to better understand the animals and the effects of changing climate.

We are in Greenland facing very serious challenges with narwhals and belugas in East Greenland. This is a very sensitive issue. The Government of Greenland initially has stopped transport and

freight of beluga products to West Greenland and Greenlander living in Denmark as a reaction to a negative Non-Detriment-Finding (NDF) in early March. This is showing the seriousness of Naalakkersuisuts decision that the quotas are only to be used locally for food security. The export of narwhal products has been stopped since 2008 voluntarily.

Another challenge we experience is the industrialised countries such as the EU and USA have banned seal products, the EU and UK with Inuit exemptions. But the EU og UK Inuit exemptions are not helping at all, on the contrary. The trade of seal products has fallen from 110,000 to around 30,000 seal skin a year to the Government owned tannery. It affects the livelihood of hunters.

As everybody know, there is something we cannot control. The SILA. The weather, in all its wild unpredictability, determines whether the hunters and researchers can go out and do their work. In early March we experienced ice entrapment of narwhals in Upernavik area and a minke whale in Disko Bay area. The following week the weather changed from high winter to Spring, changing the ice cover.

The heat is not only on at the top of the ice cap, which lies 3,000 metres above sea level, but the ice is also melting on the ground level. The melting ice is affecting the wildlife, especially those on the ocean.

We hope for a positive and constructive meeting.

Qujanaq – Thank you.