

Distinguished Chair, Delegates, Observers, Ladies and Gentlemen,

At this 30th annual meeting of NAMMCO here in beautiful Tromsø I would on the behalf of the Icelandic delegation like to extend my thanks to the Chairmanship of Norway and the Secretariat for all the work preparing this annual meeting.

After 30 years of work NAMMCO has made excellent strides in the work concerning the cooperation on conservation, management and study of marine mammals in the North Atlantic. Even though we can congratulate ourselves on what has been achieved we cannot allow us to become complacent in this important work.

There are still new questions to be asked and answers to be sought out. Therefore one can say that the focus on the future of NAMMCO should be the backbone of this year's annual meeting as we will be reviewing the status of the current activities of NAMMCO.

When looking towards the future we can also ask ourselves whether NAMMCO has lived up to the aspirations of the founding countries. In some cases, we could say yes and in other cases we could say no and the answers by the respective founding countries might also be different.

Keeping this in mind it is very important for an organization like NAMMCO to be able to address the different challenges and to discuss in a constructive manner. As the principle of consensus goes to the core of how we take decisions in NAMMCO that should not exclude us from constructively discussing issues in the case where we might potentially disagree. Yet, we can say that there is more that binds us than divides us and the focus on the excellent science activities has always been the guiding principle during the last three decades.

Iceland is committed to this and will continue to put emphasis on the work of science in its engagement within NAMMCO. The valuable knowledge derived from the work of NAMMCO has served to support how we address the wide range of issues related to conservation and management of marine mammals.

There is a plenty of work ahead of us both at this meeting and in the diverse activities that NAMMCO engages in both in cooperation with parties from the founding countries as well as observer counties and other organizations. Iceland will continue to actively engage within NAMMCO in the years to come.

It is my hope that the participants at this annual meeting will have the chance to constructively engage as we take the steps into the fourth decade of NAMMCO.

Mr. chair thank you for this opportunity to address the annual meeting on behalf of Iceland.