

NAMMCO



30 Years: 1992 - 2022

30th MEETING OF THE COUNCIL

29-30 March 2023

Rødbanken, Tromsø, Norway (also streamed)

COUNCIL REPORT



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1. OPENING PROCEDURES

1.1 WELCOME ADDRESS

The Chair of the Council, Petter Meier (Norway), welcomed participants and invited guests ([NAMMCO/30/01](#), Appendix 1: List of Participants) to the 30th meeting of the Council of NAMMCO. The NAMMCO Agreement was signed on the 9th of April 1992 in Nuuk, and the Inaugural Meeting of the Council was held in September 1992 in Tórshavn.

He noted the short timespan between meetings (6 months since Council 29), explained by the intention to return to the annual cycle of meetings in the aftermath of the pandemic. The Management Committees had met the 1st and 2nd of March, thus the duration of Council 30 lasted only two days.

As a new initiative and to commemorate the 30th meeting of the Council, it had been decided to include a “Theme Session” where Dr Tore Haug had been invited to reflect on “NAMMCO in the future – challenges and opportunities”. The Chair expressed his hope that the opening talk by Haug would be followed by a constructive and vivid discussion.

Meier shared his view that now is an opportune moment for NAMMCO to take stock and contemplate where the Organisation is, and where it wishes to be, could be, or definitely doesn't want to be, in the years to come. What would be the international community's position to whaling and the harvest of marine mammals in the future? The IWC-moratorium will be in existence for the foreseeable future for sure, but for how long?

Acknowledging that around the year 2050, meeting the food requirements of an expected global population of approximately 10 billion will be highly challenging, sustainable use of marine resources will play a role if we shall succeed in fulfilling the United Nations Sustainable Developments Goals (UN SDGs) – in particular Sustainable Development Goal number 2 – to get rid of starvation, and number 14 – a sustainable use of the ocean and marine resources. This situation will influence how the international society should approach the overall idea of considering marine mammals as a food commodity in line with poultry, pork, or beef.

Finally, the Chair noted that this Council meeting would be his last one as Chair and he expressed his gratitude to the Secretariat for their efforts in making his job a joyful ride.

1.2 ADMISSION OF OBSERVERS

On behalf of the Council, the Chair welcomed and thanked the observers ([NAMMCO/30/01](#), Appendix 1: List of Participants), from Canada, Denmark, Japan, the United States, the Makivvik Corporation, the Arctic Monitoring and assessment Programme (AMAP), the International Whaling Commission (IWC), the North-East Atlantic Fisheries Commission (NEAFC), the Northwest Atlantic Fisheries Organisation (NAFO), the Fishermen and Hunters Association in Greenland (KNAPK), and the World Conservation Trust (IWMC).

The Chair noted that Canada, Denmark, and the World Conservation Trust (IWMC) could not be present physically to the meeting but would follow the meeting online.

Apologies were received from the Fisheries and Aquaculture Division from the Food and Agriculture Organisation of the United Nations (FAO) and the North Atlantic Salmon Conservation Organisation (NASCO).

1.3 OPENING STATEMENTS

The Faroe Islands, Greenland, Iceland, and Norway as well as Japan, the USA, Makivvik, the IWC, KNAPK and IWMC provided opening statements (Appendix 4: Opening Statements).

1.4 ADOPTION OF AGENDA

The agenda ([NAMMCO/30/02](#), Appendix 2: Agenda) was adopted without amendments. Supporting documents to the meeting ([NAMMCO/30/03](#)) are listed in Appendix 3: List of Documents. All documents can be found under [Council Meetings](#) on the NAMMCO website.

1.5 MEETING ARRANGEMENTS

The Chair informed that the agenda Items would be addressed according to the schedule of the meeting to accommodate the time difference with the Chair of the Scientific Committee, Aqqalu Rosing-Asvid (Greenland), who was following the meeting online.

The General Secretary, Geneviève Desportes, joined in welcoming all the participants to Tromsø, the location of the Secretariat. The meeting would be streamed, with a few participants following online. She presented the meeting arrangements and practicalities and extended a dinner invitation hosted by the Secretariat at the restaurant of the Tromsø Chef who had participated to the NAMMCO Food Event held in October 2022 in the Faroe Islands.

She also reminded the participants that the Secretariat staff, supported by the technical team, were available during the meeting should anyone required assistance.

1.6 THEME SESSION ‘NAMMCO IN THE FUTURE: CHALLENGES AND OPPORTUNITIES’

Haug had been invited to talk about NAMMCO in the future: challenges and opportunities. Haug had been a member of NAMMCO's Scientific Committee since its first meeting in 1993 and later also joined the Norwegian delegation to the Council. In parallel, Haug was also a long-term member of the IWC Scientific Committee.

Haug emphasized that NAMMCO's science-based management is there to secure sustainable hunt. He gave clear examples of marine mammal stocks for which negative trends had been reversed by following NAMMCO management advice. Uncertainties, however, were still existing for some stocks. He underlined that climate change represented a severe challenge for NAMMCO. It represented challenges for the Arctic species (increasingly unfavorable habitat, increased competition with southern species, etc.) and for the Arctic people (modified access to hunting grounds). Climate change also opened the way for a wide range of anthropogenic activities, which potentially represented threats for marine mammals. Haug also underlined the challenge for NAMMCO of navigating side by side with the International Whaling Commission, which was increasingly turning into a whale-protection organisation. In large whale issues, NAMMCO depended upon the work conducted under the IWC, and Haug recommended that NAMMCO build up its own capacity for taking over the management of baleen whales.

A summary of Haug's presentations is provided in Appendix 5.

COMMENTS AND DISCUSSION

The Chair thanked Haug for his presentation and opened the discussion.

Jón Th. Stefánsson (Iceland) asked whether Haug thought that the present structure of NAMMCO inhibited the Organisation to fully take on the management of baleen whales. Haug answered that NAMMCO could do it, but that it would require strengthening the Secretariat and the Scientific Committee's competence and capacity, and consequently increasing its budget. Stefánsson questioned the possible political will to increase costs, at which Meier replied that Norway did not at present see a need to increase the scope of the Scientific Committee and was satisfied with the level of the work carried out by NAMMCO.

Meier noted the necessity for a significant change in public opinion and standpoints of several international organisations (including CITES), in order to open the market to marine mammals as a food commodity. However, times were changing, and the necessity of finding environmentally friendly

proteins was becoming more acute. Should marine mammals become acknowledged as food in line with other marine and terrestrial food resources, it would necessitate an increase in the capacity of NAMMCO. At present Norway was not using its quota, as the market was limited.

Amalie Jessen (Greenland) recalled that whales and fishermen were competing for the same resource, which also had an influence on food security. More knowledge is needed regarding this issue.

Iida Takeru (Japan) noted that the sustainable use of marine mammals based on scientific evidence was an essential component of healthy oceans, coastal communities, and food security. In this regard, he believed that the existence of NAMMCO was significant and found it important to think and share thoughts about the role and opportunities of NAMMCO in the future and for the next generation. He reassured that Japan would like to continue maintaining and enhancing the close cooperation it had with NAMMCO on the sustainable use of marine mammals.

Páll Nolsøe (Faroe Islands) noted that NAMMCO provides management advice, but for the Faroe Islands it was also important that the Organisation addresses other issues and, for example, disseminates widely that as long as whaling and sealing are sustainable, it is an environmentally friendly food resource that could reinforce food security. It was in this spirit that the Faroe Islands hosted the Food Event in October 2022.

Responding to the question whether the IWC was turning into a pure protection organisation and moving away from population assessment, Iain Staniland (IWC) reassured the participants that population assessment will remain a key focus of the work of the IWC Scientific Committee.

Mikael Petersen (KNAPK) pointed out that, regarding the situation of narwhals in Greenland, KNAPK's point of view is that the numbers have increased significantly and consequently the narwhal quota in both West and East Greenland should be increased. Narwhals are competitors to the halibut and other fisheries. Petersen also commented that an unusually large number of belugas have been seen off East Greenland. KNAPK pointed out that these belugas are Arctic whales, with Svalbard within their range; they live, breed, and eat in the waters of both Greenland and Svalbard and cannot by any means be called Svalbard whales. The Arctic animals move around the entire Arctic area and have fed the Arctic people that cannot survive without these food items since time immemorial. KNAPK is pleased that NAMMCO recognizes the value of, and pushes for, the involvement of hunters and hunters' knowledge in its management processes. KNAPK is looking forward to this involvement becoming a reality and to becoming an active player in this process.

Jessen underlined Greenland's strong hope that NAMMCO will become more user inclusive in its decision-making process generating recommendations and quota advice. She also underlined the importance for NAMMCO to spend time and energy explaining to the wider public what the real conservation issues in different areas are, so that the overall sustainability of whaling and sealing products are considered in comparison with those of alternative food resources.

Kristján Loftsson (Iceland) underlined the paradox that NAMMCO should rely on work done within the IWC to be able to provide management advice on baleen whales. The Secretariat of NAMMCO should be strengthened, so that it could support the Scientific Committee in undertaking the task. He also mentioned that the market needed to open, not only the EU market, but also the Japanese market, which imposes stricter import rules to foreign whale products than its national rules.

Guro Gjelsvik (Norway) underlined a seemingly lack of knowledge and misconceptions by the general public about whaling and sealing in Norway. Realising the full potential of marine mammals as a food source, i.e., utilising the full precautionary quota of minke whales, is failing due to the limited market demands. Norway believes that it is important for NAMMCO to continue informing and educating in a factual manner to increase people's awareness of marine mammals' potential with respect to food security and environmentally friendly food. The role of marine mammals in the ecosystem is subject to increased attention and will continue to be an important focus for scientists and managers. Gjelsvik

also underlined that hunters were seeing more seals than the scientists and she was supportive of Greenland's expectation to see users' knowledge better integrated in generating management advice.

Desportes thought it was essential that NAMMCO sustains and increases its effort in communication and outreach, especially towards younger generation; that it continues contextualising facts on whaling and sealing and their potential in terms of food security, blue economy, sustainable food systems, UN Sustainable Development Goals. This contextualisation helps people moving perspective and thinking out of the box; it supports the needed shift in opinion. Desportes also underlined that people must learn to acknowledge that sustainable food systems cannot, by definition, be global but must be adapted to local conditions and realities, both environmental and societal; environmentally friendly food cannot look the same everywhere.

Mario Acquarone (AMAP) underlined that a large portion of the NAMMCO area is in the Arctic which, according to AMAP/IPCC, is warming 4x faster than the rest of the globe. NAMMCO should therefore also focus on how to deal with the consequences of a warming Arctic. With Norway assuming the leadership of the Arctic Council from May 2023, some of the priority areas of the Arctic Council and AMAP could be of interest to NAMMCO, such as Oceans, Sustainable Economic Development, and People in the North.

Looking back, Stefánsson queried whether NAMMCO had lived up to the aspirations during its first 30 years. He observed that the times were quite different now and that the mandate of NAMMCO may change to adapt to the new political situation.

Jessen observed that the biggest challenge for NAMMCO was to adhere to the terms of the Agreement, i.e., to the commitment of the Parties to sustainable management of marine mammal resources, using when appropriate a multi-species approach. The ecosystem approach requires a lot of science and is still not really implemented; this might be an opportunity NAMMCO should grasp.

The Chair thanked the participants for a fruitful discussion in exploring the opportunities and challenges that lie ahead for NAMMCO in this changing landscape in terms of marine mammal conservation and emerging threats. He concluded by noting that political decisions were taken by politicians, but that managers were advisers to the politicians and their influence was not negligible. It is expected that seafood, as the largest traded food commodity in the world, will allow to fulfil the SDG 2 'Zero Hunger'; marine mammals are sea food and NAMMCO should be in a good position to provide guidelines in this regard.

2. NATIONAL & ANNUAL PROGRESS REPORTS

Member Countries submitted their National Progress Reports (NPR) for 2021 in accordance with the deadline of 1 February (NAMMCO/30/NPR/FO-2022, NAMMCO/30/NPR/GL-2022, NAMMCO/30/NPR/IS-2022, NAMMCO/30/NPR/NO-2022. All NPR are available on the [NAMMCO Website](#).

An NPR had also been received from Japan and an Annual Progress Report from Makivik.

No specific remarks or clarifications to the reports were brought forward.

The Chair thanked delegations for their input, and encouraged Canada to continue providing a NPR to NAMMCO.

The Council noted the NPRs and **agreed** to the proposal from Parties to postpone the current deadline for national reporting from 1 February to 1 March, to better accommodate the national catch registration procedures.

3. FINANCIAL AND ADMINISTRATIVE ISSUES

3.1 REPORT OF THE FINANCE AND ADMINISTRATION COMMITTEE (FAC)

The Chair of the Finance and Administration Committee, Jón Th. Stefánsson (Iceland), presented the activities of the Committee since the last Council meeting in September 2022 ([NAMMCO/30/04](#)). The Committee had met prior to the Council meeting to discuss finances and the progress of the MINTAG project.

The FAC had been tasked by the Council 29 to discuss the structure of the Secretariat including the expertise and capacity needed to best fulfil the priorities and core activities of the Commission. However, this topic and issues related to hiring new staff had been dealt with in Heads of Delegation meetings because it became part of a larger discussion within NAMMCO and the future priorities of the Commission.

FAC recommendations to Council 30:

Administrative issues

- Task the FAC to oversee the hiring process of the new staff, including conditions and contracts.

Financial issues

- Approve the 2022 audited accounts.
- Adopt the 2024 draft budget.
- Approve the 2025 forecast budget.
- Recommend that the necessity for physical meetings contra virtual meetings always be carefully weighed by committees and subsidiary bodies, both from a financial and an environmental perspective.

COMMENTS AND DISCUSSION

The Chair thanked Stefánsson for his presentation.

The Council noted the report and **endorsed** the recommendations of the FAC.

3.2 AUDITED ACCOUNTS 2022

Stefánsson presented the audited accounts 2022 ([NAMMCO/30/05](#) and Appendix 6).

The audited accounts with Financial Statements contained no specific remarks.

The audited accounts for 2022 closed with a surplus of NOK 303,447 as compared to NOK -761,440 foreseen in the budget adopted by the Council at NAMMCO 28. The general reserve increased and amounted to NOK 2,127,992 compared to the budgeted NOK 668,910.

The positive discrepancy between the budget and the account continued to be partly explained by COVID-19 limitation on travelling, as well as the postponement of the observation activities from 2022 to 2023, and of two WG meetings, the Coastal Seals WG to 2023 and the Pilot Whale WG to 2025.

COMMENTS AND DISCUSSION

The 2022 accounts were **approved** by the Council.

3.3 DRAFT BUDGET 2024 AND FORECAST BUDGET 2025

3.3.1 Anticipated results 2023

Stefánsson introduced the anticipated results 2023 ([NAMMCO/30/06, Appendix 7](#)).

The anticipated results for 2023 is a deficit of NOK 733,814 instead of the deficit of NOK 980,388 foreseen in the budget adopted by the Council at NAMMCO 29. The general reserve is expected to end on NOK 1,394,178 compared to the budgeted NOK 612,965. From this reserve, it will be taken the costs associated with hiring three new Secretariat staff, for which NOK 300,000 have been budgeted. The FAC recommended that expenses in 2023 be if possible reduced, when considering the budgets for 2024 and 2025, see below. Subsidiary bodies were also encouraged to meet online to reduce costs. The FAC recommended a supplementary allocation of NOK 20,000 to accommodate the establishment of the new Council Working Group on Enhancing Users' Involvement in NAMMCO Decision Making (UIWG).

COMMENTS AND DISCUSSION

The Council took note of the anticipated results for 2023, approved the allocation to the newly established UIWG, and recommended to favour online meetings when possible.

3.3.2 Draft budget 2024 and forecast budget 2025

This agenda Item was left open until Day 2 of the meeting to accommodate decisions taken by the Council regarding the workplan of the committees. Stefánsson introduced the 2024 draft budget and the 2025 forecast budget ([NAMMCO/30/0,6](#)).

The final draft budget for 2024 recommended by FAC closed with a deficit of NOK 362,682 and a Total Reserve of 731,496. The forecast budget 2025 closed with a deficit of NOK 402,231 and a Total Reserve of 129,265.

He noted that the foreseen situation was not sustainable, as the Total Reserve (NOK 129,265) was lower than the minimal reserve desired by the Commission (ca. NOK 600,000). The scenario was partly explained by expenses related to anticipated changes in staff in 2025. To avoid a deficit, the FAC considered it important to take pre-emptive steps to reduce the budgeted expenses in 2024 and 2025.

FAC recommendations to Council 30

To approve the budgets 2024 and forecast 2025 noting especially:

- No observation activities in 2024 and NOK 100,000 in 2025.
- For the newly established UIWG to allocate NOK 40,000 in both 2024 and 2025.
- The Council had recommended in 2022 that the Scientific Committee only held a maximum of four face-to-face WG meetings a year, and that no funding be allocated to supplementary meetings. The FAC reiterated this recommendation but considered, however, the budget allocated to the Scientific Committee as a funding envelope which should not be exceeded, but within which itemisation could change.

COMMENTS AND DISCUSSION

The Chair of the Committee on Inspection and Observation, Guro Gjelsvik (Norway) noted that no observation activities were budgeted for in 2024 and only NOK 100,000 was allocated in 2025.

The Council **adopted** the 2024 draft budget and **approved** the 2025 forecast budget (Appendix 7: Anticipated Results 2023, Budget 2024, Draft Budget 2025).

The Council **agreed** that the necessity for holding physical meeting should be considered at all levels of the Commission, both from a financial and an environmental perspective.

3.4 ADMINISTRATIVE REPORT 2022

The General Secretary introduced the Administrative Report ([NAMMCO/30/07](#)), which presented an overview of the Commission's (Council, subsidiary bodies, Secretariat) activities in the past year.

NAMMCO was still impacted by the COVID-19 pandemic in 2022 resulting in online meetings, and the postponement of the 2022 observation activities to 2023. The immediate consequences of less travelling continued to be a gain of time and money. A major advancement in terms of administrative issues was the completion of the review of the Staff Rules and the adoption of Financial Rules. Other core activities had been the review of the implementation of the Communication Plan (CP) 2019-2022, developing CP 2023-2024, and outreach and dissemination activities such as updating and revamping the website, organising and implementing the 2022 Food Event in October (see under Item 12), and developing and making of the first instruction video for minke whale hunters released in September 2022

The internship programme, which started in 2017, continued with two interns (both from Germany) joining the Secretariat in 2022. The programme provides the Secretariat with additional human resources and expertise and is a highly appreciated input to the otherwise small Secretariat, in terms of energy, ideas and creativity. It is considered a positive experience for both the interns and the Secretariat. It also functions as an eye opener for the interns on today's reality of whaling and sealing, especially within the perspective of food security, blue economy, and contribution to fulfilling the UN SDGs. It is a knowledge they bring with them when dispersing towards their next carrier steps to national or international institutions.

COMMENTS AND DISCUSSION

The Chair thanked Desportes for her presentation and noted that information on External Relations and Communication and Outreach would be reported under Items 11 and 12, respectively. He **commended** the report and the usefulness of getting an overview of the Commission activities.

The Council took note of the report.

3.5 OTHER BUSINESS

There was no other business.

4. SCIENTIFIC COMMITTEE

4.1 REPORT OF THE SCIENTIFIC COMMITTEE (SC)

The Chair of the SC, Rosing-Asvid (Greenland) was unable to participate in person. He was therefore following the meeting online and was available for questions. The Vice-Chair of the SC, Sandra Granquist (Iceland), presented the activities of the SC since the last meeting of the Council in September 2022. Granquist focused on the general part of the SC activities and report ([NAMMCO/30/08](#)), as information and recommendations pertaining to species and eco-system related issues had been presented to the relevant Management Committees ([NAMMCO/30/FI01-03](#)).

On a general note, the SC reiterated its concerns regarding the narwhal & beluga situation in East Greenland, both with respect to the survival of the narwhal stock in SE Greenland and about the credibility of NAMMCO as a responsible management Organisation. SC 29 urged the MCC and the Council to find a solution that encompassed NAMMCO acting as a responsible management Organisation both endorsing the advice from the SC and still respecting the rights of Greenland to adjust the catch according to its domestic situation. SC 29 strongly reiterated previous recommendations of zero catch of narwhal and beluga in East Greenland.

4.1.1 Overall work between the 28 and 29 Scientific Committee Meeting

The 29th meeting of the SC was held online 23-26 January 2023, with observers from Japan. The SC reviewed the activities that had taken place since its last meeting (January 2022), including working group meetings and conclusions, progress of the MINTAG Steering Group, preparation for the NASS 24 cetacean survey and initiated the review of four of the website species pages (grey seal, bowhead whale, white-sided and white beaked dolphins).

Discussing work procedures, SC agreed to establish a NAMMCO technical WG on genetics and a proposal and Terms of Reference should be presented at the next SC meeting. The SC recommended to continue with the current format of annual in-person meetings, and, presented with ICES Code of conduct and Meeting Etiquette Rules, agreed to keep them in mind for future SC meetings.

The SC welcomed a proposal from Japan for a collaborative study to further understand the role of baleen whales in the western North Pacific ecosystem. Japan plans to analyse long-term datasets for understanding ecosystem functions relevant to large baleen whale behaviour, such as distribution, movement and feeding ecology. It suggested that a group of experts from the NAMMCO countries be created to provide advice to Japan in the development of this research, so comparison with data-rich North Atlantic ecosystems (e.g., Barents Sea and Irminger Sea) would be made possible and facilitated.

Continuing its discussion on a principle-based precautionary approach for the sustainable management of small and/or depleted stocks, SC agreed on eight principles for ensuring a precautionary approach in NAMMCO's management of cetaceans and pinniped stocks (see box below).

SC 29 principles for integrating a precautionary approach in NAMMCO's management of cetaceans and pinniped stocks:

- 1) Anthropogenic removals of marine mammals should be assessed for sustainability.
- 2) Sustainable management actions should be to maintain or restore stocks at levels ideally above 60% of their equilibrium in the absence of anthropogenic removals, disturbance and resource competition.
- 3) Stocks that are depleted below 60% should be managed to increase so that they can recover to the 60% level in a reasonable time period. For example, by having total removals that ensure at least a 70% probability of increase.
- 4) Stocks that are small (<1000 individuals, unless there are more than 400 reproductive age females in the population) should be fully protected from exploitation unless a data-based assessment is able to recommend a sustainable hunt.
- 5) Management decisions should be based on the best available science, which may include hunter and user data and observations.
- 6) Where the best available science is insufficient the precautionary approach shall be widely applied, particularly for small stocks. With greater uncertainty more caution is required.
- 7) Acknowledging that halting all hunting of a stock may not be sufficient to promote recovery of a depleted or small stock, additional management actions should be considered.
- 8) All species assessments should include data requirements for future assessments.

In response to a question from the Heads of Delegations (HoDs), the SC also agreed to recommend three criteria to be used for prioritising the assessment of marine mammal stocks subjected to removals, without giving the criteria an order of priority (see box below). The suitable regularity of surveys and assessments are stock specific and is depending on their conservation status. Therefore, the SC chose not to provide a general recommendation but agreed to set as a standard term of reference in any assessment to define the regularity of abundance surveys and assessment for each specific case (species/stock).

SC 29 criteria for prioritising the assessment of marine mammal stocks with removals:

- Stocks with concerning population status.
- Stocks for which no assessment has been conducted.
- Assessments should be conducted at a minimum of every 5-10 years, or more frequently if there is concern on population status.

Working Groups, Planning Groups and Project Meetings

Two working groups had met: the By-Catch Working Group (BYCWG, 25 May 2022, Hybrid) and the Harbour Porpoise Working Group (HPWG, 7-10 November, Oslo NO). The NAMMCO-JCNB joint scientific Working Group on narwhal and beluga held a Workshop on Disturbance (12-16 December 2022, Copenhagen DK).

The NASS 24 Planning Committee held two meetings (one online during the SC meeting). The Steering Group of the MINTAG project held four meetings (both online and presential) and conducted several field tests, see under Item 5.1.

4.1.2 Proposed workplan for 2023–2025

Granquist presented the workplan for 2023 and suggested workplan for 2024-2025, (see table below). The SC would continue the planning of the NASS 2024 through 2023-2024 and review the analysis in 2025. It would engage in the testing, deployment work and analysis related to the MINTAG project through 2023-2025.

Compared to the proposal forwarded by the Council 29, the SC recommended that the pilot whale assessment be postponed to 2025 to allow for the new abundance estimates from NASS 2024 to be included. The SC also recommended that NAMMCO does not take the initiative of a beluga tagging workshop to provide more space to the SC core focus issues.

The SC annual meeting will be hosted by Iceland on 22-25 January 2024. The location is to be decided.

2023	2024	2025
<p><u>WG and WS meetings:</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Panarctic Bearded Seal WS (21-23 March (online)) - Coastal Seals WG (8-11 May) - WGHARP (ICES-NAFO-NAMMCO): 4-8 September (Tromsø) - Ringed Seal WG (Several short online meetings starting early Fall) - Dolphins WG (Fall 2023) - Narwhal and Beluga in East Greenland WG (late 2023) 	<p><u>WG and WS meetings:</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Walrus WG - Harbour Porpoise WG (Iceland) - NAMMCO-JCNB Joint WG 	<p><u>WG and WS meetings:</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Large Whale Assessment WG - Pilot Whale WG - Abundance Estimate WG
<p><u>Other:</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - ICES BWKSEALS – May (hybrid) - NASS SpG meetings (online & presential) - MINTAG StG meetings (online) - MINTAG: testing on carcasses, Norway spring, Iceland summer - MINTAG: test tags deployment work, summer 	<p><u>Other:</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - NASS SpG meetings - MINTAG StG meetings (online) - MINTAG: deployment field work and analysis - NASS surveys 	<p><u>Other:</u></p>

4.1.3 Other business

There was no other business.

COMMENTS & DISCUSSION RELATED TO ITEM 4.1

The Chair thanked the SC Vice-Chair for her presentation and thanked the SC Chair and the Committee for its work.

The Chair explained that the SC criteria for prioritising assessments and the eight principles for integrating a precautionary approach in NAMMCO's management had been presented to the MCs, and the discussion was therefore deferred to Agenda Item 9.

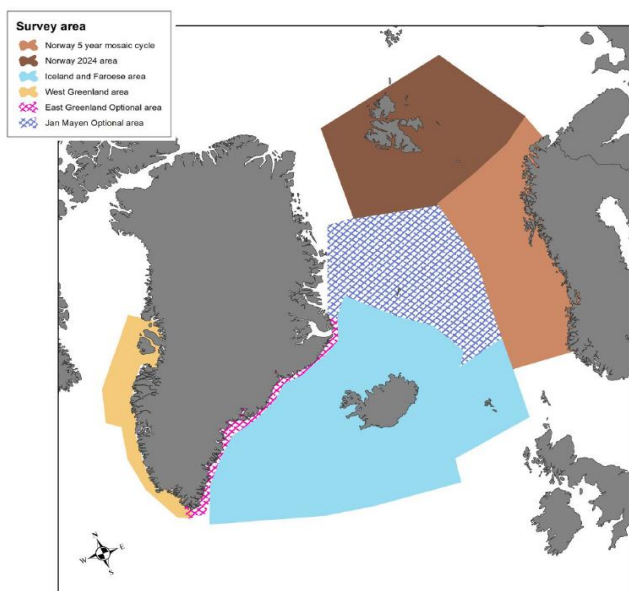
The Council took note of the report. A special note was taken of the reiterated strong concerns of the SC regarding the narwhal and beluga situation in East Greenland and the credibility concerns expressed by the SC. The Chair noted that the discussion under Agenda Item 9 would also address this issue.

4.2 NASS 2024: NORTH ATLANTIC SIGHTING SURVEY OF SELECTED CETACEANS

A NASS survey is scheduled for 2024 and the Scientific Planning Group (SpG) is composed of SC members: Rikke G. Hansen (GL, Chair), Bjarni Mikkelsen (FO), Gudjón M. Sigurdsson (IS) and Nils Øien (NO).

The Scientific Secretary, Albert Chacón, presented an update on the planning of NASS 2024. The general objective of the NASS surveys is to generate robust unbiased abundance estimates for target cetacean species in all areas of importance for management: i) pilot whales around the Faroe Islands and in the North Atlantic, ii) minke whales in West and East Greenland, around Iceland, Jan Mayen, Svalbard and the central Norwegian sea, iii) fin whales in the Central North Atlantic (around Iceland, off East Greenland, Faroe Islands and Jan Mayen) and in West Greenland, iv) humpback whales in West Greenland.

The traditional survey areas are covered by the national surveys, but do not represent a complete, coherent, and synoptic coverage of the whole NAMMCO area. A wider coverage is necessary to ensure the detection of any major shifts in the distribution and abundance of cetaceans, such as those observed in Icelandic coastal waters in 2007 and off West Greenland in 2015. The map show both the



areas that will be covered by national surveys (plain colours) and the additional areas (hatched colours) that need to be addressed to ensure complete coverage of the whole NAMMCO area. The planned survey area for the 2024 survey extends to approximately 5,000,000 km².

To be coherent and synoptic, the surveys need to be coordinated and planned at the NAMMCO level.

Also, experience from previous NASS surveys showed that the cost of generating abundance estimates for non-target species must be included in a general budget to secure the completion of those analyses in a timely manner.

The MINTAG project (see Item 5) first series of tag deployments will be done during spring-summer 2024. Allocating more ship-time to the survey vessels for tagging effort, represents a cheaper option than dedicating specific ship-time to satellite tagging.

The Council has traditionally covered in its budgets, in this case 2023-2026, the cost of the survey coordination and planning and the review of the abundance results by the WG on Abundance Estimates (NOK 580 000, see budget in Table below).

The Secretariat applied (through the Norwegian Ministry of Trade, Industry and Fisheries) in June 2022 for funds to the *Arktis 2030* Grant scheme of the Norwegian Ministry of Foreign Affairs for covering the remaining cost of the “NAMMCO activities” (NOK 9,230,000, see the budget in table below). At the Council meeting in September 2022, Norway announced that this cost would likely be covered through this Grant scheme.

Year	Notes below	Activities within NAMMCO	Costs NOK
2023		Meetings & co-ordination	100,000
2024		Meetings & co-ordination	150,000
	1	East Greenland coastal area	1,700,000
	2	Jan Mayen area	5,000,000
	3	Increased Faroe Island area	500,000
	4	Extra ship time for MINTAG-related satellite tagging	1,500,000
	5	Abundance estimation of non-target species	400,000
2025		Co-ordination, meetings & review of results	180,000
		Publication of results	80,000
2026		Co-ordination, meetings & review of results	150,000
		Publication of results	50,000
Total 2023 - 2026			9,810,000
of which NAMMCO supports			580,000

The SpG decided to hire some external expertise in 2023 and 2024 to monitor the developments in methodology, technology and data quality requirements that had taken place in post NASS 2015 other large-scale surveys (e.g., SCANS IV) and optimize the survey design of NASS-2024.

The SpG was investigating the use of mackerel and capelin surveys as observation platforms in the Norwegian Sea and off East Greenland respectively. The mackerel survey will be one of the platforms for NASS 2024 in Iceland.

COMMENTS & DISCUSSION

The Chair thanked Chacón for his presentation and the SpG for its work.

The Faroe Islands, Iceland and Norway confirmed the allocation of funding to NASS 2024, while Greenland informed that the allocation was under discussion.

Meier (Norway) confirmed that the remaining ‘NAMMCO’ part of the NASS 2024 survey (NOK 9 230 000) had been granted by the Norwegian Ministry of Foreign Affairs.

The Council noted the report.

4.3 ADOPTION OF PRIORITIES AND WORKPLAN 2023-2025

Following the adoption of the eight principles for integrating a precautionary approach in NAMMCO’s management, and the adoption of three criteria for prioritising the assessment of marine mammal stocks subjected to removals (see Item 9.3), the Council **agreed** that these principles and priorities should be immediately implemented in the prioritisation of the work of the SC. Thus, the Council **adopted a new request** for advice from the SC (see under agenda Item 9.3) and **agreed** to modify accordingly the proposed SC workplan as follows:

- To continue prioritising the Dolphin WG in 2023.
- To postpone the Pilot Whale WG to 2025, so the new NASS 2024 estimates could be incorporated in the assessment.
- To complete its review and assessment of bearded and ringed seal at the latest in 2024.

Generally, the SC should keep in mind the Council’s **recommendation** of no more than four in-person WG/WS meetings per year, although the most important issue was to remain within the funding allocation.

The Council **adopted** the following workplan for the SC in 2023, 2024 and 2025:

[activities in grey were already held, tbd: to be decided]

2023	2024	2025
<p><u>WG and WS meetings:</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Panarctic Bearded Seal WS: 21-23 March, online - Coastal Seal WG: 8-11 May, Copenhagen - WGHARP (ICES-NAFO-NAMMCO): 4-8 September, Tromsø - Ringed Seal WG: Several short online meetings starting early Fall - Dolphins WG: fall 2023, location tbd - Narwhal and Beluga in East Greenland WG: late 2023, location tbd 	<p><u>WG and WS meetings:</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Bearded Seal WG (or late 2023) - Ringed Seal WG - Walrus WG - Harbour Porpoise WG (Iceland) - NAMMCO-JCNB Joint WG 	<p><u>WG and WS meetings:</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Large Whale Assessment WG - Pilot Whale WG - Abundance Estimate WG
<p><u>Other meetings and activities:</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - MINTAG: testing on carcasses: F0, January; DK & JP, February; NO, Spring, StG, IS Summer - ICES BWKSEALS: May, Copenhagen & hybrid - NASS SpG: meetings online (Spring) & presential (Fall) - MINTAG: test tags deployment work, summer - MINTAG StG: meeting online (Fall) 	<p><u>Other meetings and activities:</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - NASS SpG: meetings online & presential - MINTAG StG: online meetings - MINTAG: deployment field work and analysis - NASS surveys 	<p><u>Other meetings and activities:</u></p>

The Council **recognised and agreed** on the implication for the Parties to make sure that the necessary collect of information and analyses be prioritised and completed on time, e.g., regarding abundance estimates, catch data, life parameters, and stock structure. Reference was made in particular to the dolphins and pilot whale data (Faroe Islands, Greenland, Iceland), bearded and ringed seals (Greenland, Norway), and the analysis of NASS 2024 survey data (all Parties).

4.4 OTHER BUSINESS

Japan expressed its appreciation of being invited as observer to the meetings of the Scientific Committee, and its continued interest in exchanging scientific information. Through these meetings, Japanese scientists benefit from receiving added information on the conservation, management, and study of marine mammals, which will contribute to Japan’s domestic resource management. At the 2023 meeting, Japan provided four documents: a progress report on large cetacean, a progress report on small cetacean, a proposal for starting a collaborative study to further understand the role of baleen whales in the western North Pacific ecosystem, and an information paper on satellite tagging experiments.

5. MINTAG PROJECT



The MINTAG (Miniature Tag) Project, launched the 4th of August 2021, is a scientific cooperation between NAMMCO and the Fisheries Agency of Japan (FAJ). It aims at developing smaller and lighter satellite transmitters with optimal ballistic performance for long-distance deployments on lesser-

known fast swimming rorqual species (blues, fin, sei, Bryde's and minke whales) and pilot whales. MINTAG should respond to outstanding questions on habitat use, dispersal and movements, behaviour, and stock delimitation. The high-profile project aims at providing missing but essential tools to the management of these lesser-known species in the North Atlantic and North Pacific Oceans.

The Steering Group (StG) is composed of SC members and scientists from the Institute of Cetacean Research of Japan, as well as the Fisheries Agency of Japan and the NAMMCO Secretariat. Mads Peter Heide-Jørgensen from the Greenland Institute of Natural Resources is the project leader, while the project is administrated by the NAMMCO Secretariat. The StG chose, in February 2022, to cooperate with the US satellite tag manufacturer company Wildlife Computers (WC).

Desportes introduced the project progress report March 2022 to March 2023 (corresponding to Japan's financial year) and the activity plan up to March 2024 ([NAMMCO/30/15](#)).

5.1 REPORT OF THE MINTAG STEERING GROUP

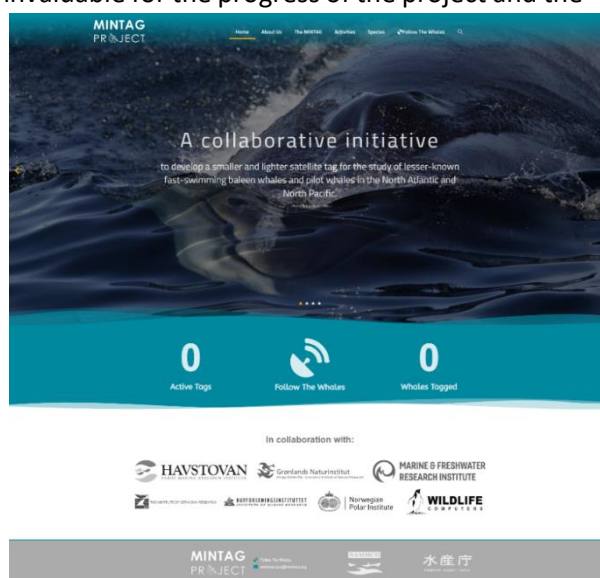
A kick-off seminar between the StG and WC was held online in March 2022, and the development of the tag design started immediately afterwards.

A Memorandum of Understanding was signed between NAMMCO and WC in June 2022. It outlines the three phases of the project, each defined by its terms and financial settlement.

WC gave a high priority to the project. Progress in tag housing and (tag) carriers design was rapid enough to allow testing the effect of different designs on the carrier/tag flight and tag penetration. The testing was done in July 2022 on fin whale carcasses at the Icelandic whaling station using dummy tag housing (V0a design). The testing was considered invaluable for the progress of the project and the design of successful tags.

A Tag Design Workshop (WS) was held 25-26 October 2022 (Copenhagen, DK) between the StG and representatives of WC. Discussions were based on the experience gained during the summer testing and WC's in house testing, as well as StG members' experience with other types of tags. The group also developed a tagging protocol.

A project website (www.mintag-project.com) was developed by the Secretariat during the summer 2022, in collaboration with the StG. It was launched on 1 November 2022. The website offers information on the project, background and aim, target species, project partners and participating institutes, timeline, and activities.



Further ballistics tests using different tag and carrier designs were done in the Faroe Islands, Denmark and Japan, using stranded whale carcasses, rockwool batts, and blubber and muscle of whales. Further ballistics testing is planned for the spring 2023 on minke whale carcasses from Norway.

The next step will be the deployment of 25 prototypes (V0b iteration design) in the summer 2023 on fin and minke whales off Greenland, Iceland, Japan (Sea of Okhotsk), and Norway.

Conclusion: Despite the initial delay, the project was now on good track and progressing well. The summer 2022 testing in Iceland on fin whale carcasses, the Tag Design WS, and the multiple field tests of different tag and carrier features significantly helped refining and tuning the design of the V0b prototype.

Three external projects including members of the StG have expressed their interest in participating in the testing of the V1a tag iteration by deploying it on other species and areas in 2024 (South Atlantic

right whales off Argentina, bowhead whales and narwhals off Greenland). Such collaborations were considered by the StG and the SC as beneficial as long as the data contributing to the assessment of the MINTAG tag performance by the MINTAG project were delivered to the StG. The Fisheries Agency of Japan FAJ and FAC supported this view and agreed to define the conditions under which these cooperations should go ahead.

5.2 FINANCIAL UPDATE

The overall cost of the project is estimated to be over NOK 26,000,000, including direct cost and in-kind cost (scientist and field work costs).

Some changes to the original budget were made when the agreement with WC was signed, based on the real cost agreed with the manufacturer (in US dollars). Some expenses that had not been accounted for were also added. A further increase in cost originates in the change in exchange rate between US dollars and NOK, which is not favourable to the project, and may significantly increase the cost of the US produced development and tags.

Despite the delay in the project and therefore in incurring expenses, the five partners agreed that the transfer of the allocated funding would follow the initial schedule. The protracted use of the funds would hopefully cover costs until the end of the project in 2027.

What remains essential for the project is that the funding from the five partners originally agreed upon, both in kind and direct, continues to be delivered.

COMMENTS & DISCUSSION RELATED TO ITEM 5

The Council took note of the report and expressed its satisfaction that the project was progressing well. It **commanded** the engagement of all the actors, project leader, StG and WC.

Japan expressed its sincere appreciation to the MINTAG StG for its hard work on the MINTAG project. Results and outcome of the MINTAG project could be utilised for the conservation and management of cetaceans not only in the North Atlantic but also in other oceans, including the Pacific Ocean. Japan informed that it would continue its scientific and financial contribution to the MINTAG project.

The Chair emphasized the importance that the agreed financing from the five partner countries and NAMMCO be continued, both with regards to direct costs and providing the in-kind funding allowing the deployment of the tags on the whales.

6. COMMITTEE ON HUNTING METHODS

6.1 REPORT OF THE COMMITTEE ON HUNTING METHODS (CHM)

The Chair of the Committee on Hunting Methods, Kathrine Ryeng (Norway), presented the activities of CHM since Council 29 ([NAMMCO/30/09](#)).

Regular information exchange, updates, and reviews

CHM had reviewed and updated information related to its work such as [Laws and regulations](#), [References](#) i.e., papers/articles related to marine mammals hunting, overview of [Conservation status of stocks in NAMMCO](#) and [Hunting methods in NAMMCO](#).

Members annual reporting of catches, hunting methods, by-catch, entanglement and strandings had also been reviewed. Iceland had introduced a new regulation requesting 100 % inspection coverage and this explained the unusual high number of inspected hunting trips in the fin whale hunting in 2022.

In the Faroe Islands, redesigned spinal lances for the dolphin drives are now placed in different whaling bays for the purpose of testing its suitability.

Norway is currently replacing the electronic monitoring (Blue box), mandatory on minke-whaling vessels since 2006, by online electronic logbook reporting – in line with praxis for other fisheries.

2nd instruction video for hunters

Council 29 had approved the production of a 2nd video, with tentative budget of NOK 200 000, focusing on the importance of target location and shooting angle in large whale grenade hunts. The chair of CHM and the Secretariat are leading the project, and a production firm has been contracted. The video, which will be an animation film, is planned to be finalised before the summer 2023.

COMMENTS AND DISCUSSION

The Chair thanked the Chair of the CHM for her report and the Committee for its work. The Council noted the report.

6.2 ADOPTION OF PRIORITIES AND WORKPLAN 2023–2024

The Committee had not engaged in a real discussion of a future workplan but recognised that 2023 would be dedicated to finalising the 2nd video and continue discussing priorities for the years to come.

The discussions on future priorities will have as its starting point the priorities agreed in 2022:

- Continue the production of videos.
- Look at the efficiency of leadfree bullets for marine mammal hunts due to the making of possible EU regulation to prohibit the use of lead bullets.
- Invite hunters to participate in CHM meetings to inform and update the members on specific hunting methods and essential issues related to the activity.

COMMENTS AND DISCUSSION

The Council noted the update.

6.3 OTHER BUSINESS

The Council thanked the outgoing Chair, Ryeng, for her able and engaged chairing for the last four years and welcomed the new Chair, Elin B. Ragnarsdóttir (Iceland). Greenland seconded the Chair in thanking warmly Ryeng for her input to the Committee.

7. COMMITTEE ON INSPECTION AND OBSERVATION

7.1 REPORT OF THE COMMITTEE ON INSPECTION AND OBSERVATION (CIO)

The chair of the Committee on Inspection and Observation, Guro Gjelsvik (Norway), presented the activities of the CIO since Council 29 ([NAMMCO/30/10](#)).

The Council had agreed in late 2021 to postpone the planned observation activities from 2022 to 2023 due to the continued COVID uncertainties related to traveling. In September 2022, Council 29 decided to decrease the observation budget from NOK 431 000 to NOK 300 000.

The originally proposed scope and range included three observers traveling to Upernavik and Sisimiut to observe walrus, beluga and narwhal hunts. Since the first allocation of NOK 431 000 (Council 28-2021), costs had increased resulting in the CIO asking Council 29 for a total budget of NOK 500 000. However, Council 29 responded by decreasing previous years allocation leaving the budget allocation at NOK 300 000. The decision to decrease the original allocation was made based on considerations of the extraordinary present situation with the aftermath from the pandemic years and the geopolitical situation. Both aspects had resulted in strained national and other budgets worldwide.

Responding to the decreased budget, the CIO reviewed different possibilities, especially addressing how to maximise the value of the money spent. The scope was redefined, two observers were contracted instead of three and target hunts were limited to walrus and beluga in the period March – April. If narwhal or other hunts took place during the observation period, these would be included.

COMMENTS AND DISCUSSION

The Chair thanked the Chair of the CIO for her report and the Committee for its work. The Council noted the report.

The Deputy Secretary, Charlotte Winsnes, informed that, to date, the observers had not observed any hunts, mainly due to unfavourable ice conditions and weather.

7.2 ADOPTION OF PRIORITIES AND WORKPLAN 2023–2024

The CIO proposed the following workplan for 2023 and 2024.

2023	2024
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Organise the annual online meeting of the observer corps • Finalise the proposal for scope and range of observer activities for 2024 for the approval of Council 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Organise the annual online meeting of the observer corps • Finalise the proposal for scope and range of observer activities for 2025 for the approval of Council

COMMENTS AND DISCUSSION

The Council **endorsed** the proposed workplan, noting, however, that there would not be any observation activities in 2024, so no planning needed in 2023, but observation activities should be planned in 2024 for 2025.

7.3 ANY OTHER BUSINESS

The Council thanked the outgoing Chair, Guro Gjelsvik, for her able chairing for the last 2 years and welcome the new Chair, Ulla Svarrer Wang (FO).

8. MANAGEMENT COMMITTEES' WORKING GROUP ON USER KNOWLEDGE

8.1 TERMS OF REFERENCE (TOR)

The Deputy Secretary, Winsnes, presented document NAMMCO/30/11.

The Council 29 (2022) had decided to establish a special designated WG to deal with user knowledge and user involvement in NAMMCO. As a first step an *ad hoc* small group was created to draft the ToR for consideration at Council 30. The *ad hoc* group held one meeting resulting in the tabled proposal. The designated WG will report to the Management Committees, and it was considered appropriate that the proposal was presented to the JMC meeting 2 March. The JMC agreed with the proposal and recommended it for approval by the Council.

Title: Working Group on Enhancing User Involvement in NAMMCO Decision Making (UIWG)

The proposed Terms of Reference were:

- To consider and give advice on how to best initiate, improve and strengthen users' involvement in NAMMCO to produce better decisions and strengthen the legitimacy of decisions. This will involve finding best practices on how to co-produce knowledge by stakeholders (users, scientists, managers) to obtain the best ecosystem-based management of marine mammals and their use by the societies that utilise them.
- Give concrete recommendations on how to advance the work and how to monitor the progress.

The WG work shall *inter alia* take due account of challenges represented by:

- Different cultures & worldviews.

- Diverging approaches to knowledge.
- Lack of shared language & terminology.
- Uneven power relations.
- Limited funding usually attributed to the collection of users knowledge.

and, be guided by the importance of factors like:

- Patience and time.
- Trust & confidence building.
- Humility & respect.
- Common objectives & shared terminology.
- Documenting user & local knowledge.
- Regular interactions & contact.
- Formal and informal meeting sites.
- Long term perspective, e.g., long term sustainability of management decisions.
- Long term stability of initiatives.

Winsnes underlined that the list of considerations was not exhaustive and most significantly that the term user included hunters and any other users of the resource such as local inhabitants, representatives from the fisheries and tourism industries and others.

COMMENTS AND DISCUSSION

The Chair thanked Winsnes for her reporting and commended the *ad hoc* group for its work. The Council **approved** the proposal for the ToR and **agreed to allocate** some funding for the years 2023, 2024 and 2025.

8.2 MEMBERSHIP

The WG should be comprised of members appointed by the member countries that combined should represent/cover:

- Users' – (that can be nominated by organisations) with at least one representative from each member country.
- Natural and social scientists, including experts on indigenous knowledge and rights in international processes.
- Managers.

The WG may seek external expertise when this is considered necessary and appropriate.

The WG shall elect among its members a Chair and a Vice-Chair, who shall each serve for 2 years, after which time they may be re-elected. The WG will be a standing WG and will report to the Management Committees.

COMMENTS AND DISCUSSION

While discussing the nominations of suitable resource persons to the WG, the importance of having members that have expertise in how to incorporate user knowledge in research and management processes was underlined. It was also noted that it would be necessary to look outside the immediate NAMMCO "family" to benefit from the experiences of people/organisations that have been and are dealing with these issues, as NAMMCO and its SC have very limited experience in this.

With respect to the size of the WG, it was agreed to keep it open since the size would most probably not represent a real challenge.

The tentative timeline agreed was that the nomination process should start immediately following the Council meeting with the aim of organising the 1st meeting of the WG before the summer.

9. MANAGEMENT COMMITTEES

The MC had met online 1 and 2 March ([see reports, doc NAMMCO/30/FI01, 02, 03](#)). The Scientific Secretary, Chacón, reported from the meetings.

Chacón presented the following information to the Council:

- The proposals for conservation and management, both those for which the MCs had agreed to forward to the Parties as management advice and those for which the MCs did not reach a consensus.
- The recommendations for new research/data collection endorsed by the Management Committee for Cetaceans (MCC), the Management Committee for Seals and Walrus (MCSW) and the Joint Meeting of the Management Committees (MCJ) and forwarded to the Parties.

Chacón also presented to the Council for consideration and, if appropriate, endorsement:

- New Requests for Advice from the Scientific Committee

9.1 PROPOSALS FOR CONSERVATION AND MANAGEMENT AND RECOMMENDATIONS FOR SCIENTIFIC RESEARCH

9.1.1 Proposals for conservation and management

9.1.1.1 Consensus for forwarding the recommendations to the Parties

The MCs reached consensus for forwarding to the Parties several proposals for Conservation and Management recommended by SC 29, related respectively to environmental issues and mitigation of disturbances (Greenland), beluga and narwhal (Greenland), killer whale (Greenland), and harbour porpoise (Norway).

In particular, the MCC noted that the by-catch of harbour porpoises was deemed unsustainable, and Norway was advised to continue its efforts to reduce the by-catch of harbour porpoises.

The full set of proposals is available in Appendix 8: New Proposals for Conservation and Management.

9.1.1.2 Lack of consensus for forwarding the recommendations to the Parties

The Management Committees (MCs) examined at its 2023 meeting a single new recommendation for conservation and management directly related to sustainable catches and pertaining to narwhal in West Greenland. A consensus could not be reached for forwarding this recommendation to Greenland.

Narwhal

- *Catch limits [of narwhals] for West Greenland provided by the JWG be followed.*

The MCC was also presented with five recommendations from previous years on zero catch limit that SC 29 strongly reiterated. However, the MCC could not reach consensus for forwarding these recommendations to Greenland. These are listed below:

Narwhal

- *To implement an immediate reduction to zero catch of narwhals in all three management areas of East Greenland.*

Beluga

- *Implement seasonal closures for the hunt of belugas in West Greenland.*
- *Make sure no hunting of belugas be allowed at any time in the area south of 65 degrees North in West Greenland.*

- *Keep belugas in East Greenland fully protected, as there is insufficient information to perform an assessment of belugas in East Greenland.*

Harbour porpoise

- *Implement the management advice given on harbour porpoise in West Greenland (i.e., no more than 2900 total removals, i.e., including an assumed quota for unreported individuals).*

COMMENTS AND DISCUSSION RELATED TO ITEM 9.1.1

The Council took note of the new proposals for conservation and management forwarded by the MCs to the Parties.

Iceland, seconded by the Faroe Islands and Norway, expressed concerns that a consensus could not be reached in forwarding a zero catch advice to a Party when the SC reiterated such a recommendation and signalled a significant threat of extension within a few years from a continued hunt. The precautionary principle was not followed, and this special situation needed to be further addressed within the Council and amongst HoDs.

Norway expressed that it fully respects the position of Greenland in relation to issues of food security, cultural identity, and the right to use local natural resources. It also acknowledged that the serious depletion of narwhal and beluga in East Greenland was almost certainly largely due to factors other than hunting. However, Norway had serious concerns regarding whether even the interim quotas were consistent with principles of a precautionary approach and sustainable use of natural resources. While interim quotas may help to provide current generation of the communities in East Greenland with necessary resources to maintain their quality of life and cultural identity, there is great concern about the consequences of maintaining even a low level of hunt in terms of the ability of future generations to sustain themselves with local resources. The decision of the Government of Greenland to allow the hunt to continue under interim quotas, which prioritises the current generation at the expense of future generations in the communities in East Greenland, was of concern to Norway.

Greenland informed that the Government of Greenland considered the situation in East Greenland as very serious. It decided, however, to allocate quotas for beluga and narwhal in East Greenland with regards to food security. Greenland further informed that, export of narwhal products to Denmark has been stopped since 2006. Due to the present situation, the Greenland Government has stopped the private export of beluga meat and mattak to Denmark, as was the export of beluga meat and product from East Greenland to West Greenland.

The Chair noted that scientific recommendations were at the core of NAMMCO advice, but that other issues such as food security for small communities also represented important realities. NAMMCO should address how to tackle a non-consensus over scientific recommendations.

9.1.2 Recommendations for scientific research

The new recommendations for research, with implication for stock monitoring endorsed by the MCs and forwarded to the Parties, deal with several topics and species and concerns all Parties:

- All Parties: killer whale (1)
- Faroe Islands: harbour porpoise (2), white sided dolphin (4), pilot whale (3)
- Greenland: narwhal (2), dolphins (2), walrus (3)
- Iceland: harbour porpoise (1), dolphins (1)
- Norway: harbour porpoise (6)

They are listed in Appendix 9: Recommendations for New Research .

COMMENTS AND DISCUSSION

The Council **took note** of the new recommendations for research forwarded by the MCs to the Parties.

9.2 REQUESTS FOR ADVICE FROM THE SCIENTIFIC COMMITTEE

All new requests or modification to requests are summarised in Appendix 10.

9.2.1 New requests for advice

The MCs did not make any new recommendations for request for advice from the SC.

9.2.2 Active requests for advice considered as answered by the MCs

Three requests for advice from the SC were considered satisfactorily answered by the MCs and recommended to be closed by the Council.

[Environmental Issues] **Request R-1.5.4:** *To advise on the best process to investigate the effects of non-hunting related anthropogenic stressors on marine mammal populations, including the cumulative impacts of global warming, by-catch, pollution and disturbance.*

[Ringed seal] **Request R-2.3.1:** *To advise on stock identity of ringed seals for management purposes and to assess abundance in each stock area, long-term effects on stocks by current removals in each stock area, effects of recent environmental changes (i.e., disturbance, pollution, climate change) and changes in the food supply, and interactions with other marine living resources.*

[Walrus] **Request R-2.6.3rev:** *Provide advice on the effects of human disturbance, including fishing and shipping activities, tourism, oil exploration and mineral extractions, on the distribution, behaviour, and conservation status of walrus in Greenland.*

The MCs recommended that R-1.5.4 and R-2.3.1 be closed, given that:

- Some answers to request R-1.5.4 would continue being provided at each species-specific working group meeting, allowing the SC to follow potential issues.
- Request R-2.3.1 from 1995 was answered as good as then possible through convening a Ringed Seal WG in 1996 and is also superseded by request R-2.3.3 from 2020, to which the upcoming meeting of the Ringed Seal WG would provide answers.

Request R-2.6.3rev should also be closed, because the mentioned factors were no longer considered relevant and because answers on human disturbances on walrus had already been provided by the WS on Disturbance WS in December 2022.

COMMENTS AND DISCUSSION

The Council **agreed** to close the above-mentioned requests.

9.2.3 Active requests for advice considered as standing by the MCs

The MCs considered that two requests concerning environmental issues, to which the SC had provided some answers, remained fully pertinent and should get a standing status.

Request R-1.1.10: *In the light of the distributional shifts seen under T-NASS 2007 and later surveys, investigate dynamic changes in spatial distribution due to ecosystem changes and functional responses.*

Request R-1.5.3: *To monitor the development of the Mary River Project and assess qualitatively or if possible, quantitatively the likely impact and consequences on marine mammals in the area.*

Following the recommendations of the SC, the MCs agreed that request R-1.1.10 should remain standing until the results from the ongoing MINTAG project and the planned NASS-2024 survey, deemed necessary for this request to be fully answered, become available. In the case of request R-1.5.3, a change to standing status would allow the SC to continue monitoring those mining projects in the Arctic and evaluate their impacts on marine mammal stocks.

COMMENTS AND DISCUSSION

The Council **agreed** with the MCs that requests R-1.1.10 and R-1.5.3 be given the status of standing request.

9.2.4 Active requests for advice not considered a priority by the MCs

The MCs considered that two requests concerning Multispecies Approach to Management and Modelling were still pertinent but should not be regarded as a priority by the SC because of the limited progress in including marine mammals in ecosystem multispecies modelling. The SC should however follow advances in the field of multispecies modelling and come back to these two requests when it will be deemed timely.

***Request R-1.1.9:** In addressing the standing request on ecosystem modelling and marine mammal fisheries interaction, to extend the focus to include all areas under NAMMCO jurisdiction.*

***Request R-1.2.1:** To consider whether multispecies models for management purposes can be established for the North Atlantic ecosystems and whether such models could include the marine mammal compartment. If such models and the required data are not available, then identify the knowledge lacking for such an enterprise to be beneficial to proper scientific management and suggest scientific projects which would be required for obtaining this knowledge.*

COMMENTS AND DISCUSSION

The Council **agreed** with the MCs that responding to requests R-1.1.9 and R-1.2.1 was not a priority for the SC.

9.3 OTHER BUSINESS: PRIORITISATION OF ASSESSMENTS AND PRECAUTIONARY APPROACH

9.3.1 Prioritisation of assessments

In response to a question from the HoDs, the SC agreed to recommend three criteria for NAMMCO to prioritise the assessment of marine mammal stocks subjected to removals, see agenda Item 4.1. These three criteria were presented to the MCs at their last meeting (March 2023). The MCs found the criteria relevant and pertinent and recommended that the Council adopted them.

The SC had also been asked to define the needed regularity of abundance surveys and assessments. However, because these were stock specific and depending on the conservation status, the SC chose not to provide a general recommendation but agreed to set as a standard term of reference in any assessment to define the regularity of abundance surveys and assessment for each specific case (species/stock).

COMMENTS AND DISCUSSION

The Council **adopted** the three criteria and **agreed** that a standard term of reference for any assessment would be to define the suitable regularity of abundance surveys and assessments for each specific case (species/stock).

9.3.2 Principles proposed by the SC for insuring a precautionary approach

The SC had proposed eight principles for ensuring a precautionary approach in NAMMCO's management of cetaceans and pinniped stocks, see agenda Item 4.1. These principles were presented to the MCs at their last meeting on 1-2 March 2023.

The MCs agreed to recommend to the Council to adopt principles 1, 5, 6, and 8. Greenland requested the SC to provide clarification on principles 2, 3, 4 and 7 of the 8 and forwarded specific questions.

The SC clarifications, agreed by correspondence in the interim period between the MC and Council meetings, were received by the MCs and the Council on 22 March (NAMMCO/30/18). They can be summarised as follow.

Regarding principles 2 and 3, the SC clarified that equilibrium abundance was a model parameter not required for stock assessment, but necessary to calculate the depletion level and hence recommended to deliver the best management advice. The SC defined as 60% the target depletion in relation to the equilibrium abundance because this is a percentage considered as being widely applicable to all stocks and not in opposition to a stronger target of above 70% (as in ICES/NAFO/NAMMCO/WGHARP).

With regard to principle 4, the SC clarified that defining small stocks as those having less than 1000 individuals or 400 reproductive females was supported by several examples of marine mammal stocks (e.g., belugas, grey whales, harbour seals, killer whales, North Atlantic right whales), that despite being protected, have never recovered from overharvest due to their populations of less than 1000 individuals. The SC sees these thresholds as appropriate and large enough to control the uncertainties surrounding the abundance, number of removals and life history of many marine mammal species.

Regarding principle 7, the SC clarified that management options, other than hunt regulation, that can promote the recovery of small stocks could be to reduce by-catch and anthropogenic impacts due to disturbance (e.g., tourism) and habitat destruction.

COMMENTS AND DISCUSSION

Greenland thanked the SC for answering its questions in a timely manner. After reviewing and assessing these clarifications, Greenland was willing to endorse the eight principles.

The Council noted the clarifications and **agreed to adopt** the eight principles recommended by SC 29 for ensuring a precautionary approach in NAMMCO's management of cetaceans and pinniped stocks.

COMMENTS AND DISCUSSION RELATED TO ITEM 9.3

The Council **agreed** that the adoption of the eight principles and the three criteria had consequences that should immediately be reflected in the prioritisation of the assessment of stocks by the SC. Several hunted stocks or stocks subjected to removals have not been assessed at all or have been assessed more than 10 years ago: ringed seals, bearded seals off Greenland and Svalbard, grey seals off the Faroe Islands, pilot whales off the Faroe Islands and Greenland, bottlenose whales of Faroe Islands and Greenland, killer whales off Greenland, dolphins off Faroe Islands and Greenland.

Desportes informed that a panarctic WS on Bearded Seal was held in March 2023. However, no assessment was carried out, in part due to the lack of abundance estimates from Greenland and Svalbard. More detailed genetic information should become available by the fall 2023, and a WG on Bearded Seal could likely be convened in late 2023 or beginning of 2024 – assuming that Greenland analyses the existing survey data to provide estimates of abundance and Norway prioritises abundance estimation.

The Council therefore **agreed** that:

- The priority should be kept to assess dolphins in 2023.
- The review and assessment of bearded seal and ringed seal stocks should progress and be completed in 2023-2024.
- The assessment of pilot whales should be postponed to, but not later than, 2025 so the upcoming abundance estimates generated through NASS 2024 could be incorporated.
- The SC should be asked to propose a long-term plan for the other species, considering both the criteria adopted and the need of the Parties in terms of management advice.

The Council **acknowledged** that this prioritisation had strong implications for the Parties involved and their scientists. There would be a need to prioritise providing the necessary information (data

collection and analyses related to, e.g., abundance estimates, life history parameters and stock structure) in time for the assessment meetings.

The Council **agreed** to forward a new request for advice to the SC (Appendix 10). The Council **tasked** the Scientific Committee to:

- a) Complete its work on assessing the bearded and ringed seals in 2023 and 2024.
- b) Prepare a tentative long-term plan (10-15 years) for the assessments of all the stocks within the remit of NAMMCO to be presented to the Council at its next meeting.
- c) Propose a system for categorizing the status of these stocks reflecting abundance, status of knowledge, and levels of removals to be presented to the Council at its next meeting.

10. ENVIRONMENTAL QUESTIONS & ECOSYSTEM APPROACH TO MANAGEMENT

The Chair noted the importance that environmental questions have for NAMMCO and its commitment to progress towards an ecosystem approach to management. Environmental matters directly related to scientific advice on the conservation and management of marine mammals were addressed by the MCJ – and the points of discussion can be found in the report of the MCJ ([NAMMCO/30/FI03](#)).

The Chair underlined the importance of cooperating on environmental issues, as such issues, when related to marine mammals, are rarely local but usually have a global or at least a regional scope. The Chair noted that NAMMCO was engaging with environmental programmes and initiatives under the Arctic Council and particularly the Conservation of Arctic Flora and Fauna (CAFF), which provide relevant information for inclusion in assessment reports on the status of the environment and the biodiversity in the Arctic. NAMMCO's collaboration with the CAFF was further reported under agenda Item 11.

COMMENTS AND DISCUSSION

Desportes pointed specifically to the analyses and the conclusions of the Workshop on Disturbance held by the NAMMCO-JCNB joint scientific Working Group on narwhal and beluga in December. The WS looked at the effects of disturbance on narwhals, belugas, walrus, and other marine mammals of two mining operations in Baffin Bay: the Mary River Project in Baffin Island (Canada) and the Dundas Ilmenite mine project, in Wolstenholme Fjord (North-West Greenland). The WS highlighted the sensitivity of narwhals to noise disturbance and the risk of population displacement. It also warned of the negative impacts of shipping and mining activities on the energy budget and population dynamics of belugas, walrus and other arctic cetaceans and pinniped species.

11. EXTERNAL RELATIONS

The Chair noted that the Administrative Report (NAMMCO/30/07, Item 6) presented a detailed overview of governmental and intergovernmental IGO meetings and events where NAMMCO was represented in 2022 and provided relevant observer reports.

11.1 COOPERATION WITH NON-MEMBER COUNTRIES

The Chair extended its thanks to the Observers, from non-member governments, intergovernmental and non-governmental organisations for their interest in the work of NAMMCO and their participation to this Annual Meeting.

Desportes noted that Japanese scientists had, as in other years, participated to the SC meeting as observers (see also under agenda Item 4.4). She further noted that all working groups and workshops organised by NAMMCO have, as a standing rule, invited external experts as participants; in 2022, these were from Canada, Denmark, France, the United Kingdom, and United States of America.

Referring to agenda Item 5, NAMMCO and Japan are engaged in a multi-year scientific cooperation for developing for the first-time satellite transmitters for lesser-known fast swimming species of interest to both NAMMCO Parties and Japan (blues, fin, sei, Bryde's and minke whales and pilot whales). Such exercise will contribute to identifying movement patterns and stock structure that are essential to the reliable management of the species.

COMMENTS AND DISCUSSION

The Chair informed that Japan and **NAMMCO had signed** during this Council meeting a [Letter of Intent](#), in order to formalise and facilitate such project-based cooperation in the future.

11.2 COOPERATION WITH INTERNATIONAL ORGANISATIONS

Desportes provided an update on the relationships NAMMCO had maintained since Council 29 with governmental and intergovernmental organisations working on marine management.

Special attention was drawn to the participation to the meetings of the IWC (SC68c and IWC Working Group on Whale Killing Methods and Welfare Issues – where NAMMCO informed on the recent work of CHM and presented its first hunters' training video), ASCOBANS (AC 27) and the annual meeting of the FAO Regional Secretariat Network.

The Secretariat and two SC members are also involved in the activities of the CAFF sub-groups and are active member of the Circumpolar Biodiversity Monitoring Program (CBMP) and of its Marine Mammal Expert Network. NAMMCO and the CAFF/CBMP had planned to organise a joint workshop to conduct a panarctic review of the status of the bearded seal to address knowledge gaps and identify priority actions needed to ensure effective monitoring and conservation of the species. With the NAMMCO and CAFF Secretariats as support team, the joint workshop was planned for May 2022 but was postponed to September 2022, then March 2023, in the light of the Ukraine crisis and the pause in activity of all the Arctic Council (AC) and subsidiary bodies. As the AC activities had not resumed by the beginning of 2023, it was decided that the WS would be held by NAMMCO keeping the same scope, agenda, and invited participation. The panarctic WS was conducted online 21-23 March.

The ASCOBANS and NAMMCO Secretariats are keeping each other informed on the developments of the NAMMCO WG on Dolphins and ASCOBANS Intersessional WG on Lagenorhynchus sp., as the data and information provided by the Faroe Islands will be at the core of both WGs.

COMMENTS AND DISCUSSION

The Council noted the update.

Desportes referred to Acquarone's (AMAP) intervention during the theme session pointing to Norway taking over the chairmanship of the AC, and the anticipation that the new priorities will align with NAMMCO priorities. She asked how AMAP work/analyses could be better included in NAMMCO WGs, e.g., taking into account in their assessments AMAP work on, e.g., pollution and disturbance. Acquarone replied that AMAP, like NAMMCO, acted on requests from its members thus forwarding questions through members might be a way forward. Acquarone also mentioned the possibilities of WG members to be included in AMAP Expert Groups. He also drew attention to the work of the ICES/PICES/PAME Working Group on Integrated Ecosystem Assessment (IEA) for the Central Arctic Ocean (WGICA).

11.3 OTHER ORGANISATIONS

The Norwegian Centre for the Law of the Sea, NCLOS, and the NAMMCO Secretariat continued in 2022 the contacts and cooperation initiated in 2020. They organised jointly the 4th Marine Mammal Student Symposium on 7 April 2022 with the theme "*Connecting scientists, policymakers, and users: How can we cooperate to safeguard marine mammals and their environment?*", see also under agenda Item 12.3.

NCLOS and NAMMCO decided in 2022 to formalise and enhance their cooperation and signed in June a ‘[Memorandum of Understanding for scholarly and scientific cooperation](#)’.

The Secretariat had also represented NAMMCO at several meetings of national organisations, as reported in the Administrative Report.

COMMENTS AND DISCUSSION

The Council noted the update.

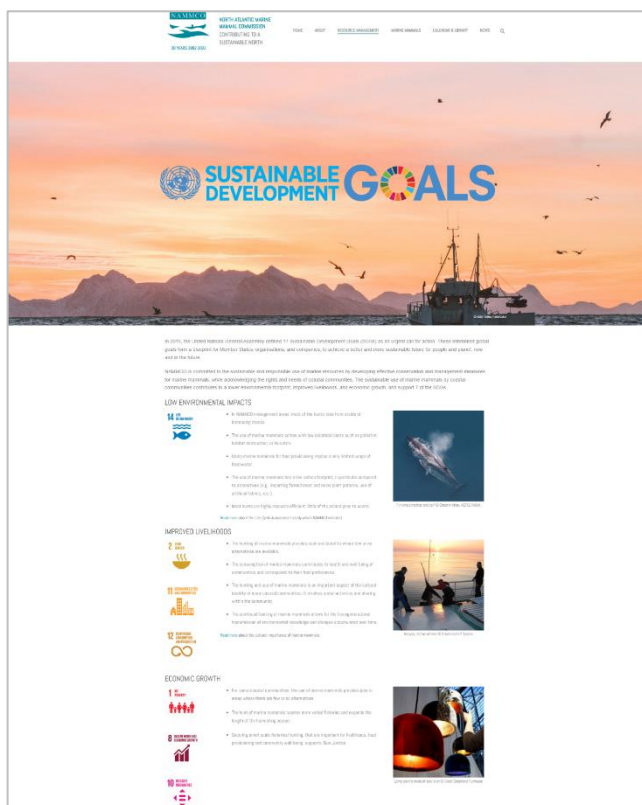
The Chair noted that it was important for the Organisation to reach out and to be visible within organisations dealing with issues related to NAMMCO. He thanked the Secretariat for its efforts related to this.

12. COMMUNICATION AND OUTREACH

Desportes provided an update on the communication and outreach activities carried out by the Secretariat since Council 29, noting that information regarding the whole year 2022 could be found in the Administrative Report ([NAMMCO/30/07](#)).

12.1 WEBSITE

The Secretariat continued to have a strong focus on the website and on updating and enhancing its content. A revamped website was launched in April 2022 to mark the 30th anniversary of NAMMCO. This included a new landing page, a re-organisation of existing pages, and the addition of new informative pages: ‘Resources’, ‘Sustainability’, ‘Responsibility’, ‘Supporting Sustainable Development Goals’, ‘Hunting: Past & Present’. Four species pages were fully revised and updated after review by the SC 28 (narwhal, beluga, humpback whale, and fin whale).



In 2022, the website had 33,183 unique users, an increase of 28% and 51% compared to 2021 and 2020 respectively. The top visitor countries continued to be the USA, UK, Canada, China, and Norway. As in previous years, users in the 18-24 and 25-34 age ranges were the most numerous users. The website continued to be used as a general source of information on marine mammal species, with the species pages being some of the most visited ones. In 2022, however, the most visited pages were the ones related to the Food Event.

12.2 SOCIAL MEDIA

Stories posted on Facebook act as teasers to news, articles, and reports published on the NAMMCO website. They direct the reader to a specific section of the website, thus contributing to enhancing its visitor flow.

The interest for the NAMMCO [Facebook](#) page has increased, reaching 2,644 likes and 2,919 followers. The Facebook “Fun-fact Friday” posts are often complimented for their diverse and interesting

content. They were also regularly shared by other organisations working with marine mammals, such as the Society for Marine Mammalogy. The three top posts of the year reached between 18,000 and more than 78,500 people. The most popular post “Did you know that the flippers of cetaceans have great similarities with the bone structure of human hands?” had close to 70,000 organic reach, 1,706 likes, was shared 390 times and generated over 1,800 post clicks.

The NAMMCO Instagram account, [nammco_org](https://www.instagram.com/nammco_org), was launched in September 2022. However, activities on this platform have not been prioritised and have received less time and attention than Facebook. The account had 103 followers as of 13.03.2023. The posts that reached the most accounts in 2022 were the news on the Food Event in October 2022.

12.3 OUTREACH ACTIVITIES

12.3.1 Student Symposium

The Secretariat, with Jana Djukaric, Intern, as lead organiser, organised in cooperation with NCLOS and the Arctic Biology department of the University of Tromsø, the 4th Marine Mammal Student Symposia on the theme “*Connecting scientists, policymakers and users: how can we cooperate to safeguard marine mammals and their environment*”.

An annual Student Symposium was initiated by the Secretariat in 2019. The objective was to expose the Tromsø community of postgraduate marine mammal students to the work of NAMMCO and also provide them with a forum for sharing and presenting their projects, as well as opportunities for networking. During the pandemic years 2020 and 2021, the symposium was held online, and created an opportunity to include students from all over the world. In 2022, 83 participants from countries such as Norway, Finland, France, Ireland, the Philippines, and the United Kingdom. The two invited keynote speakers joined from Wales and Greenland registered for the hybrid symposium.

12.3.2 Lectures to diverse audiences

The Secretariat gives every year a number of lectures in different national and international fora for high school and university students, as well as for PhD candidates and scientists.

The lectures present NAMMCO, its foundation, vision of conservation, and processes in its advisory work. The focus is to provide food for thought by presenting marine mammal use and seal ban in the perspective of sustainable food systems, blue economy, Sustainable Development Goals, and food security. The discussions afterwards are usually vivid and interesting. The perspectives presented are usually new for most of the participants and they challenge the ‘usual negative’ view on whaling and sealing activities. Participants often express that the new perspective is an eye opener on the issue and its complexity. At least part of the audiences realises that whaling and sealing, if well-managed, can represent sustainable food systems and contribute to blue economy and blue justice, with the important question being at the end which food/resource is *de facto* the most environmentally friendly in specific places.

12.3.3 NAMMCO Food Event

Winsnes reported from the NAMMCO conference and showcase “Marine mammals – A sustainable Food Resources” held in Tórshavn (FO) on 5-6 October 2022 and hosted by the Government of the Faroe Islands.

The event highlighted and stimulated discussion on the role marine mammals can play in ensuring sustainable and resilient food systems capable of generating livelihoods for local communities. The focus was on food for the future with an emphasis on young people recognising that young generations are the ones that will be “living” and experiencing the future.

The event included a conference discussing challenges in ensuring food security for a growing global population, while exploring the environmental, social, cultural, and economic aspects of ensuring

sustainable use of marine mammals and addressing nutritional benefits and potential risks of consuming marine mammal products. The conference also invited professional users to share their views on marine mammals as a food resource and to address perspectives for the future development of marine mammals as a sustainable food source.

A significant part of the event was the gastronomic workshop and Food Court where international chefs from the Faroes, Greenland, Iceland, Norway, Canada, and Japan showcased how marine mammals are used in different food cultures. A 2-day workshop prepared a variety of whale and seal dishes that were served at the Food Court the last evening. The food displayed the potential for more innovative use of marine mammals in modern gastronomy.

The programme also included an excursion to Klaksvik and a cultural evening where two documentaries were screened: “*Ice, Seals and Men*” (2013) by Shane Mahoney on the Newfoundland harp seal hunt and “*Behind the Cove*” by Keiko Yagi a response to the film *the COVE* on dolphin and whale hunting in Japan.

Gathering some 175 participants (hunters and academics, chefs and policy makers, scientists and media from Canada, Denmark, the Faroe Islands, France, Germany, Greenland, Iceland, Japan, Norway, Spain, Sweden, Switzerland, UK, and USA), the event gave stakeholders across generations and countries the opportunity to network. To meet and discuss over several days encourages friendship and networking. The chefs commended the exchange of recipes and best ways of handling and processing the meat. Students from food colleges in Greenland and the Faroes Islands were fully participating to the gastronomic workshop and appreciated this invaluable opportunity to learn from the master.

The main messages from the Conference included:

- With a growing world population in a time of climate crisis and geopolitical instability, marine mammals remain a staple and environmentally friendly food source for many, making an important contribution to global food security and nutrition.
- Marine mammals continue to have essential economic, social, and cultural importance as renewable resources for many societies around the world, a reality that is becoming better recognised in international discussions.
- Younger generations are showing a growing interest in marine mammals as food, with an emphasis on choosing climate-friendly resources and preserving local food heritage for the future.

The conference and the food event were streamed and available on You Tube. The programme, the presentations and [a Conference video](#) can be accessed on the NAMMCO [website](#).

COMMENTS AND DISCUSSION RELATED TO ITEMS 12.1-12.3

The Council **commended** and thanked the Secretariat for the attention given to the website and for its efforts in terms of communication and outreach. The website represents a useful internal and external tool that NAMMCO should be proud of, and that many external actors had noticed and complimented, and that it was important to keep it updated and accurate.

The Faroe Islands praised the invaluable role the Secretariat had played in the organisation and implementation of the Food Event and expressed appreciation to the providers of marine mammal products.

12.4 SCIENTIFIC PUBLICATIONS

Volume 12 of the NAMMCO Scientific Publications, *Marine Mammals in the North Atlantic*, is based on an open call for new knowledge (from across all disciplines) relevant for the conservation and management of marine mammals in the North Atlantic (<https://doi.org/10.7557/3.12>). It encompasses one workshop report, 5 research articles, 2 reviews and 1 note. The workshop report

was published in May 2021, the first research article in January 2022, and the last review article in December 2022. There is on average 8 months between the submission and the publication of the articles.

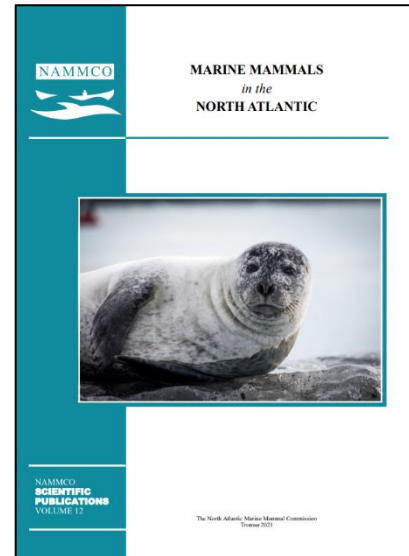
The volume is dedicated to Gísli Arnór Víkingsson († July 2022), and includes his *In Memoriam*, in acknowledgement of his contribution to the work of the NAMMCO Scientific Committee and cetacean research in general. Víkingsson was a member of the committee since its first meeting in 1993 and became head of the Icelandic Delegation to the NAMMCO Scientific Committee in 1999.

COMMENTS AND DISCUSSION

The Council **commended** the new volume and noted the recommendation of the SC to produce one more volume that is open to all publications relevant for the conservation and management of marine mammals.

12.5 OTHER BUSINESS

There was no other business.



13. ELECTION OF CHAIR AND VICE-CHAIR

The Chair noted that NAMMCO has a principle of rotation of chairmanship between countries. Norway became Chair at the 2021 Council Meeting and had now completed its two-year term.

Norway proposed Stefánsson from Iceland as Chair of the Council for the next two years. Greenland proposed Páll Nolsøe from the Faroe Islands as Vice-Chair. Both accepted and were duly elected with applause and welcomed. Both thanked the Parties for their confidence and looked forward to chairing the Commission and maintaining close contacts with all members and the Secretariat.

Meier thanked everyone, and particularly the Secretariat, for their support and input during the past two years and for facilitating his work when he acutely took over the Norway's chairing in May 2022, due to the medical issues of Ole-David Stenseth who had originally been elected in March 2021.

Iceland, supported by the other Members and the Secretariat, thanked Norway and the outgoing Chair for the able chairing of the Commission over the last two years. The Secretariat thanked Meier for his responsiveness and support during his term.

14. ANY OTHER BUSINESS

Chacón, who joined the Secretariat as Scientific Secretary in May 2022, will take up a research position at the Norwegian Institute for Marine Research in the fall 2023. He had applied before being employed at the Secretariat. His time will have been short, but intense. In 18 months, Chacón will have covered two meetings of the Council, four WG meetings, three WS and a conference, and published one volume of the NAMMCO Scientific Publications. On behalf of the Organisation and the Secretariat, Desportes thanked him for his substantial, and pleasant, contribution and presented him with a collection of local beers and wines, that he could enjoy now that he would get the time.

On a much longer time frame, having joined the Secretariat in 2000 on a permanent basis and having been involved in organising the Shetland Conference in 1995 and Sealing the Future conference in 1997, Winsnes will also be leaving the Secretariat in the fall, after 23 years of serving in the Secretariat. She is moving back to Oslo, where her family now lives. On behalf of NAMMCO, Desportes thanked her for her significant contribution to the work and development of the Organisation, especially her

engagement with the Committees on Hunting Methods and on Inspection and Observation, as well as the new website. Desportes thanked her for facilitating her taking over as General Secretary in 2015. With her knowledge of the Organisation and its people, Winsnes has represented a valuable sparring partner. Her cheerful and welcoming attitude has been an invaluable resource for the Secretariat and new staff, including Desportes. She hoped Charlotte would miss the Secretariat somewhat, but she was sure the Secretariat will miss her. She wished Winsnes good winds in her new city life in the South. Since she will have more time, on behalf of NAMMCO, Desportes presented her with a season ticket to the National Theatre and champagne for celebrating that new step. Charlotte in return expressed her appreciation and pride of having been part of the journey at NAMMCO and contributing to the Organisation finding its way to gain international recognition as a legitimate and important management advisory body. She wished the Organisation continued success.

15. CLOSING PROCEDURES

15.1 PRESS RELEASE

A press release summarising the main issues and decisions of the 2023 Council Meeting was **adopted** by the Council (Appendix 11 and [web portal](#)).

15.2 NEXT MEETING

The next Annual Meeting, including the meetings of the MCs and the Council, will be hosted by Iceland in week 12, 18-22 March 2024, with the venue to be proposed as soon as possible.

Iceland, supported by the participants, thanked the outgoing Chair for his able chairing of the meeting.

The Chair, on behalf of all participants, thanked the Secretariat staff for their work in preparing for the meeting and their dedicated support during the meeting. He also thanked all the delegates for a constructive and productive meeting, he welcomed Stefánsson as the new Chair and declared the meeting closed.

The report of the 30th Council Meeting of NAMMCO was **adopted** by correspondence on 12 May 2023 at 15:00.

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NAMMCO SECRETARIAT

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Geneviève Desportes (General Secretary)
Jana Djukarić (Intern)
Charlotte Winsnes (Deputy Secretary)

APPENDIX 2: AGENDA

Agenda Items	Document Reference
1. Opening Procedures <ul style="list-style-type: none"> 1.1 Welcome Address by the Chair 1.2 Admission of Observers 1.3 Opening Statements 1.4 Adoption of Agenda 1.5 Meeting Arrangements 1.6 Theme Session: <i>'NAMMCO in the future – challenges and opportunities'</i> 	NAMMCO/30/01, 02, 03
2. Annual Progress Reports	APR reports
3. Financial and Administrative issues <ul style="list-style-type: none"> 3.1 Report from the Finance and Administration Committee (FAC) 3.2 Audited Accounts 2022 3.3 [Budget 2023], Draft Budget 2024 and Forecast Budget 2025 3.4 Administrative Report 2022 3.5 Other Business 	NAMMCO/30/04, 05, 06, 07
4. Scientific Committee <ul style="list-style-type: none"> 4.1 Report of the Scientific Committee 4.2 NASS 2024 4.3 Adoption of Priorities and Workplan 2023-2024 4.4 Other Business 	NAMMCO/30/08, 16
5. MINTAG Project <ul style="list-style-type: none"> 5.1 Report of the MINTAG Steering Group 5.2 Financial Update 	NAMMCO/30/15
6. Committee on Hunting Methods <ul style="list-style-type: none"> 6.1 Report of the Committee on Hunting Methods 6.2 Adoption of Priorities and Workplan 2023-2024 6.3 Other Business 	NAMMCO/30/09
7. Committee on Inspection and Observation <ul style="list-style-type: none"> 7.1 Report of the Committee on Inspection and Observation 7.2 Adoption of Priorities and Workplan 2023-2024 7.3 Other Business 	NAMMCO/30/10
8. Management Committees' Working Group on User Knowledge <ul style="list-style-type: none"> 8.1 Terms of Reference 8.2 Membership 8.3 Other Business 	NAMMCO/30/11

<p>9. Management Committees</p> <p>9.1 Proposals for Conservation and Management and Recommendations for Scientific Research to the Parties</p> <p>9.2 Requests for Advice from the Scientific Committee</p> <p>9.3 Other Business</p>	<p>NAMMCO/30/12, 13, 18, FI01, FI02, FI03, MC05, MC06</p>
<p>10. Environmental Questions & Ecosystem Approach to Management</p>	
<p>11. External Relations</p> <p>11.1 Cooperation with Non-Member Countries</p> <p>11.2 Cooperation with International Organisations</p> <p>11.3 Other Business</p>	<p>NAMMCO/30/07</p>
<p>12. Communication and Outreach</p> <p>12.1 Website</p> <p>12.2 Social Media</p> <p>12.3 Outreach Activities</p> <p>12.4 Scientific Publications</p> <p>12.5 Other Business</p>	<p>NAMMCO/30/07</p>
<p>13. Election of Chair and Vice-Chair</p>	
<p>14. Any Other Business</p>	
<p>15. Closing Procedures</p> <p>15.1 Press Release</p> <p>15.2 Next Meeting</p>	<p>NAMMCO/30/14</p>

APPENDIX 3: LIST OF DOCUMENTS

Reference	Title	Agenda Item
NAMMCO/30/01	List of Participants	1
NAMMCO/30/02	Council Annotated Draft Agenda	1.4
NAMMCO/30/03	List of Documents	All
NAMMCO/30/04	Report of the Finance and Administration Committee	3.1
NAMMCO/30/05	Audited Accounts 2022	3.2
NAMMCO/30/06	Anticipated Result 2023, Draft Budget 2024, Forecast Budget 2025	3.3
NAMMCO/30/07	Administrative Report 2022	3.4, 12
NAMMCO/30/08	Report of the Scientific Committee 2023	4.1
NAMMCO/30/09	Report of the Committee on Hunting Methods 2022	6
NAMMCO/30/10	Report of the Committee on Inspection and Observation 2022	7
NAMMCO/30/11	Draft ToR for the WG on Enhancing Users' Involvement and Engagement in NAMMCO Decision Making	8
NAMMCO/30/12	MCs Proposals for Conservation and Management and Research to Parties	9.1
NAMMCO/30/13	List of Requests for Advice from the Scientific Committee	9.2
NAMMCO/30/14	Press Release	15.1
NAMMCO/30/15	Update on the MINTAG project	5
NAMMCO/30/16	Update on the North Atlantic Survey of Selected Cetaceans NASS-2024 and funding	4.2
NAMMCO/30/17	NAMMCO Food Event October 2022	12.3
NAMMCO/30/18	Clarifications from the Scientific Committee on Principles for the Incorporation of a Precautionary Approach to Stock Management in NAMMCO	9.1
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NAMMCO/30/MC05	List of Proposals for Conservation and Management and Recommendations for Research, with Responses from the Parties	9

NAMMCO/30/MC06	List of Active Requests from the NAMMCO Council to the Scientific Committee, with Responses from the Scientific Committee	9
NAMMCO/30/FI01	Report of the Management Committee for Cetaceans	9
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NAMMCO/30/FI04	Cetaceans - Use, Management and Assessment Status	9
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NAMMCO/30/NPR/ JP-2020-21	Japan Progress Report on Small Cetaceans – April 2020-March 2021	2
NAMMCO/30/APR/ MA-2022	Makivik Corporation Annual Progress Reports – 2022	2

APPENDIX 4: OPENING STATEMENTS

OPENING ADDRESS FROM THE FAROE ISLANDS

Mister Chair, Distinguished Delegates, Observers - Ladies and Gentlemen

First, on behalf of the Faroese delegation, I would like to take the opportunity to thank the Secretariate of NAMMCO for all their preparation in hosting and organising the meeting. It is a pleasure to be here in beautiful Tromsø for the 30th annual meeting of our organisation.

In October last year, as part of the 30 years anniversary of NAMMCO, the Faroe Islands hosted the conference and gastronomic showcase “Marine Mammals: A Sustainable Food Resource”.

On behalf of the Government of the Faroe Islands I would like to extend my thanks to all the participant, to my colleagues and the Secretariat for their participation and efforts in organising the event.

After 30 years the North Atlantic Marine Mammal Commission is a well-established organisation and constructive in its work. This testifies to the importance of our organisation and the value of our cooperation.

In 2024, the next NASS survey will be carried out and these recurring whale counting surveys, which span more than 30 years, are the flagship of the scientific corporation in NAMMCO.

The MINTAG project is progressing, and this project demonstrates that NAMMCO is in the forefront in the field of studies of marine mammals.

The Faroe Islands is a whaling nation and whaling is deeply rooted in our community. The voyage of NAMMCO has so far lasted 30 years and the Faroe Islands is highly committed in the continuation of this voyage, carrying on our commitment to United Nations Sustainable Development Goal 14 – to conserve and sustainably use the oceans, seas, and marine resources for sustainable development.

Thank you.

OPENING STATEMENT FROM GREENLAND

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: “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 was: “This is not 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 a new discovery. But it is true that the numbers of large whales seem to increase and that they are 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 in 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 a 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 has stopped transport and freight of beluga products to West Greenland and Greenlanders 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 that the industrialised countries such as the EU and USA have banned seal products, the EU and UK with Inuit exemptions. But the EU and 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 skins a year to the Governments owned tannery. This 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 the Upernavik area and a minke whale in the 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 in the ocean.

We hope for a positive and constructive meeting.

Qujanaq – Thank you.

OPENING STATEMENT FROM ICELAND

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 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.

Bearing this in mind it is very important for an organisation like NAMMCO to be able to address the different challenges and to discuss them 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 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 countries and other organisations. 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.

OPENING STATEMENT FROM NORWAY

Chair, Delegates, Observers and Guests - dear friends

First of all, congratulations on the 30th Council meeting. We certainly are pleased to see you here in beautiful Tromsø in such lovely weather.

After 31 years NAMMCO is a well-established organisation, constructive in its work and forward looking. Norway would like to express its sincere gratitude to all the Parties, and the Secretariat, for contributing to this unique environment of cooperation.

NAMMCO leans heavily on science and research. The Scientific Committee in NAMMCO is central in giving the organisation legitimacy and direction with regard to which direction it should move. The Scientific Committee provides advice based on the best available science and the work done in the committee has been of great importance to the member countries during the last three decades. Although we do not always appreciate the advice given, it is our belief that NAMMCO needs to stay faithful to the results from science and research. This is essential for maintaining the high credibility of NAMMCO as a responsible management organisation.

In light of this we look forward to discussing how to strengthen the implementation of the precautionary approach, linking responsibility and precautionary management.

Of great importance is also the work done in the Committee of Hunting Methods and NAMMCO must continue to focus on animal welfare to make sure that the highest standards possible are laid as a basis when euthanising marine mammals.

We look forward to fruitful and constructive discussions, including discussing the future of NAMMCO, in the next days.

Thank you.

OPENING STATEMENT FROM JAPAN

At the outset, Japan would like to thank the NAMMCO Secretariat for hosting the NAMMCO Council meeting, with great hospitality and efficiency. We recognize that NAMMCO has made great achievements in the conservation and management of marine mammals since its establishment in 1992, and we would like to extend our heartfelt gratitude to all the NAMMCO members on its significant contribution for over 30 years. We are honoured to attend the Council meeting and are fully prepared to contribute to discussions as an observer. We also appreciate NAMMCO's initiative to hold the NAMMCO Conference and Showcase in the Faroe Islands last October. It was an invaluable opportunity for Japan including its municipalities and industries to reaffirm the importance of marine mammals as food resources.

Even after its withdrawal from the ICRW in 2019, Japan remains committed to international cooperation for the proper management of cetaceans, working with relevant international organisations, including NAMMCO and the IWC. Japan also participated in the 68th Meeting of the IWC as an observer and worked with IWC member countries including all the NAMMCO members that share the basic position of promoting sustainable use of aquatic living resources based on the best available scientific evidence.

To further strengthen its science-based approach, Japan is willing to enhance collaboration with NAMMCO and its members. From this perspective, Japan would like to continue scientific and financial contribution to the MINTAG Project, which aims at developing a new satellite tag to be used on fast swimming rorquals and pilot whales, species demanding a long-range deployment and a tag with as little drag as possible. Furthermore, at the 29th Meeting of the NAMMCO Scientific Committee, a collaborative study between NAMMCO and Japan for further understanding the role of baleen whales in marine ecosystem was discussed. These kinds of scientific collaboration could contribute to the proper management of marine living resources in the North Atlantic and the North Pacific oceans.

Finally, Japan would like to reiterate its conviction that the collaboration between NAMMCO and Japan is a vital force in international fora to promote conservation and sustainable use of marine living resources based on science.

Thank you for your attention.

OPENING STATEMENT FROM THE UNITED STATES OF AMERICA

The United States would like to thank the NAMMCO members for the invitation to observe your 30th Annual Meeting. We are pleased to be here in Tromsø to observe the Council meeting. We continue to wish to engage with the NAMMCO Members to gain a better understanding of your organisation and approach to issues of mutual concern.

We continue to be interested in NAMMCO's work on bycatch, entanglements and strandings, the ecosystem approach to management, and work on hunting methods. We wish to build our understanding of NAMMCO's decision-making process, how scientific information is used, how conservation issues are addressed, how indigenous communities' views and knowledge are incorporated into decisions, and how management issues are addressed. We look forward to observing discussions over the next few days and appreciate the opportunity to be here with you all this week.

OPENING STATEMENT FROM THE INTERNATIONAL WHALING COMMISSION

On behalf of the International Whaling Commission, I would like to thank you for the invitation to join this 30th 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 thank the NAMMCO members who participated in the recent IWC Commission meeting IWC68 and those who will join us for the IWC Scientific Committee meeting in Bled, Slovenia next month.

Both our organisations rely on high quality scientific research, and it is these endeavours that are the focus of our collaborations. Indeed, IWC and NAMMCO both maintain tables of approved abundance estimates that are used to inform our work and decisions. I am pleased to note the increased communication between our two organisations to ensure consistency in these.

In our role of overseeing aboriginal subsistence whaling the IWC maintains records of historical and modern whaling catches. This database relies on contributions to keep it up to date and maintain its efficacy and we thank the NAMMCO members for their help in this.

The threats to whale stocks, such as ship strikes, pollution, and climate change, are increasing and are often outside of the immediate influence of our organisations. As such they rely on us working with others across different fora to ensure that the health of our oceans and their cetacean populations are part of any decision making. Critically bycatch is the greatest single threat and both 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.

I hope that our collaborative work continues, and I look forward to fruitful discussions over the next two days. Thank you Chair.

OPENING STATEMENT OF THE IMWC WORLD CONSERVATION TRUST

Within the last few months, the protection of the natural environment has attracted a significant amount of media attention. First, the climate conference in Sharm-el-Sheikh, then the Biodiversity Conference in Montreal, and lastly, the BBNJ negotiations in New York. Some have even gone so far as to label these meetings and their respective outcomes a major success, historic, and landmarks. Especially the Global Biodiversity Framework (GBF), which was concluded in Montreal, and the adopted text for the BBNJ Agreement in New York triggered these responses. The world is saved, it seems.

What is missing is the fact that texts don't mean much if they are not properly implemented. And 'proper implementation' means that it is not only states that make these instruments work, but it must also be people. Unfortunately, it is especially indigenous peoples and local communities (IPLCs) who are completely missing from the picture. This is probably best represented by the fact that several countries strove to change the CITES listing criteria by including issues such as food security and livelihoods — which, arguably, would have made CITES much more effective. But the majority of CITES Parties chose to keep the criteria as they are, much to the disadvantage of IPLCs. The same can be said about the IWC, where several states tabled a resolution on food security, meaning the link of a discourse on food security with whales, which would have been especially relevant for developing states and, ultimately, for IPLCs. Not surprisingly, however, what the IWC opted for is already known path: no link between whales and food security!

This situation is somewhat reminiscent of Morpheus offering Neo the red and the blue pill in *The Matrix*. While Neo chose the red pill and with it the willingness to learn and engage in life-changing adventures, CITES and the IWC chose the blue pill and decided to simmer in their used-up waters until, maybe, something ever changes.

But let us do away with the negativity. In spite of these shortcomings elsewhere, there are also successes! The BBNJ Agreement — despite its somewhat technical and NGO-infused character — contains many provisions for the proper consultation of and respect for IPLCs. Also, the GBF is to pay due respect to indigenous land and cultural rights, which is especially relevant when implementing the 30x30 Target. And indeed, against this backdrop, NAMMCO can serve as a shining example for the proper inclusion of IPLCs and the respect for livelihoods and food security concerns. While being a regional organisation, its proper functioning and consensus-driven nature can teach the world a valuable lesson: that those who are interested in sustainably using components of biodiversity have an equally important interest in conserving it. Once that becomes clear, we believe many conflicts can be overcome.

It is in this spirit that we wish the 30th meeting of the NAMMCO Council a successful meeting!

OPENING STATEMENT OF KNAPK

KNAPK will initially express its pleasure to participate as an NGO observer in NAMMCO's 30th annual meeting.

KNAPK has existed for almost 70 years, with the organisation celebrating its anniversary on 12 June 2023.

Throughout its existence, KNAPK has fought for the improvement of the conditions and framework conditions of Greenlandic fishermen and hunters. The organisation has achieved many good results over the years. The most significant result is that the organisation is represented in almost all residences in Greenland.

There is no other organisation that is as broad and encompassing as KNAPK.

Our work areas and purpose clauses have made KNAPK a strong and energetic organisation that wins attention and respect. Not because of size, but because of stability and representation.

During KNAPK's general assembly in October 2021, it was decided that the organisation must, among other things, work on improving the purchase prices for fish, obtain larger quotas (game animals and fish) and improve the living conditions for the fishermen and the hunters.

The year 2022 was used to cement KNAPK's representation in international organisations, with the organisation gaining NGO observer status at NAFO, IWC and NAMMCO. The next step will be to strengthen the organisation's cooperation with research organisations, so that advice on fish and game animals can be improved.

KNAPK believes that the way to greater influence is through greater cooperation with biologists and researchers, who advise the Greenlandic politicians on quotas and the protection of nature, animals, and fish.

Climate change

Climate change has had major negative effects on the Arctic, and in Greenland in particular. This has affected hunting and fishing, which, as you know, is Greenland's most important industry. Of course, not all consequences are equally negative. The warmer sea temperatures have meant that the fish population generally grows a little faster. Fish species are coming to our waters in greater style, where we have observed more species than usual.

Of the negative consequences, it must be noted that unstable weather and a longer change of season, and later ice cover have had devastating consequences for the hunting industry. Earning opportunities are reduced.

KNAPK has submitted queries to the country's politicians in vain about the many negative consequences, but they remain silent and passive despite large protests. There has been no help for the hunters in the outer districts, which KNAPK has applied for in November 2022.

Major restrictions

As you know, Greenland is the World's largest island. Despite this, Greenland, with its 56,661 inhabitants, is relatively small compared to other nations. Quotas are allocated which do not at all reflect Greenland's size at sea, on land and in the air.

Greenland must be recognized for a much larger share of game animals and fish, which reflects the country's size and food base. The biomass can easily withstand a much larger quota, and therefore KNAPK is working on recognition of Greenland's much larger quotas, in all contexts.

User knowledge

Among the ways to achieve greater validity in advice, investigation, and assessment of the resource base, KNAPK will participate actively in describing how the fishermen and the hunters can be involved much more, so that there will be greater credibility and security for biological advice.

It must be remembered that KNAPK's members spend much more time in nature and the environment. Therefore, the fishermen and hunters deserve greater respect, recognition, and involvement in the advice making process.

Sustainability goals

Greenland is a pioneering country when it comes to sustainability. Long before the concept of sustainable was internationally recognized, the Hunters' Council in Thule thus had developed legal provisions on the protection of nature and wildlife, where the Council drew up conditions for how, when and what should be caught by whom.

Conservation areas were drawn up, the purpose of which is to protect the animals' breeding areas, feeding chambers and breeding areas. These provisions have been known as the Thule Laws of 1917.

KNAPK lives by the same principles as our ancestors have done for generations, namely that no more should be caught than what is absolutely necessary, and only as needed.

These guiding principles of sustainability are deeply ingrained in our nature.

Protection of wildlife and ecosystem is not enough. There must also be balance in things. If there are too many animals, some species will suffer from this. Therefore, it is important to create balance and harmony between exploitation and protection.

Goals in the short and medium term

KNAPK works according to five pillars: new fishery act, better procurement prices, higher quotas, climate change and countering the negative consequences of inflation.

At the same time, the SDG goals are important to KNAPK. There is a connection between resource utilisation, earnings and securing optimal framework conditions. Harmonization of prices is also important. Better procurement options are important.

The importance of culture, identity, and traditions

Greenland has existed as a proud hunting society in the Arctic throughout the ages because the Inuit have adapted to nature, the environment, and the wildlife. Without ingenuity, mentality and endurance, the Inuit cannot survive in the Arctic.

KNAPK considers our history and ancestry to be an important reason why Greenlanders live and live in Greenland, as active citizens in the Arctic. Involvement of citizens is important if trust and respect are to be created around resource utilisation.

After all, it is the people of the Arctic who have lived and survived through the ages. And therefore, it is the original population that has the first right to the resources and their exploitation. Also, when it comes to financial benefits.

A Greenlandic and a Danish version of KNAPK's Opening Statement can be found in the [documents to the meeting](#).

APPENDIX 5: THEME SESSION - SUMMARY OF THE PRESENTATION BY THE INVITED SPEAKER

‘NAMMCO in the future – challenges and opportunities’ Tore Haug (Emeritus), Institute of Marine Research, Tromsø, Norway

Tore Haug has been a member of the NAMMCO Scientific Committee since its first meeting in 1993 and served as the committee’s Chair in the periods 1995-1997 and 2016-2018.

Haug emphasized that NAMMCO’s science-based advice must secure sustainable hunt, and noted many clear examples that management matters and works: 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 NAMMCO which has good reasons to be proud of. Furthermore, Haug was pleased to notice that NAMMCO has succeeded in getting coastal seal management from its previous “home-made” approach and into a scientific working group that now enables the NAMMCO SC to give good advice to its governments. Haug also concluded that he was very content to see the advice-producing Working Group on Harp and Hooded Seals into the NAMMCO framework without losing the original ICES (and NAFO) affiliation which he found very important since it secures the participation from the two other very important seal-hunting nations in the North Atlantic: Canada and Russia. Science based advice from NAMMCO has also been important for serious treatment of all sorts of animal welfare issues in killing, hunting, and by-catching of seals and whales.

Unsustainable hunt in the NAMMCO area is certainly a severe challenge. In 2022 the NAMMCO MCC could not reach consensus on the endorsement of recommendations from the SC on zero catches pertaining to beluga in East and West Greenland and narwhal in Southeast (SE) Greenland. Haug emphasized that there is no doubt that Greenland has the right not to follow the advice. Nevertheless, the current harvest of narwhals in SE Greenland is considered not sustainable and there is concern about the survival of the stock. This causes concern that the credibility of NAMMCO as a responsible management organization is at risk unless NAMMCO reacts to the situation with direct management advice.

Another challenge is the decrease in sealing activities in the NAMMCO area. Before the controversies in the 1970s, sealing was very profitable. Anti-sealing campaigns destroyed important markets, some were completely closed (USA, EU). Profitability disappeared, and subsidizing became necessary to maintain the hunt (Norway, Greenland, Canada). As it seems now, the hunt continues in Canada and Greenland, Russia may resume catches, whereas the situation in Norway seems uncertain. New products, such as seal oil and hem-iron may present some optimistic signals. Haug also saw challenges in future whaling. Anti-whaling campaigns have destroyed important markets, some are still completely closed (USA, EU). Minke whale quotas are currently not taken in Norway, which is primarily a market problem. Whaling in Iceland is an on and off business, primarily due to complicated export procedures; this is also a vulnerable one-man-business. For the time being Greenland receives aboriginal subsistence quotas from IWC – sustainability is therefore secured, and NAMMCO serves as a guarantee for sustainable drive hunt in the Faroe Islands.

Climate change and ice-retreat are other challenges. We have already seen that poor ice is equivalent to high pup mortality in harp seals. If poor ice becomes the rule, the impact on future population trends may become significant, and reduced harp seal pup production is already observed in all breeding areas. Ringed and bearded seals are common and hunted in Arctic areas where they now face problems caused by lack of ice. Also, very little is known about the abundance of these two species in all areas. These changes represent a challenge for NAMMCO and will certainly have consequences for the future management of the stocks. Regarding whale species in a warming Arctic, bowhead whales, narwhals and belugas have limited geographic scope for northward range expansion. Oil and gas

exploration, mining and increased ship traffic is already a challenge. Also, southern visitors such as killer whales (predation) and other baleen whales (competition) may present a challenge.

Large whale issues are still something that our politicians have decided that we must share with the International Whaling Commission (IWC). How long this will last is impossible to guess, but it is obvious that the IWC is developing more and more into a dysfunctional organisation when it comes to the original aim: to manage whaling. At some point – presumably when IWC has transformed into a pure whale protection organisation – the assessment and management of large whale in the North Atlantic will become an important NAMMCO-only issue. When NAMMCO SC has provided RMP-based catch advice for whales in the North Atlantic, it has always been based on work already done in the IWC SC. NAMMCO SC has added the last step of the RMP process by calculating catch limits for scenarios and areas pre-defined during the implementations done by the IWC SC. However, NAMMCO SC and the Secretariat do not currently have the capacity of conducting a full RMP review. But with some slight modifications it is evident that NAMMCO SC can be enabled to provide catch advice for baleen whales. The issue was discussed by the SC when it was requested to address questions related to the effort required to review RMP-like catch limits generated by Japan. Acceptable information on abundance estimates and stock structure will be essential, and the assessment would best be dealt with in the already existing NAMMCO Working Group on Large Whale Assessment (LWA WG). Scaling up the Secretariat and member country participation in SC will be necessary, and invited participation of relevant external expertise will be required.

APPENDIX 6: AUDITED ACCOUNTS 2022

INCOME AND EXPENDITURE	2022 (NOK)
Income	
Contributions	4,931,418
TOTAL INCOME	
Expenditure	
Staff related costs	2,876,954
Internship	97,043
Staff travel and subsistence	167,695
Meetings	159,642
Rent of premises	298,895
Office supply	124,676
Communication & Outreach	39,228
Accounts & auditing	180,765
Observation scheme	0
Committee on Hunting Methods	197,485
Committee on Inspection and Observation	0
Scientific Committee	133,921
Capacity building	0
Other expenses	70,641
Food Conference	80,453
MINTAG	200,000
TOTAL EXPENDITURE	4,627,398
OPERATING RESULT	304,020
Financial revenue (interest)	7,648
Financial costs	-8,221
RESULT TO RESERVE	303,447
BALANCE	
Assets	
Outstanding claims	407,250
Claim employee	-13,791
Bank deposits	6,049,390
TOTAL ASSETS	6,442,849
Equity	
General Reserve	1,224,545
Restricted Reserve	600,000
Result	303,447
TOTAL EQUITY	2,127,992
Liabilities	
Japanese Funds	501,029
MINTAG project	2,486,174
Creditors	1,032,670
Various liabilities	294,984
TOTAL LIABILITIES	4,314,857
TOTAL LIABILITIES AND EQUITY	6,442,849

APPENDIX 7: ANTICIPATED RESULTS 2023, BUDGET 2024, DRAFT BUDGET 2025**INCOME AND EXPENDITURE (NOK)**

	Anticipated Results 2023 (by 15.04)	Budget 2024	Draft budget 2025
Income			
Contributions	5,030,098	5,130,700	5,233,314
TOTAL INCOME			
Expenditure			
Staff related costs	3,120,095	3,032,013	2,910,478
Internship	195,400	220,400	250,400
Staff travel and subsistence	223,800	270,000	200,000
Meetings	178,600	205,000	200,000
Rent of premises	319,018	334,969	351,717
Office supply	180,000	189,000	198,450
Communication & Outreach	150,000	150,000	150,000
Accounts and auditing	200,000	210,000	220,500
Observation scheme	300,000	-	100,000
Committee on Hunting Methods	197,000	200,000	200,000
Scientific Committee	305,000	222,000	244,000
WG User Knowledge	20,000	40,000	40,000
Capacity building	30,000	40,000	40,000
Other expenses (inc. Recruitment 2022+2023)	70,000	50,000	250,000
NASS	100,000	150,000	180,000
MINTAG	175,000	180,000	100,000
Food Conference	0	0	0
TOTAL EXPENDITURE	5,763,913	5,493,382	5,635,545
OPERATING RESULT	- 733,814	- 362,682	- 402,231
Total Reserve	2,127,992	1,094,178	731,496
Transfer to/from general reserve	- 733,814	- 362,682	- 402,231
NEW TOTAL RESERVE 31.12	1,394,178	731,496	329,265
Recruitment	- 300,000		- 200,000
New Reserve with staff recruitment accounted for	1,094,178		129,265

APPENDIX 8: NEW PROPOSALS FOR CONSERVATION AND MANAGEMENT

This appendix provides the proposals for conservation and management that the MCs have endorsed and forwarded to the Parties.

1. GREENLAND

Environmental issues

- No ship anchoring should occur in Store Hellefiske Banke, off West Greenland, due to its importance as a feeding ground for many Arctic seabirds and marine mammal species.
- Greenland invites Canadian experts to participate in reviewing monitoring programs, plans and results of the Dundas mine in North-West Greenland.

Killer whale

- Regulate the hunt of killer whales and restrict quotas in a precautionary way.
- Existing catch records be validated and reporting on catches (including struck and loss rates) be improved.
- Killer whales be included in existing mandatory reporting schemes.

Narwhal

- Due to the observed displacement of narwhals from Eclipse Sound caused by shipping traffic and associated ice breaking, future developments avoid shipping within narwhal summering aggregations.
- Because ship traffic causes significant disturbance to narwhals at distances from 0 to 20 km, while icebreaking can cause impacts at distances from 0 to 35 km, these values be used to establish buffer zones around narwhal summer aggregations and establish traffic corridors to protect migration routes and winter foraging grounds.
- Hunt management advice should account for the displacement and possible associated changes in fecundity and survival, both in disturbed summer aggregations, as well as in aggregations affected by the displaced animals.

Beluga

- Ship speed regulations of 8 knots be extended to south of the beluga migration route passing Cape York in September-October. This recommendation does not include a buffer around the timing of shipping.
- Any by-catch of belugas in East Greenland be documented in the Special Reports.
- In case of live by-caught belugas in East Greenland, all efforts be made to release the animal.
- Additional samples be taken from all dead by-caught belugas in East Greenland, and all caught belugas in West Greenland, besides the already mandatory information (date and location of the by-catch, sex, presence/absence of a foetus). This additional information includes skin biopsy sample, length, a tooth, girth measurements, and whether there is milk in the mammary glands of females.
- The documentation of hunter observations of belugas in East Greenland is collected in a structured manner, including photographs or video footage of the animals, information on where and when the sighting took place, and how many individuals were seen.

2. NORWAY

Harbour porpoise

- Continue its efforts to reduce the by-catch of harbour porpoises which is deemed unsustainable.
- Assess the compliance of the fleet to the pinger regulations in Vestfjorden as a basis for evaluating the efficacy of the pinger mandate.
- Consider expanding the use of pingers to areas north and west of Vestfjorden.
- Due to the present unsustainable level of by-catch, consider the best way of ensuring that the mandatory use of pingers is enforced.
- Implement the use of REM systems in fishing vessels outside the CRF, to complement the by-catch data from the CRF.

APPENDIX 9: RECOMMENDATIONS FOR NEW RESEARCH

This appendix provides the recommendations for new research or data collection with implication for stock monitoring and management that the MCs have endorsed and forwarded to the Parties.

1. ALL PARTIES

Killer whale

- To further sampling efforts, as well as further analyses of pollutant levels and genetic analyses to help determine stock structure.

2. FAROE ISLANDS

Harbour porpoise

- Support the creation of an App where users of coastal areas (i.e., fishers, recreational boats) can report observations, catch and by-catch of harbour porpoises.
- Initiate the collection of biological data on harbour porpoise.

White-beaked, White-sided and Bottlenose dolphins

- Age determination from random teeth samples from different periods of time should be added to the age structure information on *Lagenorhynchus acutus*.
- Investigate any changes in age structure over different years to resolve whether some cohorts are underrepresented in the samples.
- Complete the analyses of life history parameters.
- Together with Greenland, collect data for genetic analyses and make sure they are integrated within the current European genetic analyses for *Lagenorhynchus* sp. coordinated by ASCOBANS.

Pilot whale

- Given the high number of available data (2000+), 150+ teeth samples collected randomly in 2013-2022 should be aged and the corresponding reproductive data analysed to obtain a long-term trend in life history parameters.
- Collect and analyse genetic samples together with Iceland and Greenland, to get better knowledge on stock identity.
- Investigate the potential relationship between pollutants and life history parameters of pilot whales between the first sampling period (1986-1989) and the present one (2013-2022).

3. GREENLAND

Narwhal

- Conduct tagging studies to determine impacts of shipping in Baffin Bay.
- Obtain biological samples (brains, organs etc.) and morphometrics from the narwhal winter hunt in Disko Bay and the spring hunt in other areas of West Greenland.

White-beaked, White-sided and Bottlenose dolphins

- Increase effort in collecting samples for genetic analysis.
- Prepare catch statistics separating both species, where possible.

Walrus

- (**High priority**) The regional aerial survey of the east side of Smith Sound be the minimum area that should be covered for monitoring walrus abundance and distribution. Surveys should occur in April, annually during the first 3 years of production, to allow detection of any substantial changes.
- The satellite imagery of Wolstenholme Fjord be collected annually to determine walrus density, and eventually walrus counts if <30 cm resolution imagery becomes available.
- The telemetry data on walrus habitat use, distribution and migration patterns be combined with a study of benthos covering the foraging areas in Wolstenholme Fjord to improve the assessment of the relative importance of the potential foraging area impacted by the mining operation (disturbance and siltification).

4. ICELAND**Harbour porpoise**

- Generate the best back-calculated by-catch estimates (i.e., a time series going back to the beginning of the fishery) for the upcoming Icelandic assessment.

White-beaked, White-sided and Bottlenose dolphins

- Provide a table with the by-catch information available for each *Lagenorhynchus* species.

5. NORWAY**Harbour porpoise**

- Increase tagging efforts to inform on movements, distribution, and stock delineation of harbour porpoise in Norwegian waters.
- Collect more biological samples to increase the life history information feeding the population models.
- Look into potential by-catch of porpoises in recreational fisheries to potentially include recreational fisheries in future by-catch estimates.
- Include by-catch data from larger (>15m) vessels into the by-catch estimates used for the assessment.
- Look into the effects of ghost nets on harbour porpoise mortality dynamics and, if a concern, increase efforts in removing ghost nets in areas of high porpoise density.
- By-catch estimates be back-calculated as far back as possible (e.g., until 1970) using landings and included in future assessments.

APPENDIX 10: NEW REQUESTS FOR ADVICE FROM THE SCIENTIFIC COMMITTEE

New Request for Advice

The Council requests the Scientific Committee to:

- Complete its review and assessment of bearded and ringed seals not later than 2024.
- Prepare a tentative long-term plan (10-15 years) for the assessments of all the stocks within the remit of NAMMCO.
- Propose a system for categorizing the status of these stocks reflecting abundance, status of knowledge, and levels of removals.

The Council acknowledges that this requires the Parties and their scientists to prioritise the necessary collection of data and their analysis. Parties need to prioritise providing the necessary information (data collection and analyses related to, e.g., abundance estimates, life history parameters and stock structure) in time for the assessment meetings.

APPENDIX 11: PRESS RELEASE

NAMMCO marks its 30th Council Meeting in Tromsø, Norway

The 30th Council Meeting of the North Atlantic Marine Mammal Commission (NAMMCO) took place the 29th & 30th March 2023, in Tromsø, Norway. NAMMCO was founded in 1992 by the Faroe Islands, Greenland, Iceland, and Norway.

30 years contributing to a sustainable North

Over the past 30 years, NAMMCO has played a critical role in advancing the cause of marine mammal conservation in the North Atlantic. With the support of its member nations and a dedicated network of partners and collaborators, NAMMCO has led the way in promoting sustainable management and protection of marine mammal populations and their habitats.

As NAMMCO marks its 30th Council Meeting, the organisation looks forward to continuing its important work and collaborating with stakeholders around the world to safeguard the future of marine mammals and the oceans they call home.

Future NAMMCO

The future of NAMMCO was a focal point at the meeting. With the marine mammal conservation landscape evolving, participants explored the opportunities and challenges that lie ahead for NAMMCO. From new technologies and emerging threats to shifting policy frameworks and evolving public attitudes, the discussion explored the many factors shaping the future of marine mammal conservation in the North Atlantic.

Precautionary approach

Concerned by the status of some of the stocks, the Council adopted principles for incorporating a precautionary approach to the management of marine mammal stocks in NAMMCO. These include definitions of when stocks should be protected. It also adopted criteria for prioritising future assessments of all stocks.

NASS24 and the MINTAG

North Atlantic Sightings Surveys in 2024 (NASS24) are fundamental for the progression of NAMMCO's work. The NASS surveys are essential to obtain trends in abundance of whales and dolphins in the North Atlantic and represent a unique timeseries conducted over the last four decades.

The Miniaturised Tag Project (MINTAG), a cooperation between NAMMCO Countries and Japan, aiming for the first time at developing satellite tags to study movements and identify migration patterns of whales. The first deployment of 25 tags is scheduled for summer 2023. To formalise this scientific cooperation, NAMMCO and Japan signed a Letter of Intent, with the purpose to facilitate further project-based cooperation.

WG User Knowledge

The Council reiterated commitment to find ways for better including User Knowledge in the work of NAMMCO.