



## **NAMMCO 31**

### **Opening Statement**

Over the last couple of years, the international community has seen the adoption of instruments that in one way or another will impact the sustainable use of marine and other resources. The Kunming-Montreal Global Biodiversity Framework, for instance, calls for the protection of 30% of the world's surface by 2030 — a target that is also part of the recently adopted Agreement on the Conservation of Biodiversity Beyond National Jurisdiction. So, what can we expect? That more and more marine protected areas will be established that will prevent fishers or whalers from making use of the abundant marine resources that are there?

While some species are in dire need of protection, it is also clear that millions of humans are as well. And their protection cannot happen without the safeguarding of food security to which marine species, including whales, contribute. To this end, in December 2018, the UN Declaration on the Rights of Peasants and Other People Working in Rural Areas — also known as UNDROP — was adopted by the UN General Assembly. After decades of struggle, UNDROP combines the rights of Indigenous peoples with the rights of those depending directly on rural, coastal, or marine livelihoods. IWMC refers to these groups as the ARC (Aboriginal, Rural, and Coastal) communities.

Unfortunately, UNDROP has been neglected in conversation deliberations as not being universally approved. True, merely 121 countries have signed the declaration, but what is easily forgotten is the fact that the rights in it stem from legally binding documents that most countries of the world have ratified. Therefore, it is imperative to remind the international community that UNDROP is not a stand-alone document, but a testament of applied human rights in the context of small communities living with limited natural resources.

Later, this year, the International Whaling Commission will meet again. And again, it will discuss the issue of the South Atlantic Whale Sanctuary. Against the backdrop of the Global Biodiversity Framework, the BBNJ and UNDROP, what would the establishment mean for whalers and fishers worldwide? Technically, it would mean that the largest swaths of the southern hemisphere would be whale sanctuaries. Even if the moratorium were to be lifted, special rules would apply here, affecting fisheries operations in some of the poorest countries in the world.

And what would be next? A North Atlantic Whale Sanctuary with drastic repercussions for millions of fishers and whalers? We therefore call upon all those state representatives present here at NAMMCO 31 to vote against the South Atlantic Whale Sanctuary in the interest of coastal communities and their human rights.

Lausanne, 13 March 2024