

Distinguished Chair, Delegates, Observers, Ladies and Gentlemen,

It is my pleasure, on behalf of the Icelandic delegation, to welcome you here to our annual meeting in Reykjavík. I would also like to thank the Secretariat for the work in preparing this meeting.

Looking ahead to the work that we have in front of us in the next three days it is clear that the work of NAMMCO concerning the cooperation on conservation, management and study of marine mammals in the North Atlantic is just as important now as when the organization was established more than 30 years ago.

It is worth mentioning that the foundation for our work in NAMMCO is the science. Iceland is fully 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.

To carry out this work we continue to rely on the individuals and their respective organizations to lay the groundwork for which the decisions of NAMMCO are based on. This also includes the cooperation with external parties. Iceland would therefore like to take this opportunity to thank everyone involved.

Referring to the recent debate in Iceland there are topics of interest that have been raised that have an impact on the work at NAMMCO. Therefore, it is of

value that the discussion on animal welfare is at the center in this opening session.

For an organization like NAMMCO it is important to be at the forefront of this debate in line with our mandate to develop management procedures which take into account the relationship between marine mammals and other marine living resources; in line with the general principles of conservation and sustainable use of natural resources as reflected in the report of the World Commission on Environment and Development.

This time as before there is plenty of work ahead of us at this meeting. We look forward to a constructive debate with our NAMMCO partners.

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