

Norges åpningsinnlegg i NAMMCO Council 19. mars 2024, Reykjavik

Ladies and Gentlemen,

On behalf of the Norwegian delegation, allow me to express our gratitude to the Icelandic authorities for inviting us to Reykjavik. It is always something special to visit this awesome country, come rain come shine.

As usual for the Council meetings, there is a full agenda ahead of us with plenty of interesting and important items to be discussed - something we should exploit in full. This should guarantee some interesting next couple of days. There are many topics on the agenda this delegation finds to have particular interest. We most certainly welcome the focus for this year's theme session "Welfare issues in marine mammal hunting" to be spot on and to be a subject of interest to so many levels involved in the management and conservation of marine mammals. Animal welfare issues in general is a matter of concern for the public opinion, and rightly so, and marine mammals should certainly not be an exception in that regard!

At this Council meeting, attention will also be given to financial and administrative issues. This is rarely among the most popular issues to handle and discuss, but indeed necessary. Member countries are facing a rather harsh budgetary situation which also influence on the various activities under the NAMMCO umbrella. The conclusion should be that NAMMCO must be aiming for running it's various activities as economically feasible as possible, but in parallel must continue it's activities without compromising on quality. The financial situation will affect us one way or another, but we are convinced NAMMCO should be able to face even this situation in a most constructive way.

From our point of view, it is the Scientific Committee that is the heart and soul of this organization. It is the Scientific Committee which has provided us with high quality data from the ocean surrounding us. The Scientific Committee has been absolutely pivotal in making us interpret and understand the development in the ocean, and far beyond the status of marine mammals, as this Committee over the years has provided us with tools to understand the complex ecosystems, climate change, etc, in the North-Atlantic. This Council should listen carefully to the advice from the Scientific Committee, also when the advice has not been that easy neither to accept nor to follow. But this is how it has to be, also in the future.

Then another issue which is troubling us. In approximately 25 years from now, Mother Earth will be populated by ca 10 billion human beings, who all would need and rely on an adequately access to healthy food and proteins. Where shall these resources come from? Sustainable use of marine resources should and must have a pivotal role to play in that regard. If we shall be able to fulfil United Nations Sustainable Goal number 2 – to get rid of starvation, and number 14 – a sustainable use of the ocean and marine resources we simply have no choice. Marine mammals should be considered as a food commodity in line with poultry, pork or beef.

Thank you for your attention.