

NAMMCO



COMMITTEE ON INSPECTION AND OBSERVATION

*22 February 2024
Online*

REPORT



© Cover photo by P. Sigurður– Sisimut (GL) harbour full of ice.

Please cite this report as:

NAMMCO-North Atlantic Marine Mammal Commission (2024). Report of the Committee on Inspection and Observation, February 2024

Available at <https://nammco.no/committee-on-inspection-and-observation-reports/>

DISCLAIMER:

The content of this report contains the view of the Committee and does not necessarily represent the views of the NAMMCO Council.

NAMMCO

Postbox 6400, Sykehusveien 21-23, N-9294 Tromsø, Norway, +47 77687371, nammco-sec@nammco.no, www.nammco.no, www.facebook.com/nammco.no/

TABLE OF CONTENTS

1.	Adoption of the agenda and review of documents	4
2.	Review of background and status of CIO per July 2023	4
3.	Observation Activities.....	4
3.1	Observation activities in 2023 and lessons learned.....	4
3.2	Future of Observation activities.....	5
3.3	Scope and range of Observation activities in 2025.....	7
3.4	Plans for observation activity in 2026.....	7
4.	Observers' Annual Information meeting.....	7
4.1	Update and comments on the May 2023 meeting.....	7
4.2	Next meeting.....	7
5.	Workplan 2024-2026.....	7
6.	Next meeting.....	8
7.	Any other business	8
8.	Adoption of the report	8
	APPENDIX 1: Agenda	9
	APPENDIX 2: List of participants	10
	APPENDIX 3: Written comments from Greeland (after the meeting)	11

The Committee on Inspection and Observation (CIO) met online on 22 February 2024. The CIO was chaired by Ulla S. Wang (Faroe Islands). The meeting agenda and list of participants are available in Appendix 1 and 2, respectively.

1. ADOPTION OF THE AGENDA AND REVIEW OF DOCUMENTS

Wang welcomed the participants and invited the new member of the CIO Jóhann Ásmundsson (Iceland), as well as the new NAMMCO Deputy Secretary Naima El bani Altuna to introduce themselves. The agenda was adopted without further amendments and the meeting documents reviewed (Appendix 1).

Regrettably Greenland did not participate in the meeting. The CIO welcomed written comments to the report on the decisions and recommendations emanating from the meeting by the Greenlandic delegates (Appendix 3).

2. REVIEW OF BACKGROUND AND STATUS OF CIO PER JULY 2023

The CIO **agreed** that the CIO background and status as per July 2023 prepared by former Deputy Secretary Charlotte Winsnes and General Secretary Geneviève Desportes (CIO/2024-02/02) was comprehensive and informative and presented a good overview of the work of the CIO. The CIO suggested adding documents CIO/2024-02/04 and CIO/2024-02/05 as appendices to CIO/2024-02/02.

3. OBSERVATION ACTIVITIES

3.1 OBSERVATION ACTIVITIES IN 2023 AND LESSONS LEARNED

The CIO discussed the observation activities (OA) conducted in 2023 in Greenland (CIO/2024-01/03). The two observers did not observe any hunts during the observation period and highlighted a significant challenge in the execution of the OA related to communication with hunters and a lack of trust toward the observers. As Greenland was not present at the meeting it remained unclear which level of support the observers received from the Ministry for Fisheries, Hunting and Agriculture to conduct the OA.

One of observer report mentioned that the local municipality authority represented by the “Fiskeri og Fangst konsulent” was uncooperative as were the persons responsible for the sale of the meat. Several individual of the targeted species (narwhal, beluga & walrus) were caught in Sisimiut during the observation period, but the observers did not know about or did not have access to the relevant hunting activities at sea due to the lack of a suitable inspection vessel.

Both observers noted a lack of cooperation from the hunters (e.g., unwillingness to show the papers), and tension between the wildlife officers (GFLK) and some hunters who did not inform when going hunting. The Observers’ reports point to a problem of information to the hunters on the reason for the NAMMCO observation, which lead to a problem of trust to the observers and a lack of cooperation. There was also clearly a logistic problem in Sisimiut, as a suitable inspection vessel was not available.

The CIO **agreed** that there is a need for information dissemination to explain to the hunters and the local community the rationale behind the observation scheme. It is essential to communicate why this initiative is advantageous for both the hunters and the broader context of marine mammal hunting, in addition to using this as an opportunity to shed light on the broader work of NAMMCO for a more comprehensive understanding.

3.2 FUTURE OF OBSERVATION ACTIVITIES

For reference, the General provisions of NAMMCO Observation Scheme (OS) are given below:

1. *The purpose of this Observation Scheme is to collect reliable information on all kinds of hunting activities in the NAMMCO Member Countries. The objectives are to*
 - a) *provide a mechanism for NAMMCO to oversee whether recommendations made by NAMMCO are implemented and national regulations are adhered to*
 - b) *provide a foundation for the member states to evaluate whether a recommendation is serving its purpose or not*
 - c) *contribute to the improvement of the national regulation of hunting activities in the Member Countries*
2. *These objectives will be reached by NAMMCO appointing observers to observe hunting and inspection activities in NAMMCO member countries and the Committee on Inspection and Observation reviewing the observation activities and the implementation of NAMMCO recommendations in national legislations (see section 1).*
3. *The information collected through the Observation Scheme shall be made available to any NAMMCO body requesting it.*
4. *Observations of hunting activities can take place on board a vessel or on shore, including flensing, storage, landing or delivering of the catch.*
5. *NAMMCO decides the scope of observation priorities. The Secretariat is responsible for the practical administration and coordination of these activities.*
6. *Deployment of observers according to this Scheme cannot be refused.*

The revised OS (adopted By Council 27 in 2019) provided a mechanism for NAMMCO to both evaluate whether recommendations adopted by NAMMCO were implemented in national regulations (role of the CIO) and as such, adhered to (role of the observers). Furthermore, it provided a foundation for the member countries to evaluate the recommendations and thus would contribute to the improvement of national regulations related to hunting activities in member countries.

The role of the OA is to collect reliable information on all kinds of hunting activities in the NAMMCO Member Countries. In this context, the CIO considered that the OA contributed to the transparency of hunting activities and should be continued.

Based on the experience from the OA in 2023 (item 3.1.), the CIO acknowledged the need for improved communication with hunters to facilitate future OA. This involves emphasising not only their responsibility but also highlighting the benefits of the NAMMCO Observation Scheme. While a certain

degree of mistrust is to be expected, the CIO **agreed** to establish an information ‘campaign’ ahead of any future OA, aiming to overcome communication barriers and reduce mistrust among hunters.

To achieve this, the CIO should use existing platforms such as national whaling/sealing associations and hunters’ courses to better inform the hunters of the goals of the OA (i.e., to oversee the hunting activities and promote transparency). This proactive approach would aim at enhancing understanding and cooperation, contributing to a more successful and trusted implementation of future OA.

Moving forward, the CIO **agreed** to carry out consultations with all relevant parties, including observers, hunters, and the locally involved authorities. The objective is to understand how each party envisions successful OA, what are the needs and how the current format of the OA should be improved.

The CIO discussed the effectiveness of the current format for OA and explored alternative approaches to enhance cost efficiency. Acknowledging budget constraints, the CIO recognised that the current format of OA may not be the most cost-effective, especially given the opportunistic nature of hunts in most countries and the heavy role of the weather conditions.

The CIO therefore explored alternatives to make the OAs more cost efficient and **recommended**:

- Reducing the regularity of the OA. The CIO considered decreasing the regularity of OA, suggesting intervals of every two or three years at a random frequency. While this adjustment may impact NAMMCO's commitment to transparency, it allows for the accumulation of sufficient funds to conduct OA with the necessary standards. For reference, the OA in 2023 in Greenland with two observers had an approximate cost of 251.000 NOK, while only 100.000 NOK are preliminarily budgeted for the OA in 2025.
- Allowing national/local observers. Observers in the NAMMCO OS have traditionally been foreign to the country in which the hunt is taking place. The NAMMCO Council (see [here](#) Report of the 27th Council of NAMMCO (2019), page 19 after the revision of the implementation scheme) endorsed the following recommendation of the CIO ‘*Allowing national observers in specific cases due to specific logistical and language issues*’. Building on this recommendation, the CIO reiterated this recommendation, also in cases in which there are no logistic nor language issues. The potential benefits of this approach would not only make the OA more cost effective but may also contribute to decreasing communication issues, as well as increasing the trust between observers and hunters. It would also allow to better handle the opportunistic nature of the hunts.

The CIO **agreed** to continue examining whether using new observation methods, such as drones, could be used to also enhancing the cost efficiency of the observation and allow to increase the observation effort. Drones have proven to be successful tools for OA in fisheries in Iceland. However, the CIO acknowledged the challenges of ensuring the success of the OA using drones in remote areas, with challenging weather conditions or when observing opportunistic hunt practices. In addition, concerns about privacy and potential animosity from hunters towards camera-equipped drones were recognised.

The CIO also **agreed** that if the importance of the OA is to enhance the transparency of hunting activities and consequently of NAMMCO, then the overall results of the OA should be made more transparent and accessible on the website, instead of constituting a few lines in the Reports of the Council. An updated overview of the results, compiling all the years, should be available.

3.3 SCOPE AND RANGE OF OBSERVATION ACTIVITIES IN 2025

Following the discussion in item 3.2, the CIO **agreed** to recommend the allocation of the available funds for 2025 to 2026, aiming at increasing the likelihood of accumulating additional funds, with the goal of conducting more comprehensive OA in 2026.

3.4 PLANS FOR OBSERVATION ACTIVITY IN 2026

Based on the rationale behind the 2023 OA in Greenland (i.e., addressing the absence of OA for beluga, narwhals, and walrus) and given the lack of success of OA in 2023, the CIO tentatively proposes to concentrate the OA efforts in Greenland for the same hunts for the year 2026.

In light of the experiences from 2023, the CIO intends to develop an enhanced communication plan for 2026, with the objective to foster increased cooperation with local hunters and mitigate the existing mistrust.

4. OBSERVERS' ANNUAL INFORMATION MEETING

4.1 UPDATE AND COMMENTS ON THE MAY 2023 MEETING

The meeting with the observers was conducted with the aim of keeping those who participated in the observer course engaged and interested in the overall process. One of the observers proposed the idea of organising a follow-up meeting with the CIO to share their experiences with the committee. Recognising the value of such feedback, the CIO **agreed** that getting insights from the observers on how the OA should be conducted could be very useful in improving the effectiveness of the OS.

4.2 NEXT MEETING

See item 5.

5. WORKPLAN 2024-2026

Based on the discussions presented in items 3 and 4, the CIO workplan proposal is presented in Table 1.

Month or Season, Year	Activity	Participants	Description/Goal
Spring to Autumn 2024	Developing a communication plan and communication material	CIO	To work on communication plan to better convey the goals and benefits of the OA to the hunters
May/June, 2024	CIO meeting	CIO	To put together the communication plan
May/June, 2024	Meeting with observers	CIO, Observers	To consult what should improve
November/December, 2024	Meeting of the Norwegian Whaling Association	Member(s) of the CIO/Secretariat, whalers (NO)	To be present at the Norwegian Whaling Association meeting to discuss the Observation Scheme with the whalers in Norway

2025	Define the plan for the OS in 2026		Refining the plan developed for 2023, and making sure that the logistic will be there
March 2025	Meeting of the Faroese Pilot Whaling Association	Member(s) of the CIO/Secretariat, whalers (FO)	To be present at the Pilot Whale Association meeting in the Faroe Islands to discuss the Observation Scheme with the whalers
2024/2025	Meeting with KNAPK?	Member(s) of the CIO/Secretariat, hunters (GL)	To discuss the Observation Scheme with the hunters in Greenland
2024/2025	Meeting with IS whalers/sealers	Member(s) of the CIO/Secretariat, hunters (IS)	To discuss the Observation Scheme with the hunters in Iceland

6. NEXT MEETING

The next CIO meeting will be held in May/June 2024 (see item 5).

7. ANY OTHER BUSINESS

No other business was discussed.

8. ADOPTION OF THE REPORT

The report was adopted by correspondence on 28 February 2024.

APPENDIX 1: AGENDA

- 1. ADOPTION OF AGENDA AND REVIEW OF DOCUMENTS**
- 2. REVIEW OF BACKGROUND AND STATUS OF CIO PER JULY 2023**
- 3. OBSERVATION ACTIVITIES**
 - 3.1 Observation Activities in 2023 and lessons learned**
 - 3.2 Future of Observation Activities**
 - 3.3 Scope and range of Observation Activities in 2025**
 - 3.4 Plans for Observation Activities in 2026**
- 4. OBSERVERS' ANNUAL INFORMATION MEETING**
 - 4.1 Update and comments on the May 2023 meeting**
 - 4.2 Next meeting**
- 5. WORKPLAN 2024-2026**
- 6. NEXT MEETING**
- 7. ANY OTHER BUSINESS**

LIST OF DOCUMENTS

Doc Reference	Title	Agenda item
CIO/2024-01/01	Draft agenda & list of documents	1
CIO/2024-01/02	Background and Status of CIO per July 2023	2
CIO/2024-01/03	Report on Observation Activities 2023	3.1
CIO/2024-01/04	Overview of Past Observation Activities	3
CIO/2024-01/05	Overview of Past Hunts and Hunts Observed	3

APPENDIX 2: LIST OF PARTICIPANTS

Geneviève Desportes

NAMMCO Secretariat

geneviève@nammco.org

Guro Gjelsvik (NO)

Directorate of Fisheries

guro.gjelsvik@fiskeridir.no

Jóhann Ásmundsson (IS)

Directorate of Fisheries

johann.asmundsson@fiskistofa.is

Naima El bani Altuna

NAMMCO Secretariat

naima@nammco.org

Ulla Svarrer Wang (Chair, FO)

Ministry of Fisheries and Infrastructure

ulla.svarrer.wang@fisk.fo

APPENDIX 3: WRITTEN COMMENTS FROM GREELAND (AFTER THE MEETING)

Regarding agenda item 3.1

Ministry of Fishery and Hunting had a meeting with the observer in Nuuk, where relevant employees participated in the meeting. Initially introduced the participants to each other and there was a presentation of the structure of the Ministry of Fisheries and Hunting, including Greenland's Fisheries License Control Authority, which is responsible for the control work with the catch in Greenland.

The other observer should have been in Nuuk before the trip to Sisimiut, but bad weather prevented this.

Relevant legal basis had been sent to the observers via e-mail. During the meeting with the observer in Nuuk legal basis were discussed. In general, for example, how the ice situation was in Sisimiut at that time was discussed. Otherwise, any practical information, etc. discussed.

Regarding "Fiskeri og Fangst konsulent" in Sisimiut / Qeqqata municipality, it was unfortunately the case that it was precisely during the period when there was a change of staff. A "Fiskeri og Fangst konsulent" of many years had retired and the municipality hired a new consultant, but unfortunately he resigned shortly after and it took some time to hire a new "Fiskeri og Fangst konsulent". He is still employed today and has now gradually signed on to his work, and the Ministry has enjoyed good cooperation with him.

Otherwise, without mentioning individual sections in the report, Greenland **agrees** with the considerations expressed in the report regarding recommendations/proposals.