



## NAMMCO ANNUAL MEETING 32

25-27 March 2025

Fram Centre, Tromsø, Norway

# JOINT MEETING OF THE MANAGEMENT COMMITTEES

<b>DOCUMENT 07</b>	<b>Progress of the Working Group on Enhancing User Involvement in NAMMCO Decision Making (UIWG)</b>
<b>Submitted by</b>	UIWG / Secretariat
<b>Action requested</b>	To take note To designate a Chair To advise on how to move forward with the WG
<b>Background/content</b>	Acknowledging the importance of including diverse knowledge systems beyond western scientific knowledge in the management processes, the NAMMCO Council 29 (2022) endorsed the recommendation by the management committee to create a specialised working group to improve stakeholder involvement. The Terms of Reference (ToRs) were presented and refined during the Council 30 (March 2023). In 2024 the UIWG held three meetings, with only one held for this reporting period (March 2024-March 2025).

## 1. Fourth meeting of the UIWG – June 2024

The NAMMCO Working Group on Enhancing User Involvement in NAMMCO Decision Making (UIWG) held a fourth online meeting on June 25, 2024 (the list of participants can be found in Appendix 1). In the absence of a Chair, Geneviève Desportes acted as chair.

The WG had two invited social scientists, Anatole Danto and Tanguy Sandré. Danto presented two project examples of successful user involvement in wildlife management in the North Atlantic, while Sandré presented a proposal for enhancing user involvement in NAMMCO, based on a recently published study on the management on narwhal in Ittoqqortoormiit with a focus on the community perception.

Based on the case studies presented in the meeting and previously made recommendations (NAMMCO/28/MC/07 (2021) and Appendix 2), the group discussed specific actions that NAMMCO could be proposed to take for enhancing user involvement. No recommendations were made but the UIWG prepared a list of actions to present to the MCJ:

- All working groups of the Scientific Committee include a standing agenda item for discussing “User Knowledge”
- Enhancing information sharing with Users’ Organisation and Users by:
  - Establishing a list of relevant and interested user organisations from each of the member countries and commit to notifying these organisations of the workplans of NAMMCO committees, including Terms of Reference of upcoming WGs/Expert Groups (EG) and agree with these organisations on information sharing
  - Investigating and supporting the further development and use of programs, technologies and databases for collecting and structuring local observations in a way that can be easily shared with those conducting assessments.
  - Create opportunities and spaces such as events and dialog fora, for Users, Scientists, and Managers to meet, exchange information and become more familiar with each other.
- Facilitating greater User Engagement in existing NAMMCO Committees and Working Groups
  - Specifically call for input from users/user organisations before all WG/EG meetings.
  - Ask Member Countries to nominate at least one user/local knowledge representative to the Committee on Hunting Methods.
- Modifying the text of NAMMCO Principle 5 for integrating a precautionary approach. The sentence “*Management decisions should be based on the best available science, which **may** include hunter and user data and observation*” should be changed to “*Management decisions should be based on the best available science, which **should** include hunter and user data and observation*”.

The group recognised the difficulty of creating a “universal” system that would adapt to the specificities of the NAMMCO member countries (e.g., with different regulations, different concept of “users”) and hunts (e.g., different animals being hunted, different methods), but agreed that the tools and recommendations generated from the UIWG could be general and flexible enough to adapt to all.

## 2. Challenges

The Secretariat recognises the following challenges that the UIWG faces and that hamper its progress:

- **Lack of clear mandate for the integration of User Knowledge at NAMMCO.** There is an absence of a clear mandate and understanding of how to incorporate user knowledge within the NAMMCO structure. While the importance of including diverse knowledge systems beyond western scientific knowledge in management processes is acknowledged by many, most case studies are conducted for research projects. At NAMMCO, advice typically originates from a committee recommendation (Committee of Hunting Methods, CHM, Committee on

Inspection and Observation, CIO, and Scientific Committee, SC) and is then brought to the Management Committees (MC) or Council. Although different delegations include users in the MC and Council, and the CHM has traditionally involved users through expert groups and in workshops, more communication with users is needed in other Committees. The CIO and SC are exclusively composed of managers and natural scientists, respectively. Successful user involvement initiatives suggest that conversations between managers, scientists, and users should occur in the same arena simultaneously, not in parallel in different fora (which could lead to valuing one forum over the other and complicate the integration of outcomes), nor consecutively (with one discussion following another). The key is to involve users in the discussions where advice is generated, not separately or later in the process. However, this is a controversial topic as it would require redefining Committee memberships and adding new procedures, such as including social scientists with the necessary expertise to mediate and "translate" different knowledge systems among participants, as well as potentially including interpreters, requiring longer timeframes, patience, and goodwill.

- **Unclear role of UIWG.** The UIWG is currently grappling with an unclear understanding of its role within the broader NAMMCO framework. This ambiguity raises questions about whether the group is responsible for recommending how user involvement processes should be structured and implemented within NAMMCO or in projects related to NAMMCO that are led by other institutions (e.g., research institutes, scientific projects). Without a clearly defined purpose, it is challenging to set objectives, prioritise tasks, and measure the progress of the group. This lack of clarity can lead to inefficiencies and a sense of frustration among members, as they are unsure of how the invested time and effort contribute to the group's goals.
- **Lack of the necessary expertise.** The UIWG is composed of a diverse and motivated group of individuals, both users, scientists and managers, which is a significant asset, as each member brings unique insights and expertise from their respective fields and perspectives within NAMMCO. However, the group lacks members with specific expertise in user involvement processes, such as social scientists who specialise in participatory approaches and stakeholder engagement. This gap in expertise hinders the group's ability to effectively design recommendations on strategies for incorporating user knowledge into NAMMCO's decision-making processes.
- **Lack of leadership.** The absence of a Chair within the UIWG has resulted in a lack of direction and leadership, which can impede the group's ability to function effectively. A Chair, with the Secretariat's support, would provide essential leadership by facilitating meetings, guiding discussions, and ensuring that the group remains focused on its objectives. Additionally, a Chair can serve as a liaison between the UIWG and other NAMMCO committees, helping to integrate the group's work into the broader organisational context.
- **Misunderstanding of parallel initiatives.** There is a prevalent misunderstanding regarding the relationship between NAMMCO's user involvement initiatives and similar efforts by other organisations. Some may perceive these initiatives as competing or mutually exclusive, when in fact they can be complementary. Various bodies, organisations, and institutions are recognising the importance of enhancing user involvement and are taking steps in this direction. NAMMCO's efforts should be seen as part of a larger movement towards more inclusive and participatory management practices. It is important to communicate that NAMMCO's initiatives are not intended to obstruct or duplicate the work of other organisations, but rather to contribute to a collective effort to improve user engagement across the board.

### 3. Next steps

The Secretariat is actively researching ways to continue this initiative with examples in the literature and participation in conferences and networks (e.g., Arctic Youth Conference 2025 in Tromsø), but recognises the need for support and guidance to move forward. The Secretariat is in contact with

similar organisations, which are traditionally science-based advisory bodies and are now starting to engage in similar processes for Indigenous and local knowledge inclusion, such as AMAP and CAFF, to share experiences and learn from one another.

Additionally, the Secretariat has been invited to participate in a workshop organised and funded by the UArctic Thematic Network on Collaborative Resource Management in April 2025 in Nuuk. This workshop will focus on identifying practical approaches for bridging user-based and scientific knowledge for decision-making in managing living resources.

Once the Secretariat has obtained guidance and clarity on how to make the meetings productive and meaningful for participants and how this initiative can be useful for NAMMCO, the group could reconvene. The MCJ is asked for input on how to carry this process.

## **APPENDIX 1: List of Participants at the meeting of the Working Group on Enhancing User Involvement in NAMMCO Decision Making meetings**

### **Fourth meeting – June 2024**

**Amalie Jessen**, manager, Ministry of Fisheries and Hunting (GL)

**Anatole Danto**, scientist, University of Brest (FR) / Tartu Ülikool (EE) / CREE Inalco (FR)\*

**Bjarne Pettersen**, Norwegian whaler

**Geneviève Desportes**, NAMMCO Secretariat

**Masaana Dorph**, manager, Ministry of Fisheries and Hunting (GL)

**Mikael Pettersen**, hunter representative, The Association of Fishers and Hunters in Greenland (KNAPK)

**Naima El bani Altuna**, NAMMCO Secretariat

**Nikkulat Jeremiassen**, hunter representative, The Association of Fishers and Hunters in Greenland (KNAPK)

**Nuka Møller**, interpreter, The Association of Fishers and Hunters in Greenland (KNAPK)

**Sandra Granquist**, scientist, Marine and Freshwater Research Institute (IS)

**Tanguy Sandré**, scientists, University of Paris Saclay (FR) / University of Bergen (NO)\*

*Participants marked with a star (\*) were invited to the meeting but are not formal members of the UIWG*

## APPENDIX 2: Recommendations made by the UIWG in the period March 2023-March 2024

The group **agreed** that the user involvement process should be species-specific, and if necessary, country specific. The working procedure of the group will be kept flexible to adapt to such specificity.

The UIWG participants **agreed** that a tentative workplan could not be made yet, as the UIWG needs to discuss further the workflow, organisation, and structure of the group before outlining a comprehensive workplan.

As a way forward, the WG **agreed** that they needed more time to decide what would be the best way of enhancing user involvement in NAMMCO decision making, and how the group should work.

The WG **agreed** to conduct shorter but more regular meetings, each focusing on a specific topic.