

**32nd Council of NAMMCO - Opening Statement**  
**Martha Rojas Urrego**  
**Executive Secretary, International Whaling Commission**  
**March 2025**

I am very pleased to join this annual meeting of the Council of the North Atlantic Marine Mammal Commission on behalf of the International Whaling Commission.

This is an important opportunity to share progress on the different areas of collaboration between our two organisations in our common mission of cetacean science and stewardship.

I welcome the increased cooperation of the last years, including the recent meeting between our two Secretariats, in which we agreed to strengthen our collaboration over Abundance Estimates, Whale Killing Methods and Welfare, and communication between our Scientific Committees.

In this regard, we are fortunate to have the same experts working in both Scientific Committees. I would particularly like to thank the NAMMCO members who are also valued members of the IWC Scientific Committee

Since my intervention in the last Council Meeting, we had the meeting of the Scientific Committee in April 2024 and the 69th meeting of the Commission in September 2024. A very important outcome was the successful renewal of the Aboriginal Subsistence Whaling quota at IWC69, which includes Greenlandic hunts of Bowhead, Humpback, Fin and Common Minke whales.

The scientific advice provided by the Scientific Committee was pivotal for the implementation of a new, clearer and more transparent process to manage the Commission's responsibilities regarding Aboriginal Subsistence Whaling. The new process was used for the first time at IWC69 and resulted in consensus renewal of all quotas on the first day of the meeting.

Also, as part of our role overseeing Aboriginal Subsistence Whaling, the IWC maintains records of historical and modern whale catches. This database relies on contributions to remain up-to-date and maintain its efficacy, and we thank NAMMCO members for their help in this.

Data-sharing is also evident in the production of abundance estimates, which provide the crucial foundations for our work and our decision-making. Our increased cooperation will be key to achieve consistency between IWC and NAMMCO's tables of approved abundance estimates.

Welfare issues are also extremely important to both our organisations. At IWC69 we welcomed the NAMMCO Executive Secretary who provided updates on their latest training initiatives for hunters at our Whale Killing and Welfare Issues meeting.

We are also collaborating in areas outside the immediate influence of our two organisations to respond to the increasing scale and range of threats to whale stocks. These include issues such as ship strikes, pollution and climate change which can only be addressed through multi-disciplinary co-operation, working across many different fora to ensure that the health of our oceans and their

cetacean populations are part of any decision making. Bycatch is the greatest single threat to cetaceans and both NAMMCO's Working Group on Bycatch and IWC's Bycatch Mitigation Initiative are working with the fisheries sector to expand efforts to monitor and mitigate bycatch.

My IWC colleagues and I look forward to the discussions over the next two days. I take the opportunity to thank NAMMCO members for their willingness to engage with the IWC and provide valuable data, especially on catches. I look forward to continued and increased cooperation in our shared areas of interest and I wish you a successful meeting.

Thank you Chair.