



COMMITTEE ON INSPECTION AND OBSERVATION

*17 February 2025
Online*

REPORT



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The Committee on Inspection and Observation (CIO) met online on 17 February 2025. 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 to the meeting. Deputy Secretary Naima El bani Altuna was appointed as rapporteur for the meeting.

Items in 2.2 to 2.6 in the draft agenda were moved under item 4. The meeting documents reviewed (Appendix 1).

2. Hunters' survey and meetings with hunters

The CIO members asked hunters to reply to the survey prepared by the Secretariat and approved by the Committee, to gain insights on their views and experience with the Observation Activities (OA) (CIO/2025-01/02). The survey included questions about the regularity, observers, new methods to be employed in OA and suggestions to improve the OA. In addition, the respondents were welcomed to give feedback on the CIO, Committee of Hunting Methods and NAMMCO. The survey can be found in English [here](#) and in Greenlandic [here](#). El bani Altuna presented an overview of the replies from the hunters.

2.1 General overview

The survey had a total of 12 responses. Most respondents were very experienced hunters (>20 years of experience) and 50% of them were not very familiar with the OA.

2.2 Faroe Islands

Only one reply was obtained from the hunters. Wang clarified that the Pilot Whaler Association responded jointly to the survey, resulting in a single reply.

The respondent was not very familiar with OA but had a NAMMCO observer follow one of their hunts. They believed OA for dolphins and pilot whales should occur every 5 years. The respondent thought using national/local observers could be beneficial, as they might achieve better results for the local community. The main need identified for a successful OA was improved communication between hunters and observers beforehand. The respondent also suggested face-to-face communication prior to observations.

2.3 Greenland

The respondents (6), all experienced hunters and very familiar with OA, had differing opinions on how frequently hunts of various stocks should be observed. Most believed that employing national and local observers would not be problematic and could actually facilitate the process due to their familiarity with the country, conditions, and waters. Respondents agreed that improved communication between hunters and observers before the start of observations is necessary. They suggested that, to enhance the OA, observers should understand the hunters' perspectives.

Respondents also stated that any improvements in the Committees and NAMMCO should be made in collaboration with hunters, using their knowledge and experience, particularly in determining the timing of observations. One respondent expressed that, in the current situation, NAMMCO and the hunters seem disconnected or not communicating.

The respondents' replies (in Greenlandic) indicated a potential misunderstanding between "survey" (i.e., conducted by scientists to assess the distribution and abundance of marine mammals) and "observation" (i.e., observation of hunting activities conducted by NAMMCO observers, who

sometimes, are also scientists). The Committee **agreed** that this distinction should have been made clearer in the form, and Niels Lyberth (Greenland) noted that both terms can be confused in Greenlandic.

2.4 Iceland

At the time of the meeting, no replies were received from Icelandic hunters. Jóhann Ásmundsson (Iceland) agreed to follow up to obtain more responses for the evaluation. Since sealing is very opportunistic and rare in Iceland, making it unlikely to be observed, the CIO agreed that it was unnecessary to send the form to the sealers in Iceland.

2.5 Norway

Respondents, comprising experienced sealers (1) and minke whale hunters (4), supported conducting observations of both sealing and minke whale hunting every 10 years. The majority believed that having local observers would not pose any issues, although one respondent emphasised that observers should not have an agenda against whaling. All respondents agreed on the necessity for improved communication between hunters and observers before observations started and expressed a need for more information about the OA for the hunters. One respondent also insisted that observers should be knowledgeable about marine mammals.

Not all respondents answered the questions related to the Committees and NAMMCO, but it appeared that this attempt to communicate with them and open new communication channels was viewed positively. One respondent highlighted that improved and ongoing communication between hunters and observers is crucial. Hunters also mentioned that there should be more communication regarding the practical implementation of observations.

3. Form to inspectors and observers

The CIO discussed the replies from the Ministries and Directorates in their June 2024 meeting (CIO/2024-03). During the CIO meeting in November (CIO/2024-04), the Committee agreed to "*send the same form that Ministries and Directorates completed in June 2024 to inspectors and observers (both NAMMCO observers and local observers)*".

Lyberth, Ásmundsson, and Guro Gjelsvik (Norway) stated that they consulted with inspectors and observers to respond to the form that the Ministries and Directorates completed in June 2024. Wang also mentioned that asking Faroese observers could be complicated since some of those currently in the NAMMCO Observers' Corps have not necessarily participated in an OA. Despite this, the CIO **agreed** that the Secretariat would send the form to the entire NAMMCO Observer Corps and attempt to gather their views on this matter. The CIO also suggested reviewing past OA reports to gain insights on lessons learned, even if these might not be applicable to the OA in general and could be very specific.

4. Summary of the evaluation for Council 32

The summary below, along with the replies from observers and Icelandic hunters (missing at the time of the meeting), will be used to develop the evaluation report for the Council, including recommendations to improve the OA. Recommendations made in the NAMMCO 27 and NAMMCO 28 Council meetings will also be taken into account.

4.1 About the regularity

Given the wide diversity of replies, establishing a specific regularity for conducting the OA was a complicated task, as it depends on the hunt and the area where the hunting takes place. Ásmundsson suggested using a risk assessment similar to that used in fisheries management to identify hunting

activities that required more frequent observation. Although this idea was positively received by the Committee, the members of the CIO **agreed** to keep exploring this further throughout 2025. The CIO also **agreed** that developing a risk assessment for this purpose would have required external expertise, resulting in additional time and expenses.

4.2 About the observers

There was a high diversity of replies regarding the observers, which were very country-specific. In the Faroe Islands and Greenland, having local and national observers was not problematic and was further encouraged due to the opportunistic nature of the hunts and language barriers. However, in Norway, having national observers did not seem ideal (conflict of interest), nor necessary as all the hunts were planned for a specific time period.

4.3 About the observation methods and remote techniques

The responses from different stakeholders did not seem conclusive on the use of new methods and remote techniques for observation. The CIO also noted that they would in addition have economic implications for NAMMCO. Instead, the CIO expressed confidence that the current method (in person) worked, although specific aspects (e.g., communication) needed significant improvement.

4.4 Needs and suggestions for improvement

The hunters' replies made it very clear that there is a need to further improve communication and dissemination about the OA and the Committees work. The CIO **agreed** that it is essential to address and improve the communication issue.

4.5 Other

The CIO wished to inquire with the Council about the objectives and goals to be achieved with the OA. Understanding what the Council intended to accomplish from the OA is important to, for example, help the CIO better define the necessary regularity of the OA.

5. Any other business

No other business was discussed.

The report to the Council will be developed through email correspondence, with a deadline set for completion by 7 March 2025.

The report was adopted by correspondence on 3 March 2025.

APPENDIX 1: Agenda

1. Adoption of agenda and review of documents

2. Hunters' survey and meetings with hunters

2.1 OVERVIEW

2.2 Faroe Islands

2.3 Greenland

2.4 Iceland

2.5 Norway

3. Form to Inspectors and observers

4. Summary of the evaluation for Council 32

4.1 About the Regularity

4.2 About the Observers

4.3 About the observation methods and remote techniques

4.4 needs and suggestions for improvement

4.5 other

5. Any other business

LIST OF DOCUMENTS

Working Document Reference	Title	Agenda item
CIO/2025-01/01	Draft agenda & list of documents	1
CIO/2025-01/01b	Draft annotated agenda	1
CIO/2025-01/02	Replies to hunters' survey	2,4
CIO/2025-01/03	Replies from Directorates/Ministries (June 2024)	4
CIO/2025-01/04	NAMMCO 27 Council Report	4
CIO/2025-01/05	NAMMCO 28 Council Report	4

APPENDIX 2: List of participants

Geneviève Desportes

NAMMCO Secretariat

Guro Gjelsvik (NO)

Directorate of Fisheries

Jóhann Ásmundsson (IS)

Directorate of Fisheries

Naima El bani Altuna

NAMMCO Secretariat

Niels Lyberth (GL)

Ministry of Fisheries and Hunting

Ulla Svarrer Wang (Chair, FO)

Ministry of Fisheries and Infrastructure