



## 14<sup>th</sup> ANNUAL MEETING OF NAMMCO

The North Atlantic Marine Mammal Commission (NAMMCO) held its 14th meeting 1 - 3 March 2005 in Tromsø, Norway. The meeting was attended by delegations from the member countries, the Faroe Islands, Greenland, Iceland and Norway, as well as observers from the Governments of Canada, Japan and the Russian Federation, and representatives from a number of international organisations, including the International Council for the Exploration of the Sea and the International Whaling Commission.

Among issues discussed and decisions taken at the fourteenth meeting were the following:

### **International cooperation on seals and sealing**

Under the UN Convention on the Law of the Sea, States are obliged to cooperate on the management of all marine mammals. As an international body for cooperation on the conservation and management of marine mammals in the North Atlantic, NAMMCO's work in coordinating research, conservation and management measures for seal stocks is filling an important gap in international cooperation. Among the broad range of international instruments relevant to conservation and management of marine resources, there are in fact few, other than NAMMCO, that are dealing with management and sustainable utilisation of seal stocks.

In addition to ongoing assessments of stocks and the review of management measures for grey seals, harp seals, hooded seals, ringed seals and walrus across the North Atlantic, NAMMCO has now decided to look more closely at the status of harbour seals, also an important resource for many coastal communities.

### **Focus on hunting methods**

NAMMCO provides a unique forum for the exchange of information and experiences in hunting methods used in marine mammal hunts across the North Atlantic. The NAMMCO Committee on Hunting Methods organised a workshop in 2004 focussing on hunting methods for seals and walrus. Recommendations from the workshop dealing with such issues as hunter training and safety and technical innovation were endorsed by NAMMCO. Future work will include a workshop on the issue of struck and lost animals in hunting, and the development of guidelines on the use of different weapons and ammunition on different species.

### **Ecosystem-based management**

Cooperation through NAMMCO is based firmly on the importance of considering the role of marine mammals in the marine ecosystem and developing multi-species approaches to management. The NAMMCO Scientific Committee is reviewing ongoing work to develop multi-species models suitable for use in management. NAMMCO plans to examine more closely the management objectives and experiences in applying ecosystem based management in countries across the North Atlantic where marine mammals are utilised.

### **International observation of whaling and sealing**

NAMMCO has since 1998 had a fully operational international scheme for the observation of whaling and sealing activities in member countries. At this year's meeting NAMMCO reviewed the implementation of this scheme and noted the valuable experiences gained from having

NAMMCO observers active in the field, both land-based and onboard vessels, observing a range of different hunts. One of the main focuses of NAMMCO observation activities in 2005 will be the Norwegian seal hunt.

### **Narwhal and beluga**

Having previously expressed its grave concern on the apparent decline of stocks of narwhal and belugas in West Greenland, NAMMCO commended the recent measures taken by the Government of Greenland to reduce catches by implementing quotas for these stocks. There are however continuing concerns about the sustainability of the catch and the effects of the new management measures will be followed closely.

### **Fin whales**

In order to complete the requested assessment of fin whale stocks in the North Atlantic, questions related to stock identity and historical catch data in particular still need to be resolved. The NAMMCO Scientific Committee will be taking steps to complete this work as soon as possible.

### **Humpback whales**

NAMMCO has in recent years also focussed its attention on the status of humpback whales in the North Atlantic, which are increasing in some areas. This year the Scientific Committee has been requested to continue its assessment and in particular to assess the long-term effects of annual removals of from 0, 2, 5, 10 and 20 humpback whales in West Greenland, as well as providing estimates of sustainable yields for stocks in the Northeast Atlantic.

**New General Secretary** – NAMMCO welcomed the new General Secretary, Dr Christina Lockyer, who took up her official duties during the 14<sup>th</sup> Annual Meeting in Tromsø. Dr Lockyer joins existing staff members of the Secretariat, Mr Daniel Pike, Scientific Secretary and Ms Charlotte Winsnes, Administrative Coordinator.

The next annual meeting of NAMMCO will be hosted by Iceland in the spring of 2006.

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