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REPORT OF THE SEVENTEENTH MEETING OF COUNCIL 2-4 September 2008, Sisimiut, Greenland

1. OPENING PROCEDURES

The Chair of the Council, Kate Sanderson (Faroe Islands) opened the meeting at Taseralik, the Sisimiut Cultural House, and welcomed all delegates and observers. The list of participants is contained in Section 3.1.

In her opening remarks, the Chair noted that it had been 18 months since the last Annual Meeting but that there had been no shortage of activities in the interim period, not least of which was the successful planning and implementation of T-NASS. She welcomed in particular the new Scientific Secretary, Mario Acquarone as a valuable addition to the Secretariat. He had taken up his position in April last year and was now attending his first annual meeting. On behalf of all participants the Chair thanked the Government of Greenland for hosting the meeting in the beautiful surroundings of Sisimiut.

1.1 Welcome address

Mr Finn Karlsen, the Minister for Hunting, Fisheries and Agriculture of Greenland welcomed the 17th Annual Meeting of NAMMCO to Sisimiut, Greenland. The text of Mr Karlsen's welcome address is contained in Appendix 3.

1.2 Opening statements

Opening statements were made by the Faroe Islands, Iceland and Norway and a written statement was submitted by Japan. These are contained in Appendix 3.

1.3 Admission of Observers

Observers from Canada, Denmark, Japan and Russia, North East Atlantic Fisheries Commission (NEAFC), Northwest Atlantic Fisheries Organization (NAFO), International Whaling Commission (IWC), and several Non-Governmental Organisations - Inuit Circumpolar Council (ICC) and High North Alliance (HNA) were welcomed. Apologies were received from St Lucia, International Council for Exploration of the Sea (ICES), Food and Agriculture Organization (FAO), North Atlantic Salmon Commission (NASCO) and European Bureau for Conservation and Development (EBCD) and the Swedish Association for Hunting and Wildlife Management.

1.4 Invited Speaker

Peder Olsen, Chairman of KNAPK, the Greenland Hunters' and Fishermen's Association, gave a presentation entitled "Sealing and whaling in Greenland". The presentation is summarised in Appendix 4.

Commenting on the presentation and opening statements, Minister Karlsen of Greenland expressed his appreciation that KNAPK, Faroe Islands, Iceland and Norway all share the same views on the importance of ensuring sustainable use of

marine mammals, and that NAMMCO is fully mandated to manage all marine mammals, including large whales.

1.5 Adoption of agenda

The final draft agenda was adopted without amendments (Appendix 1).

1.6 Meeting arrangements

Social arrangements during the meeting included a reception on Monday 1 September at Taseralik, hosted by the Municipality of Sisimiut and a dinner at Hotel Sisimiut on Wednesday 2 September hosted by the Greenland Ministry of Hunting, Fisheries and Agriculture.

2. FINANCE AND ADMINISTRATION

2.1 Report of the Finance and Administration Committee

The report of the Finance and Administration Committee (NAMMCO/17/4) was presented by the Chair of the Committee, Ásta Einarsdóttir (Iceland).

It was noted that the final accounts for the 2007 had been adopted by the Council earlier in the year (see Appendix 5).

The Council endorsed the recommendations and conclusions of the Finance and Administration Committee related to the staff employment survey (review of salary scales and pension), rates for observers under the NAMMCO Observation Scheme, and the status of locally recruited staff in the official category in relation to the Host Agreement.

The Chair noted that adaptation of the salary scheme for Secretariat staff to a UN-based system was a priority issue for the Council in the coming months.

2.2 Commission Draft Budget 2009

The Council adopted the draft Budget for 2009 as contained in NAMMCO/17/4, Annex 1, with a minor increase under the budget item other expenses. The final amended budget and breakdown of membership contributions for 2009 would be circulated immediately after the meeting.

3. SCIENTIFIC COMMITTEE

3.1 Report of the Scientific Committee

The Chair of the Scientific Committee, Geneviève Desportes (Faroe Islands) presented the Report of the Scientific Committee (NAMMCO/17/5; Section 4.1).

The presentation of detailed advice on specific stocks and species was referred to the relevant Management Committees. The Scientific Committee Chair therefore focussed her presentation on advice on items common to stocks and species, such as T-NASS (see under Item 3.2), marine mammal fisheries interactions, by-catch, as well as organisational and procedural matters in the work of the Scientific Committee.

Participation and data presentation in the Scientific Committee

The Scientific Committee Chair noted that there was not always full participation of all appointed members, which is problematic for such a small Committee. In addition, some documents presenting data resulting from work coordinated through NAMMCO had not been presented to the Scientific Committee before being dealt with in other bodies.

The Council urged member countries to ensure that their appointed members to the Scientific Committee were in full attendance at Scientific Committee meetings, or where this is not possible, to appoint alternative members with the relevant expertise to address the specific issues being dealt with by the Scientific Committee at any given time. The Council also stressed the importance of having all relevant data presented to the NAMMCO Scientific Committee in a timely fashion to enable it to address fully the requests for advice forwarded from the Council and urged member countries to ensure that this was followed up on a national basis.

The Council reiterated its wish that endorsement of abundance estimates by the Scientific Committee only be carried out on the recommendation of either the NAMMCO Working Group on Abundance Estimates or a NAMMCO Assessment Working Group, in order to provide for the possibility of using the most competent expertise, both internal and external.

Proposed work plan of the Scientific Committee

The Council noted the proposed work plan of the Scientific Committee (NAMMCO/17/5; Section 3.1) with working groups and workshops scheduled or proposed for 2009 and 2010 to address outstanding requests for advice and assessments, including work to finalise new abundance estimates for several cetacean species after T-NASS. This proposed work was also considered in more detail by the respective Management Committees.

The Council endorsed the Scientific Committee's proposed work plan, but noted that the priority of tasks would need to be further clarified after discussions in the Management Committees and in the light of new requests resulting from their deliberations (see Items 5.2 and 6.2).

NAMMCO Scientific Publication Series

With respect to the NAMMCO Scientific Publication series, the Grey Seal volume was produced in late 2007, and the NASS volume is scheduled to be finalised before the end of 2008. The volume on Harbour Seals is well under way and is expected to be published in 2009.

The Scientific Committee sought guidance from the Council on the publication of results and analysis of T-NASS. The Scientific Committee recommended a joint publication with the IWC Scientific Publication series, and the Secretariat had already made informal enquires to the IWC Secretariat on this possibility.

In response, the Council noted the importance of highlighting the leading role of

NAMMCO in the planning and implementation of T-NASS, underlining that this role should be quite clear in the subsequent publication of data resulting from T-NASS. Although it would be preferable to publish T-NASS results as a stand-alone volume of the NAMMCO Scientific Publication series, it was also noted that timing and editing issues suggest that co-publication with the IWC was likely to be a more effective approach for the dissemination of the material.

The Council therefore agreed that a joint NAMMCO/IWC publication on T-NASS should be pursued.

3.2 Trans-North Atlantic Sightings Survey - T-NASS 2007

The Scientific Committee Chair, Geneviève Desportes, who was also the T-NASS coordinator on behalf of NAMMCO, summarised the report of the T-NASS WG (NAMMCO/17/5 Annexes 1.1, 1.2 and 1.3; Section 4.1) and the outstanding tasks still to be completed. T-NASS was the culmination of previous requests to the Scientific Committee (NAMMCO/13, 14 and 16) and the third such North Atlantic cetacean sightings survey coordinated by NAMMCO (after NASS 1995 and NASS 2001). Non-member countries were encouraged to participate to achieve the broadest coverage possible. Fin, minke and pilot whales were priority species, but the methodology should also accommodate the need for estimates for harbour porpoises especially in Icelandic waters. Estimates and trends of abundance should be produced as soon as possible after completion of the survey programme.

T-NASS had indeed achieved a trans-Atlantic coverage, which had been the aim since the beginning of the NASS surveys. NAMMCO achieved also “value for money” from the T-NASS project. Observers were placed on board other platforms of opportunity, conducting non-whale surveys concomitantly to T-NASS in contiguous areas, thus broadening the coverage. Besides the sightings survey, a methodology adequate for deep-diving species, such as sperm whales, was used from the survey vessels. The involvement of PINRO in Russia should contribute to insuring a compatibility of methodology, and thus abundance estimates, in adjacent areas.

Desportes noted in summary that the synoptic coordinated trans-North Atlantic survey was effectively implemented, and although national priorities are somewhat different, all NAMMCO member countries, the Faroe Islands, Greenland, Iceland and Norway participated and contributed. Also Canada and Russia participated for the first time, thus laying the foundations of a trans-North Atlantic survey spanning from the Barents Sea to the eastern Canadian coast. Opportunistic surveys using ICES Redfish, MAR-ECO and pelagic Norwegian-Russian surveys were undertaken. Timing of the survey was centred in July, although Greenland conducted its main effort in September. The Norway dedicated survey area was unfortunately not contiguous with the other dedicated surveys, although the opportunistic surveys conducted from the two Norwegian vessels involved in the Norwegian-Russian pelagic survey provided a continuity. The Canadian survey in the central Davis Strait had to be cancelled, but the continuity between east and west was insured by the opportunistic survey conducted from the Russian ICES redfish platform.

For the first time as well, a NASS survey co-operated with a European – CODA – and an American – SNESSA – concomitant survey, insuring a co-ordinated effort. The broadest synoptic coverage possible was thus achieved with T-NASS, of which the 12 dedicated platforms covered 57,781 nm in effort. With the associated surveys included, the total coverage was 71,332 nm.

The fact that the survey was a large synoptic international survey had been crucial in securing funding, at least for the Canadian surveys. However, funds are still needed for some of the analyses. The new cooperation established between the three programmes, and with other non-cetacean programmes, is very valuable. SNESSA, CODA and NAMMCO have agreed to publish as a priority a joint primary publication pertaining to the general distribution of all cetacean species throughout the entire survey area, under the leadership of the T-NASS coordinator and the NAMMCO Secretariat. Finally, the Scientific Committee also recommends that archive data be stored at the NAMMCO Secretariat for future reference.

Abundance estimates are being produced, some of them have already been reviewed by the Scientific Committee, and in the case of the Icelandic coastal minke whale the abundance estimate was endorsed. Estimates for the target species will be reviewed by the NAMMCO ‘fin - large whale’ assessment Working Group which will meet in early spring 2009 (fin, humpback, sei, minke and pilot whales estimates). Most of the other analyses are planned to be completed by the end of 2009.

The Council applauded Geneviève Desportes for her tireless and professional efforts as T-NASS coordinator, also acknowledging the excellent support of the Secretariat.

The Council commended T-NASS as a flagship for NAMMCO and a unique achievement, having provided a much broader coverage than any previous cetacean sightings survey, either in the North Atlantic or in any other region. Areas that had never been covered before or not at the same time as other areas had now been covered. The success of the T-NASS was also due to excellent working relationships with other organisations and research institutes in non-member countries across the North Atlantic. The Council saw the cooperation established between SNESSA, CODA and NAMMCO as very valuable and regarded the joint publication on cetacean distribution as a priority and urged member countries to ensure that the necessary data be provided in a timely fashion to the Secretariat.

The Council noted that changing ecosystems require regular good quality surveys of baseline abundance and distribution, and highlighted the importance of developing updated abundance estimates for the target species as soon as possible, noting that most results will be available in 2009.

A representative from KNAPK (the Greenland Hunters’ and Fishermen’s Association) commented that more minke whales have been observed recently north of Disko Bay and Melville Bay than have been seen before, while no minke whales had been observed in the south, indicating a possible migration north. He suggested that this northern area should therefore be covered in future surveys. (See also Item 4.4 of the

Management Committee for Cetaceans report, Section 2.1.)

Other matters arising from T-NASS related to the conservation and management of specific cetacean species and stocks were referred to the Management Committee for Cetaceans.

3.3 Rules of Procedure

The Scientific Committee Chair drew attention to the proposed revision to the Scientific Committee's Rules of Procedure to extend the Chair's term from 2 to 3 years in order to provide for better continuity and long-term planning in the work of the Scientific Committee.

The Council approved the proposed revision of the Scientific Committee Rules of Procedures, Article II, paragraph 2 which would now read: The Scientific Committee shall elect by majority vote from amongst its members a Chairman and a Vice-Chairman. The Chairman and vice-Chairman shall serve for *three* years.”.

Geneviève Desportes would therefore serve as Scientific Committee chair for one more year, and the Council welcomed her continuation.

4. NATIONAL PROGRESS REPORTS

National Progress Reports were submitted by all member nations. The Council noted with appreciation the submission of a National Progress Report from Canada, and thanked Russia and Japan for submitting comprehensive reports of their marine mammal research to the Scientific Committee. These documents were also circulated as Council documents for general information. The Chair proposed that questions related to the specific contents of the National Progress Reports should be taken up in the relevant Management Committees.

5. MANAGEMENT COMMITTEE FOR CETACEANS

5.1 Report of the Management Committee for Cetaceans

The Report of the Management Committee for Cetaceans (NAMMCO/17/6; Section 2.1) was presented by its Chair, Halvard P. Johansen (Norway).

Species / Stocks

The Council noted the deliberations of the Committee with respect to species and stocks of whales of interest to member countries. The Management Committee for Cetaceans Chair reported to the Council on the proposals for conservation and management agreed for stocks of cetaceans in the North Atlantic (See also Item 4. of the Management Committee for Cetaceans report, Section 2.1.)

The Council also noted the deliberations of the joint session of the Management Committee for Cetaceans and Management Committee for Seals and Walruses (Item 6. in the report of the Management Committee for Cetaceans, Section 2.1) to discuss conservation and management related issues of overlapping interest, including marine

mammal fisheries interactions, environmental issues, by-catch and users knowledge in management decision-making.

The Council also took note of the recommendations for further research identified by the Scientific Committee and endorsed by the Management Committee for Cetaceans, noting that these recommendations are directed to individual member countries for appropriate action (see the report of the Management Committee for Cetaceans, Section 2.1, Appendix 5).

5.2 Requests for advice from the Scientific Committee

The Council agreed to forward the following requests for advice to the Scientific Committee, as recommended by the Management Committee for Cetaceans:

Narwhal and Beluga

The Scientific Committee is requested to update the assessment of both narwhal and beluga, noting that new data warrant such an exercise. The NAMMCO Scientific Committee/JCNC Joint Working Group should meet before March 2009, to allow the updated assessment to be available for setting the new quota series. Greenland should submit fully corrected estimates derived from the 2006, 2007 and 2008 surveys to the joint Working Group. In addition, as in 2006, advice should also be forwarded to the Canada/Greenland Joint Commission on Conservation and Management of Narwhal and Beluga (JCNC).

Fin whales

The Scientific Committee is requested to complete an assessment of fin whales in the North Atlantic and also to include an estimation of sustainable catch levels in the Central North Atlantic. This work should be initiated as soon as all estimates become available and before the next meeting of the Scientific Committee.

Minke whales

The Scientific Committee is requested to conduct a full assessment, including long-term sustainability of catches, of common minke whales in the Central North Atlantic once results from the 2009 survey become available. In the meantime the Scientific Committee is requested to assess the short-term (2-5 year) effects of the following total annual catches: 0, 100, 200, 400.

Sei whales

The Scientific Committee is requested to review the new data from T-NASS and associated surveys and report on the status of sei whales through the Fin Whale assessment WG.

Humpback whales

The Scientific Committee is requested to assess the long-term effects of catches of 0, 2, 5, 10, 20 humpback whales off West Greenland and estimate sustainable yields for other stocks, as well as to conduct a formal assessment following the completion of the T-NASS. In addition, the relationship between the humpback whales summering in West Greenland and other areas should be investigated and this knowledge

incorporated into the estimate of sustainable yields of West Greenland humpback whales.

Management models for baleen whales

The Scientific Committee is requested to study general models for conservation and management of baleen whales, *inter alia* based on Norwegian studies presented to the Scientific Committee of the IWC.

Role of Marine Mammals in the Ecosystem

In addressing the standing requests on ecosystem modeling and marine mammal fisheries interaction, the Scientific Committee is requested to extend the focus to include all areas under NAMMCO jurisdiction. In the light of the distributional shifts seen under T-NASS 2007, the Scientific Committee should investigate dynamic changes in spatial distribution due to ecosystem changes and functional responses.

5.3 Other business

The Council welcomed the election of Ásta Einarisdóttir as Chair and Ulla S. Wang as Vice-Chair of the Management Committee on Cetaceans for the period 2008-2010.

6. MANAGEMENT COMMITTEE FOR SEALS AND WALRUSES

6.1 Report of the Management Committee for Seals and Walrus

The Report of the Management Committee for Seals and Walruses (NAMMCO/17/7; Section 2.2) was presented by its Chair, Amalie Jessen (Greenland).

Species / Stocks

The Council noted the deliberations of the Committee with respect to species and stocks of seals and walruses of interest to member countries. The Management Committee for Seals and Walruses Chair reported to the Council that there were no new proposals for conservation and management agreed for stocks of seals and walruses in the North Atlantic (see also Item 4. of the Management Committee for Seals and Walruses report, Section 2.2).

The Council also took note of the recommendations for further research identified by the Scientific Committee and endorsed by the Management Committee for Seals and Walruses, noting that these recommendations are directed to individual member countries for appropriate action (see the report of the Management Committee for Seals and Walruses, Section 2.2, Appendix 3).

6.2 Recommendations for requests for advice

The Council agreed to forward the following requests for advice to the Scientific Committee, as recommended by the Management Committee for Seals and Walruses:

Harp seals

The Scientific Committee is requested to provide advice on Total Allowable Catches for the management of this species and the establishment of a quota system for the common stocks between Norway and the Russian Federation, leaving full freedom to

the Committee to decide on the best methods to determine this parameter based on an ecosystem approach.

The Council noted the importance for the study of harp seal ecology that satellite tags can be deployed in the White and Barents Sea in 2009 and encouraged the Russian authorities to allow the continuation of this study.

6.3 Any other business

The Council took note of discussions in the Management Committee on Seals and Walrus related to trade bans against seal products. Although NAMMCO does not deal formally with trade issues, all Council members shared concerns that moves within the European Union to impose import bans on seal products can have serious implications for the responsible management and sustainable utilisation of abundant seal stocks across the North Atlantic, and for the economies of the many communities dependent on these valuable resources.

The Council noted that such import bans were not being proposed due to any concerns about the conservation status of seal stocks in the North Atlantic. Rather, they appear to have their basis in discussions related to hunting methods (see reports from ESFA and COWI under the auspices of the European Commission), which are unfortunately very often confounded by misleading and inaccurate depictions of sealing practices publicised throughout the media.

It was nevertheless noted that there appears to be a growing understanding in many countries that seal stocks are legitimate and abundant resources. This was a major focus of the International Conference “Seals and society – how to manage resources and interactions in the Baltic Sea and North Atlantic”, held in Vaasa, Finland in October 2007. The importance of seals as resources was also clearly underlined in the declaration “Seals and Society” adopted by the Nordic Fisheries Ministers at their meeting in Växjö, Sweden on 26 June 2008. The Council welcomed these developments.

7. HUNTING METHODS

7.1 Report of the Committee on Hunting Methods

The Report of the Committee on Hunting Methods (NAMMCO/17/8; Section 1.2) was presented by its Chair, Egil Ole Øen. (Norway).

Workshop plans - Handling, processing and utilisation of hunted marine mammals

The Council expressed its support for the on-going planning of the Committee for the proposed workshop on handling, processing and utilisation of hunted marine mammals, which is now scheduled for November 2009, with Sandefjord, Norway as a suggested venue. Seals, whales and walrus should be included in the workshop discussions. Hunters will be the main participants, as well as researchers and representatives from all relevant countries where whaling and sealing is conducted. It was also noted that

input from food safety and hygiene experts and authorities would also be important for the workshop.

New developments in member countries

With regard to the reported new instrument for use in killing pilot whale, the Faroe Islands informed the Council that the a spinal lance is not yet in general use but has great potential as an efficient new tool, noting that it has been developed on the initiative of experienced whalers. The Faroe Islands also informed the Council that a full revision of the 1998 executive order on pilot whaling is planned, which will adapt the regulations to take account of new developments in equipment and other matters related to the organisation and division of whale catches.

The Council also noted the information from Greenland, reviewed by the Hunting Methods Committee, that that a quota of 2 bowhead whales was allocated for 2009. Plans are to use a grenade cannon as is used in the hunting of fin whales. The Hunting Methods Committee provided Greenland with advice on the best targeting methods, recommended a 3-year year trial period in which methods could be developed and agreed that it would be important to identify a small number of vessels (2 – 3) with a license to hunt the quota under monitored and controlled circumstances and thus gain the necessary experience to adapt the best possible hunting methods.

Best practices in sealing

With reference to the Hunting Committee suggestion for how to proceed with the requested work to focus on best practices in sealing (NAMMCO/17/8, Item 7.1; Section 1.2), the Council confirmed the following work plan and terms of reference:

- The work should build upon the knowledge and experiences already gathered in previous workshops organised by the Committee and possible new developments emerging since the last workshop held in 2006.
- The work should be undertaken in a focussed group of specially invited experts with experience in seal hunting practices from sealing nations and communities.
- The expert group will critically assess different seal hunting methods within their contexts, addressing such questions as:
 - The use of specific hunting methods and equipment in particular settings
 - Training requirements for hunters
 - Control and monitoring of hunting methods
 - Research needs to improve the basis for further assessment.
- The expert group will develop recommendations on best practices based on state of the art in sealing today and identify where and how specific improvements can be made.
- As background information for the work of the expert group, the Secretariat, in cooperation with the Hunting Methods Committee, will prepare a collation of relevant information and recommendations on seal hunting methods from previous NAMMCO workshops and other relevant and up-to-date sources of information on sealing practices.

It is expected that the expert group will convene in the spring of 2009 and its conclusions will be presented to the Council at its next annual meeting.

7.2 Other business

Council members agreed with comments by Greenland that the work of the Committee on Hunting Methods should be publicised. The Council endorsed Greenland's suggestion that efforts be made to disseminate the work of the Committee and its workshops more widely. The focus should be on the valuable exchange of expertise and information between hunters and technical experts through NAMMCO, which aims to ensure the best possible humane killing methods in different forms of whaling, sealing and walrus hunting.

The observer from Japan informed the Council that Japan's intention is to send whale killing data and information to NAMMCO. Japan has suspended submission of data on hunting methods to the IWC and has informed that organisation that Japan will submit data to NAMMCO. The Chair thanked Japan and underlined that relevant data submitted by Japan was always very welcome.

8. THE JOINT NAMMCO CONTROL SCHEME

8.1 Report of the Committee on Inspection and Observation

The Chair of the Committee on Inspection and Observation, Ole Heinrich (Greenland), presented the Report of the Committee (NAMMCO/17/9; Section 1.3).

The Committee on Inspection and Observation has over the past year been working on the Council's request to revise the provisions of the Joint NAMMCO Control Scheme in order to integrate requirements for observer training to ensure observer safety onboard vessels, and to take account of recent technological developments in automated monitoring. A draft revision of the provisions of the Scheme was under consideration by members of the Committee, but it had not been possible to finalise its text prior to the Council meeting.

The Council therefore agreed to defer the issue until next year, but requested the Secretariat to circulate the most recent draft revision to heads of delegations for information. The Committee was asked to finalise the revision as soon as possible and to ensure that the provisions are fully up-to-date and do not have to be revisited too frequently. It was also underlined that the existing provisions are certainly still an adequate basis for observation activities in the coming year.

8.2 NAMMCO International Observation Scheme 2007 and 2008

The report on the implementation of the NAMMCO International Observation Scheme in 2007 and 2008 (NAMMCO/17/10; Section 1.4) was presented by the Deputy Secretary Charlotte Winsnes. In 2007, a NAMMCO observer was stationed in the Faroe Islands and observed a catch of 231 pilot whales in August. In 2008, a NAMMCO observer was on board a sealing vessel in Norway and observed a total of 397 seals hunted. No violations were observed in either year and observers reported and carried out their work according to the provisions of the Scheme.

In response to general comments from the Secretariat regarding the logistical challenges associated with placing NAMMCO observers in the field, sometimes at very short notice, the Council agreed that all efforts possible should be made by national authorities to provide the Scheme with a larger pool of suitably qualified people as official NAMMCO observers.

9. ECOSYSTEM-BASED MANAGEMENT

The Chair recalled that at NAMMCO/16 it had been decided to transfer this agenda item from the former General Management Committee to the Council agenda for future meetings to avoid duplication of discussions. At the same time it was noted that this item could still be considered with regard to the specific conservation and management focus of the respective Management Committees.

A substantive discussion on the subject of Ecosystem-based Management took place in 2006 in the former General Management Committee, based on the report of the *ad hoc* Working Group on enhancing Ecosystem-Based Management, which had met in September 2005. A number of recommendations were made for follow up discussions and the *ad hoc* Working Group was requested to meet inter-sessionally. However, this group had not met since 2005.

The Chair pointed out that the Council now needed to make a decision on how it wished to deal with this issue as a general item on its own agenda. The Chair reminded delegations that NAMMCO has, since its inception, recognised the need for ecosystem approaches to management. Requests for advice from the Scientific Committee also focus on developing a better understanding of the relationship between marine mammals and other marine living resources, and the impact of environmental factors. These and other related issues were also items on the agendas of both the Management Committees (Cetaceans and Seals and Walruses), and a joint session of both Committees had dealt with these matters (Items 6.1, 6.2 and 6.3 in the report of the Management Committee for Cetaceans, Section 2.1).

It was noted that the development of ecosystem models for use in management was a time-consuming process, but that enough progress had been made in this area recently to warrant new consideration and a broader terms of reference in the Scientific Committee Working Group on marine mammal-fisheries interactions (see Item 5.2 above).

The Council also welcomed the report from the NAMMCO observer who had taken part in the FAO ecosystem modelling workshop in Rome in 2007 (NAMMCO/17-12-INFO 2).

In summary it was noted that the Scientific Committee has new work planned in the near future and the Management Committees for Cetaceans and Seals and Walruses have ecosystem-related issues on their agendas in order to relate new scientific knowledge to conservation and management recommendations.

Given this, the Council decided to discontinue the *ad hoc* Working Group on ecosystem-

based management. It was stressed that discussions of a general nature on the management level in recent years had been useful, and the efforts of the members of the *ad hoc* Working Group were appreciated. However, the continued scientific and management focus on these issues was more appropriate for detailed discussion in the respective Management Committees. It was however also agreed to keep this item on the Council agenda as an opportunity to follow developments in more general terms and to review how other relevant international bodies are addressing both the concepts and the practicalities of ecosystem-based management.

10. USER KNOWLEDGE IN MANAGEMENT DECISION-MAKING

The Chair recalled that at NAMMCO/16 it had been decided to transfer this agenda item from the former General Management Committee to the Council agenda for future meetings to avoid duplication of discussions. At the same time it was noted that this item could still be considered with regard to the specific conservation and management focus of the respective Management Committees.

In 2006, following up on the successful NAMMCO Conference on User Knowledge and Scientific Knowledge in Management Decision-Making in 2003 and the subsequent publication of the proceedings, the Working Group on User Knowledge in Management had been re-established under the chairmanship of Egil Ole Øen (Norway) and new Terms of Reference agreed (see *Annual Report NAMMCO 2005*, p. 25). However, due to other priorities and staff changes in the Secretariat during this period, the Working Group had not had an opportunity to meet since then.

Greenland highlighted the importance of this issue and the need to maintain a clear focus within NAMMCO on the role of users in marine mammal research, conservation and management. The Conference and its proceedings had provided much insight into approaches in different contexts, and it remained therefore a very useful reference for future discussions.

The Council noted that the joint session of the Management Committee on Cetaceans and the Management Committee on Seals and Walruses had recommended that the issue of user knowledge in management decision-making should be returned to the agendas of the Management Committees for future meetings for discussion in relation to conservation and management recommendations.

The Council agreed to this recommendation, and as a result also agreed to dispense with the associated Working Group, noting that any further dedicated treatment of this issue would be decided in relation to deliberations in the respective Management Committees at future meetings.

11. ENVIRONMENTAL QUESTIONS

Report of the expert meeting on potential positive health effects of consuming whale and seal oil

The General Secretary Christina Lockyer presented a summary of the report of the

Expert Meeting on Potential Positive Health Effects of Consuming Whale and Seal Oil (NAMMCO/17/13), organised by NAMMCO and held in Copenhagen on 3 October 2007, with sponsorship from NORDEN (the Nordic Council of Ministers), Indigenous Survival International Greenland and NAMMCO. The workshop was chaired by Professor Lars Walløe (Norway) and attended by a total of 17 experts from diverse backgrounds of medicine, government and industry from all NAMMCO member countries. A summary report from the workshop was presented on behalf of NAMMCO by the workshop chair at the International Conference on Seals and Society in Vaasa, Finland in October 2007.

The expert meeting heard reports of trials and beneficial effects of seal oil consumption on intestinal disorders, arthritic joint pain associated with Irritable Bowel Disease, food allergies, psoriatic arthritis, reducing menstrual pain and cardiovascular disease – especially in the area of lowering blood pressure. Seal oil was also noted as an anti-thrombotic – excess of dietary *omega-3* fatty acids have been noted naturally to produce hemorrhagic nose bleeding in Inuit people, for reducing cholesterol levels in blood and enhancing effects of omega-3 fatty acid intake from fish. The meeting also heard how changes in diet in the last 30 years away from traditional marine mammal diet to European diet has resulted in an increase in obesity and also certain types of heart disease in Inuit people. At the same time this dietary switch has produced a lowering of contaminant levels in the diet even though these have remained stable in the marine mammals over time.

The main conclusions were that the effective components were *omega-3* fatty acids and antioxidants, especially effective in the unrefined state. The meeting recommended further research to investigate the active components of unrefined marine mammal oil, to publish better documentation of research results and more random sampling and double-blind and placebo experiments. Future research should perhaps focus on specific applications such as in the field of cardiovascular disease.

The Council welcomed the report of the Workshop and expressed its appreciation to Professor Walløe of Norway for chairing the event. It was noted that the workshop had been very useful in identifying the range and extent of research findings on the health benefits of consuming whale and seal oil, while also clearly highlighting further research needs.

Norway stressed the importance of continuing research efforts in this field to better document the health advantages of marine mammals in the diet. The Faroe Islands noted that contaminants in the marine ecosystem lead to accumulations in top predators, especially small whales and seals. It is important that NAMMCO highlight this issue in terms of the need to take action to eliminate marine pollution and stop the contamination of an otherwise excellent food resource.

The Council noted that the health risks associated with high levels of pollutants in some species of small whales and seals warrants continued monitoring. But it was also stressed that the documented health benefits of a diet rich in marine fats need to be balanced against these risks.

The Council concluded that stronger global efforts to reduce pollution in the marine environment were crucial to ensuring that the high quality food provided by marine mammals can continue to contribute to both local and global food security. The perspective of whaling and sealing nations where marine mammals are an important part of the diet needs to be better communicated in order to strengthen global commitments to eliminate pollution in the marine environment.

OSPAR

The Chair recalled that at its last meeting the Council had been informed that OSPAR is consulting with relevant fisheries organisations in connection with the preparation of a Quality Status Report (QSR) for the Northeast Atlantic in 2010. The Chair noted that this work is now well underway within OSPAR.

The General Secretary informed the Council of recent correspondence from OSPAR requesting information on the status of Northeast Atlantic bowhead, blue and northern right whales in relation to an intended update of OSPAR's 2003 "List of threatened and/or declining species and/or habitats", which is also to be incorporated into the QSR 2010. Norway reported that the IUCN Red List has recent updates on these species, *Cetaceans update of the 2008 IUCN Red List of Threatened Species*. In this list Svalbard-Barents Sea bowhead whales are listed as Critically Endangered (CR), northern right whale as Endangered (EN), blue whales in the North Atlantic as Vulnerable (VU) and humpback whales as Least Concern (LC).

The Chair referred to previous Council discussions on the importance of maintaining active working relations with OSPAR and providing up-to-date reliable information on the status of marine mammal stocks dealt with through NAMMCO. It was concluded that the NAMMCO Secretariat should follow the OSPAR QSR process more closely and provide all relevant NAMMCO information on marine mammals. It should be stressed in this connection that the QSR should not only focus on stocks and species classified as "threatened and/or in decline", but also provide a broader overview of marine mammals as resources in the Northeast Atlantic region, as indeed OSPAR intended to do in relation to fish stocks and fisheries.

12. EXTERNAL RELATIONS

The Chair referred to document NAMMCO/17/11, which provided a compilation of information and observer reports from meetings of a number of international organisations with which NAMMCO has established formal relations. These included observer reports from IWC Commission and Scientific Committee meetings, the 5th meeting of the FAO Regional Fisheries Bodies, Arctic Council SAO meetings, and annual meetings of NEAFC and NAFO and NASCO since the last NAMMCO Annual Meeting. In addition, the Secretariat attended the 5th NARFMO meeting, a forum for the Secretariats of the Regional Fisheries Management Bodies in the North Atlantic, and the Norwegian Small Whalers Union.

Noting the establishment in 2006 of working relations between the respective Scientific Committees of NAMMCO and NAFO on issues related to the role of

marine mammals in the ecosystem, the Council welcomed plans for the forthcoming Symposium on the Role of Marine Mammals in the Ecosystem in the 21st Century (29 September – 1 October, Dartmouth, Canada). These issues remain among the core considerations of NAMMCO. NAMMCO is a co-sponsor of the Symposium together with ICES and NAFO. The NAMMCO Scientific Committee has been liaising with the co-convenors on the programme for the Conference and NAMMCO will be hosting a reception for the occasion.

For the guidance of the Secretariat in responding to invitations from other organisations, the Council agreed to delegate NAMMCO observers among member countries as follows: Norway would represent NAMMCO at relevant meetings of NEAFC, Iceland at relevant meetings of NAFO, and the Faroe Islands at relevant meetings of NASCO.

NAMMCO had received an invitation to be represented at the COP9 meeting of the Bonn Convention (Convention on Migratory Species), 1 – 5 December in Rome. Norway offered to represent NAMMCO at this meeting.

13. INFORMATION

The General Secretary introduced NAMMCO/17/12. A variety of reports from scientific and other meetings was presented, as well as information about forthcoming meetings. The Chair thanked the Secretariat for the comprehensive information provided and noted the importance of making information on NAMMCO activities and publications widely available, such as through appropriate attendance at relevant meetings and conferences.

Particular reference was made to the International Conference “Seals and society – how to manage resources and interactions in the Baltic Sea and North Atlantic”, which was held in Vaasa, Finland in October 2007. NAMMCO was formally involved in the programme planning and the Chair of the Council had chaired the final panel discussion at the Conference. The Council was informed that a draft report from this meeting had been prepared soon after the conference, and that the final report was expected to be published and posted on the conference website within the next week.

The Council also welcomed the Declaration on “Seals and Society” adopted by the Nordic Fisheries Ministers at their meeting in Växjö, Sweden on 26 June 2008. The declaration, which the Swedish minister who chaired the meeting has subsequently forwarded to the EU Commissioner for the Environment, clearly emphasises the importance of seals as resources. It also recognises the role of NAMMCO in international cooperation on the conservation and management of seal stocks and work within NAMMCO on hunting methods, and encourages NAMMCO to continue these efforts.

14. ELECTION OF OFFICERS

Halvard P. Johansen (Norway) was elected as Chair of the Council for the next two years. Ásta Einarsdóttír (Iceland) was elected as Vice-Chair of the Council for the next two years.

15. ANY OTHER BUSINESS

In concluding the meeting and her second two-year term as Chair of the Council, Kate Sanderson thanked all delegations and observers for their excellent cooperation, both during this meeting and since taking up office. She extended her warmest appreciation to the Secretariat staff for their professional work and for their support during her chairmanship, and welcomed Halvard P. Johansen of Norway to the chair of the Council, wishing him every success in moving forward the important work of NAMMCO.

In appreciation of her efforts as Chair, Halvard P. Johansen on behalf of the Council presented the out-going Chair with a parting gift and thanked her for her competent leadership over the past 4 years.

16. CLOSING ARRANGEMENTS

Next meeting

The 18th Annual Meeting of NAMMCO (NAMMCO/18) will be held in Norway in the first half of September 2009. Specific dates, location and venue will be communicated by the Secretariat as soon as possible.

Adoption of press release

A Press Release highlighting major issues discussed and decided during the Annual Meeting was adopted (Appendix 6).

AGENDA

1. Opening Procedures

- 1.1 Welcome address
- 1.2 Opening statements
- 1.3 Admission of Observers
- 1.4 Invited Speaker: Presentation on sealing and whaling in Greenland by the
Director of KNAPK , Peder Olsen
- 1.5 Adoption of agenda
- 1.6 Meeting arrangements

2. Finance and Administration

- 2.1 Report of the Finance and Administration Committee
- 2.2 Commission Draft Budget 2009
- 2.3 Other business

3. Scientific Committee

- 3.1 Report of the Scientific Committee
- 3.2 TNASS
- 3.3 Other business

4. National Progress Reports

5. Management Committee for Cetaceans

- 5.1 Report of the Management Committee for Cetaceans
- 5.2 Recommendations for requests for advice
- 5.3 Other business

6. Management Committee for Seals and Walruses

- 6.1 Report of the Management Committee for Seals and Walrus
- 6.2 Recommendations for requests for advice
- 6.3 Any other business

7. Hunting Methods

- 7.1 Report of the Committee on Hunting Methods
- 7.2 Other business

8. The Joint NAMMCO Control Scheme

- 8.1 Report of the Committee on Inspection and Observation
- 8.2 NAMMCO International Observation Scheme 2007
- 8.3 NAMMCO International Observation Scheme 2008
- 8.3 Other business

9. Ecosystem-based Management

10. User Knowledge in Management Decision-making

11. Environmental questions

- 11.1 Report of the expert meeting on potential positive health effects of consuming
whale and seal oil

12. External relations

- 12.1 Cooperation with international organisations
- 12.2 Other business

13. Information

14. Election of officers

- 14.1 Chair of Council

14.2 Vice-Chair of Council

15. Any other business

16. Closing arrangements

16.1 Next meeting

16.2 Adoption of press release.

LIST OF DOCUMENTS

NAMMCO/17/1	List of Participants
NAMMCO/17/2	Agenda
NAMMCO/17/3	List of Documents
NAMMCO/17/4	Report of Finance and Administration Committee
NAMMCO/17/4 ANNEX 1	Commission draft budget 2009
NAMMCO/17/5	Report of the Scientific Committee
NAMMCO/17/5 Addendum	Report of the NAMMCO Working Group on Pilot Whales, July 2008.
NAMMCO/17/6	Report of the Management Committee for Cetaceans
NAMMCO/17/7	Report of the Management Committee for Seals and Walrus
NAMMCO/17/8	Report of the Committee on Hunting Methods
NAMMCO/17/9	Report of the Committee on Inspection and Observation
NAMMCO/17/10	NAMMCO International Observation Scheme 2007 and 2008
NAMMCO/17/11	External Relations
NAMMCO/17/12	Information
NAMMCO/17/NPR-F	National Progress Report Faroe Islands
NAMMCO/17/NPR-G	National Progress Report Greenland
NAMMCO/17/NPR-I	National Progress Report Iceland
NAMMCO/17/NPR-N	National Progress Report Norway
NAMMCO/17/NPR-C	National Progress Report Canada
NAMMCO/17/NPR-R	National Progress Report Russian Federation

**OPENING STATEMENTS TO THE COUNCIL BY MEMBER
DELEGATIONS AND OBSERVER GOVERNMENTS**

GREENLAND – WELCOME ADDRESS

Minister of Fisheries, Hunting and Agriculture, Mr Finn Karlsen

Madam Chair, Delegates, Observers, Ladies and Gentlemen,

First of all, it is an honour to welcome you to the 17th NAMMCO Annual Meeting in Sisimiut, Greenland.

The North Atlantic Marine Mammal Commission has provided vital management advice since its creation in 1992.

The above mentioned advices are based on advice provided by the Scientific Committee or on our own requests. Examples of the latter are that we, a couple of years ago, requested from Scientific Committee to give advice on how different quotas on humpback will impact the stock size. NAMMCO'S Scientific Committee concluded that a quota of ten will not have any impact on the population.

Based on that background, Greenland requested a humpback quota from the International Whaling Commission and thereby have the IWC Scientific Committee re-emphasize what the NAMMCO Scientific Committee had already established.

However, our request for a humpback quota was turned down by the majority of countries in the International Whaling Commission despite the conclusion by the Scientific Committee that Greenland had fulfilled all the requirements for such a quota.

The situation has of course created the political consideration of whether or not we should discuss if we are to continue our participation in the future of the IWC.

NAMMCO has a special situation in this matter, and in connection with this NAMMCO Annual Meeting and we would like to express clearly that it is our desire to discuss if it is not the time to alter the Agreement on the establishment of NAMMCO and evaluate whether or not NAMMCO can become a body with a jurisdiction on providing large whale quotas. On this behalf, we from Greenland would like to suggest that we establish an *ad hoc* working group that investigates this issue.

We all know that seals are now the focus of debate in the international arena, with a proposed EU ban on import as a next example. NAMMCO member countries and sealing countries have in that connection, done extensive work to prevent the ban and limit the harm done to our hunters as much as possible.

We all are aware that the campaign against marine mammal hunting is usually based

on ignorance of the fact that conservation and humane killing methods are very important for hunters.

Despite the grave state of the situation I believe that we ourselves also make a contribution to improving the image of hunting.

With that background, I am pleased to hear that the NAMMCO Committee on Hunting Methods is planning to hold an expert Working Group on “Best hunting practices” and I look forward to hear more on this issue.

Lately, we ourselves experienced an incident that we certainly are not proud of, namely that narwhals were found in a certain location with only some usable parts removed. This is just one sign that we need to discuss more good hunting practices among ourselves.

During the years NAMMCO has held seminars and workshops on different hunting methods on different marine mammals. These workshops and seminars have resulted in recommendations. It seems that these recommendations are followed up and I am therefore pleased to find out that there will be a workshop on treatment, processing and utilization of marine mammals as kind of a conclusion to previous workshops; and a publishing of all previous recommendations.

With these words I would once again like to welcome you here; and referring to my statements, I am looking forward to making NAMMCO stronger as an organization that has jurisdiction on large whales because we sometimes wish for a more active role for NAMMCO on certain issues.

Thank you and have good meeting.

FAROE ISLANDS – OPENING STATEMENT

Madam Chair, Minister, Delegates, Observers, Ladies and Gentlemen,

It is a pleasure for the Faroe Islands to be attending the 17th Annual Meeting of NAMMCO, and we would like to thank Greenland for hosting this year’s meeting and inviting us to this beautiful town of Sisimiut.

In 2007 the Scientific Committee of NAMMCO, which the Faroe Islands currently chair, coordinated the major cetacean sightings survey in the North Atlantic – T-NASS 2007. T-NASS was very well planned and successfully carried out, with broad participation across the North Atlantic. The Faroe Islands are pleased to have made our contribution to the shipboard part of T-NASS in our area, and we now look forward to the completion of the data analysis that will provide us with updated abundance estimates, not least for the pilot whale stock in our region.

Madam Chair, this year is very unusual one for us in the Faroe Islands. There has so far not been a single catch of pilot whales around our shores in 2008. We have not had

an entire year without a pilot whale catch since 1927, and we know that this is not due to any depletion of the stock. Climate and ecosystem fluctuations are likely to be the explanation, and we have also seen dramatic changes in the distribution of some important fish stocks across the Northeast Atlantic in recent years. Hopefully increased research in this area will provide us with a better understanding of these factors. Continued biological monitoring is also very important and we look forward to a more detailed presentation of the Scientific Committee's recommendations for our regular monitoring and sampling of pilot whales in the Faroe Islands.

The Faroe Islands very much welcome planned discussions this week on procedures for deciding on conservation and management measures. We have always believed that cooperation through NAMMCO should apply actively to all marine mammal stocks of interest to member countries, including large whales, and we have always been ready to support specific measures in this regard. It is 16 years since the NAMMCO agreement was signed, and we believe the time has come for this organisation to activate its mandate and responsibility for managing all whales in the North Atlantic, a responsibility that the IWC is quite clearly not capable of fulfilling.

Although the Faroe Islands are not a sealing nation, we follow discussions on sealing management and hunting methods in NAMMCO with great interest. We are very concerned about the trend towards using trade bans against legitimate forms of sealing in the North Atlantic. Such bans undermine the fundamental principles on which our cooperation in NAMMCO is based, the responsible management and sustainable use of living marine resources and the rights of nations to use – and trade in - their natural resources. As the only international management body for cooperation on seal stocks, NAMMCO seal-related work should be seen as setting the international standard, both with respect to scientific assessment and management measures for shared stocks, as well as for transparent review and discussion of hunting methods in different forms of sealing.

The Faroese delegation is looking forward to contributing to what we hope will be a constructive and productive annual meeting this week.

ICELAND – OPENING STATEMENT

Madam Chair, Delegates, Observers, Ladies and Gentlemen,

It is with great pleasure that the Icelandic delegation attends the 17th Annual Meeting of NAMMCO here in Sisimiut.

NAMMCO plays a great importance for Iceland as sustainable utilisation of marine resources is of fundamental significance for the economic survival of the Icelandic people. In fact we have no other alternative then to give sustainable utilisation of marine resources such a high status.

Sustainable utilisation of marine mammals is not only important to Iceland but it is crucial for all of the NAMMCO member states. The main basis for our economic

welfare is utilising the living resources of the sea. Marine mammals are not only an important part of the marine ecosystem. They are a part that must be utilised in a sustainable way, like other parts of the ecosystem and there is no logical reason for treating marine mammals differently than other living resources of the sea.

For this reason international cooperation in this field is of a great importance to us all and we need to work together for the sustainable utilisation, conservation and study of these resources. NAMMCO has made valuable contributions to the conservation and sustainable management of marine mammals.

In particular the work conducted by the Scientific Committee has been of great importance to Iceland. As an example, assessments by the Scientific Committee have formed the main basis for management decisions taken by Icelandic authorities concerning fin and minke whales.

In 2007, Iceland participated in the largest cetacean survey ever conducted in the world (T-NASS). This survey was successfully coordinated by the Scientific Committee of NAMMCO.

Iceland adheres strongly to the ecosystem approach to management of marine resources, including marine mammals. This view is shared by the other NAMMCO countries. To advance this approach a comprehensive scientific programme is being conducted on the feeding ecology of common minke whales in Icelandic waters. Iceland was happy to present the preliminary results from this programme at the NAMMCO council meeting in Selfoss in 2006. Preliminary findings from this programme indicate that commercial fish species such as cod constitute a considerably higher portion of the minke whale's diet than previously assumed. These results underline the importance of scientific work for a better understanding of the marine ecosystem for management.

We are confident that, as past meetings, this meeting will be fruitful and constructive, based on objective, and science-based approach.

NORWAY - OPENING STATEMENT

Madam Chair, Minister, Delegates, Observers and Guests, Dear Friends,

It is indeed a pleasure to meet here in Sisimiut, Greenland, for the seventeenth meeting of the NAMMCO Council. I believe that we, during this meeting, will confirm the status of NAMMCO as a useful regional management body for marine mammals.

Many countries accept whaling and sealing in some nations, both in countries with a developed economy and in countries where the economy is less developed depending on who is conducting the whaling and sealing. Norway has the strong opinion that all whaling and sealing have to be based on science, and that no whaling and sealing should be conducted if it is not sustainable.

The debate about management of marine mammals today is mainly emotional. It is disturbing that the attitude towards science as the basis for managing whale stocks is vanishing. This is especially important as we have to base our management of wildlife in general on science. Also, we have to solve international conflicts in the environmental field (global warming, biological diversity, IUU fishing, effects of pollution, *etc.*) on a scientific basis. Whaling and sealing is not a major issue in this context, but the actions of governments in this matter may create an international precedent for similar actions in more important issues. We cannot accept that a legal activity conducted with the best practice in one country is not accepted in another country because of emotions.

We recognize the fact that governments allow themselves to describe some mammals as pest animals (musk rat, possum, kangaroo, horse, camel) and consequently accept that they may be killed without any control of the methods used or supervision of the culling. This is not consistent with what these countries demand from whaling and sealing nations.

During the past two years we have seen an ongoing campaign in many European countries against trade in seal products. Some countries have introduced legislation to this effect already, and others will follow suit. In July the Commission of the European Communities proposed regulation of the European Parliament and the Council concerning trade in seal product. This underlines that it is mandatory that we who live in the Arctic and depend on sustainable use of the living marine resources available to us, including the marine mammals, stick together and defend our right to sustainable harvest of the surplus of nature's production and make a living of selling the products.

Our understanding of the proposed regulation in the EU of trade in seal products is that the European market will be open for seal products coming from Inuit hunt and from countries that have a respectable regulation of the seal hunt. It is therefore mandatory that the sealing nations in the North Atlantic strive to develop and implement the best possible hunting methods and acceptable control measures. In that way we can set the standards also for other legal hunting activities, also in countries that do not harvest marine mammals. I think we can be proud of our contribution to the amelioration of the animal welfare in hunting activities.

In this respect the work of the NAMMCO Committee on Hunting Methods is important. This Committee is setting the standards for the hunt of marine mammals, and these standards represent best practice. We will now ask this Committee to codify what is best practice in different kinds of sealing.

The NAMMCO Inspection and Observer Regime is the only control regime in force that covers marine mammals. We think it is important that we now give priority to update this regime and take into account experience gained and the new techniques that are developed.

Greenland has this year experienced that they did not get a quota of humpback whales

despite a scientific advice stating that the requested quota would be sustainable. Such an experience emphasises how important it is that the NAMMCO Scientific Committee starts to study general models for conservation and management of baleen whales.

Finally, I would like to reiterate that Norway continuously strive to develop a coherent and active conservation and management regime for marine mammals based on modern principles for the management of species, habitats and ecosystems.

I wish you all a fruitful meeting.

JAPAN – OPENING STATEMENT

The delegation of Japan expresses its appreciation for the hospitality and warm welcome we have received from the Government of Greenland. We are pleased to be attending the Seventeenth Meeting of the NAMMCO Council.

Indeed, we believe it appropriate that this meeting of the Council is being held in Greenland following the decision at the 60th Annual Meeting of the IWC that rejected the legitimate and scientifically supported request for humpback whales made by Denmark on behalf of Greenland. The continuing rejection of Japan's request for a quota for its small-type coastal whaling communities by the IWC puts Japan and Greenland and our cultures in the same position as victims of an organization whose agenda and functioning has been overtaken by anti-whaling zealots. The people and the Government of Greenland have our heartfelt understanding and sympathy. Clearly, this emphasizes the need for strengthened regional management and/or a new global arrangement.

As we noted at your sixteenth meeting, Japan has little confidence that the current situation in IWC will improve; however, we are committed to work within the "Future of IWC" process initiated by Chairman Hogarth at least until June of next year. We believe that the understanding shared between Japan and NAMMCO member countries that the management of all marine living resources should be based on science, conformity with international law and respect for cultural diversity must constitute the basis of our participation in that process and must continue to be communicated to all members of the IWC. At the same time, we appreciate the participation of individuals from NAMMCO member countries in the working group that is developing a "safety net" which could assume the role of managing sustainable whaling in the absence of IWC functioning.

Cooperation between Japan and NAMMCO member countries is also important in other international fora where whaling and other marine and fisheries issues such as marine protected areas, improvement of regional fisheries management organizations and the management of fisheries in waters beyond national jurisdiction are currently being discussed. One such forum will be the IUCN World Conservation Congress which will be held in Barcelona from October 5 to 14. Whaling and many other fisheries issues are on the agenda for this Congress and we look forward to working

with you to try to ensure that decisions made are consistent with our shared understanding concerning the basis for managing marine living resources.

Finally, we would like once again to note that research on interactions between whales and fisheries and ecosystem modeling is a subject of shared interest between Japan and the members of NAMMCO. We remain convinced that collectively, our work on these issues will provide a strengthened scientific basis for improved management of all marine resources.

Thank you.

**PRESENTATION TO THE 17TH ANNUAL MEETING OF NAMMCO
BY PETER OLSEN, CHAIRMAN OF KNAPK – THE ORGANIZATION OF
FISHERMEN AND HUNTERS IN GREENLAND**

KNAPK expresses great pleasure in having the opportunity to address NAMMCO on the subject of “Sealing and Whaling in Greenland”. KNAPK has the following to say.

Concerning large whales

KNAPK strongly demand that the processing of quotas on larger whales such as minke, fin, humpback and Greenland right whales, come under the auspices of NAMMCO. The reason for this demand arose from the recent IWC meeting in Chile during the month of June 2008, when Greenland was denied a catch of humpback whales, despite there being absolutely nothing to hinder this administratively and scientifically. Greenland was thus unjustly denied their catch.

Greenlandic hunters and fishermen cannot accept that the IWC can deny quotas for these whales. The KNAPK arranged a hearing and the general opinion was that Greenland should leave the IWC in favour of moving to NAMMCO with respect to questions of allocation of quotas for larger whales.

The decision to deny a catch of humpback whales by the IWC and especially the EU members was made clearly on the basis of emotions. This can hardly be justified.

KNAPK is of the opinion that a sustainable harvest of any living resources is a human right for the Inuit in the Arctic, and an unjustifiable denial is cultural discrimination against our way of life and is oppressive behaviour. This is a violation of human rights and KNAPK is ready for this case to be brought to the Human Rights Commission.

In recent years the members of KNAPK have observed that the numbers of humpback whales are drastically increasing, which has had a negative effect in that fishermen are experiencing problems with pound nets.

We urge the member nations of NAMMCO to discuss our suggestion that NAMMCO becomes authorized to allocate quotas for whales, and it is our hope that you will take this suggestion into consideration.

KNAPK also kindly urges the Minister for Fisheries, Hunting and Agriculture, Mr Finn Karlsen, to work to establish allocation of quotas by NAMMCO through the Danish membership of the IWC. In this regard, we refer to Minister Finn Karlsen’s letter to the Danish Minister for Foreign Affairs, Mr Per Stig Møller, concerning establishing a working group.

KNAPK also urges member nations within NAMMCO to consider the topic of trade of whale products because this is an important topic and should be an item for discussion.

Concerning seals

KNAPK also conducted a hearing among its members concerning seals, and we will present you with the results of that hearing.

Ringed seals

The seal population in Central West Greenland between Sisimiut and Aasiaat is showing signs of change: their numbers are decreasing. The reason is climate change with changes in the pattern of the west ice. The population between Nuuk and Paamiut however, is reportedly showing signs of increasing in numbers, while the seal population in the Thule region does not seem to have undergone any changes.

Harp seals

The number of harp seals is reportedly constantly on the rise in Western Greenland, especially in the Thule region, and it is evident that harp seals are breeding off the waters of Sisimiut.

Young harp seals

Their numbers show evidence of increasing throughout Western Greenland and also that they have begun to breed in both Southern and Western Greenland. Young harp seals are staying in our waters until the month of December, where small and thin seals have been sighted.

All member organizations claim that there is an increasing number of seals in Greenlandic waters, especially harp seals. Breeding in Greenland waters is increasing.

The Greenlandic coast is vast and the dark time during winter often makes it difficult to conduct hunting. Catching seals with nets is conducted and is vital to hunters and their families. The seal is important in those areas where there are dogs, especially during the dark period. KNAPK would like to stress to NAMMCO that catching seals with nets is something the hunters cannot manage without. We therefore urge that this practice be allowed to continue unhindered.

In conclusion, KNAPK, on behalf of its members, wish NAMMCO fruitful discussions during this year's Annual Meeting.

AUDITED ACCOUNTS FOR 2007

1. PROFIT AND LOSS ACCOUNT (NOK)

	2007	2006
Income		
Contributions	3,275,375	3,119,399
Interest received (net)	36,930	19,581
Book Sale	3 603	5,100
Employers Tax	182,369	119,266
Employees	579,266	532,289
<i>Total Income</i>	4,077,543	3,795,635
Expenditure		
Secretariat costs	3,512,027	3,176,666
Meetings	82,807	75,771
Scientific Committee	452,288	471,689
Observer Scheme	45,326	90,771
Conference		97,987
<i>Total operating expenses</i>	4,092,448	3,912,884
Operating result	-14,905	-117,249

2. BALANCE SHEET 31 DECEMBER 2007 and 2006

Current assets		
Bank deposits	812,809	1,090,817
Outstanding claims	275,361	268,935
Total assets	1,088,170	1,359,752
Current liabilities		
Employers tax	58,995	38,737
Creditors	6,869	14,015
Other	297,148	566,937
Total liabilities	363,012	619,689
Equity		
Restricted equity (Relocation fund*)		200,000
Distributable equity (General reserve)	725,158	540,063
Total equity	725,158	740,063
<i>Total liabilities and equity</i>	1,088,170	1,359,752

* The relocation fund was dissolved in 2006.

PRESS RELEASE
4 September 2008

Regional management of whales and seals in the North Atlantic is the way forward

Whaling and sealing nations in the North Atlantic, meeting in Sisimiut, Greenland this week, confirmed their commitment to ensuring the sustainable utilisation of marine mammals through science-based management decisions, stressing the vital importance whales and seals have as renewable resources for economies and cultures across the region.

Greenland, Iceland, the Faroe Islands and Norway are members of NAMMCO – the North Atlantic Marine Mammal Commission, an international body for cooperation on the conservation, management and study of whales, seals and walrus in the North Atlantic, which held its 17th annual meeting this week in Greenland. The Commission was established in 1992 through an agreement which provides the organisation with the international competence to make recommendations to member countries on conservation and management measures for all stocks and species of whales and seals in the region.

In the light of interest expressed by Greenland in resuming a catch of humpback whales in its waters, the Cetacean Management Committee of NAMMCO recommended that the total quota of humpbacks in West Greenland in 2009, including by-catches, should not exceed 10 animals. This recommendation was based on the 2006 advice from the NAMMCO Scientific Committee that such a level of catch is well within sustainable limits, and noting that the most recent abundance estimate for West Greenland humpbacks from 2007 is higher than the previous estimate from 2005.

New abundance estimates for a number of other key whale stocks in the North Atlantic, including fin whales, minke whales and pilot whales are also expected to be completed in the very near future. These will be based on data from the comprehensive Trans North Atlantic Cetacean Sightings Survey carried out in July 2007 and coordinated by the NAMMCO Scientific Committee. T-NASS was the largest contiguous cetacean sighting survey of its kind ever conducted, spanning the North Atlantic with participation by Canada, Greenland, Iceland, Faroe Islands, Norway and Russia, and in partnership with surveys carried out at the same time in the USA and in European waters. Regular monitoring of trends in the size of whale populations and their distribution through sightings surveys are an essential tool in the management of whale stocks.

The results of the T-NASS survey, as well as the Icelandic minke whale research programme, fisheries surveys and other studies point to significant changes in North Atlantic marine ecosystems in recent years. NAMMCO has therefore requested its Scientific Committee to examine the latest information on these changes and the nature of predator-prey relations, and their implications for the management of all marine resources.

Sealing was also a major focus of this year's NAMMCO meeting. The Commission has requested a special meeting of experts to assess best practices in different forms of seal hunting. The NAMMCO Committee on Hunting Methods brings veterinary experts and hunters together on a regular basis to review and exchange experiences on methods and equipment used in whaling, sealing and walrus hunting and to make recommendations for improvements.

Although NAMMCO does not deal formally with trade issues, moves within the European Union towards imposing import bans on seal products prompted all member countries at the NAMMCO meeting this week to express their serious concerns about the implications such trade barriers can have for the responsible management and sustainable use of abundant seals stocks across the North Atlantic, and the economies of the many communities dependent on these resources.

The health benefits of consuming whale and seal oil were the subject of a specialist workshop organised by NAMMCO and its report on the most recent research findings and further research requirements was presented to the meeting. The health risks associated with high levels of pollutants in some species of small whales and seals warrants continued monitoring. But the documented health benefits of a diet rich in marine fats need to be balanced against these risks. NAMMCO members stressed that stronger global efforts to reduce pollution in the marine environment were crucial to ensuring that the high quality food provided by marine mammals can continue to contribute to both local and global food security.

In summing up the meeting and concluding her term as Chair of the NAMMCO Council, Kate Sanderson from the Ministry of Fisheries and Natural Resources in the Faroe Islands, said: “For our nations in the North Atlantic, with a fundamental stake in conserving our marine resources and utilising them sustainably, it is clear that NAMMCO’s regional approach to cooperation on the management of whaling and sealing is a constructive and effective way to work, as is our regional approach to fisheries cooperation in the region. Hopefully this can also serve as a model for other regions around the world. “

Halvard P. Johansen of the Ministry of Fisheries and Coastal Affairs in Norway was elected as the new chair of the NAMMCO Council.