

Agenda Item 18.2

Relations with other Bodies

IGOs – HELCOM, OSPAR, EC, IWC, IMO, CBD,  
ACCOBAMS, NAMMCO etc.

**Document 33**

**NAMMCO Statement**

**Action Requested**

- take note and comment

Submitted by

NAMMCO



**NOTE:**  
**IN THE INTERESTS OF ECONOMY, DELEGATES ARE KINDLY REMINDED TO BRING THEIR OWN  
COPIES OF DOCUMENTS TO THE MEETING**





## NORTH ATLANTIC MARINE MAMMAL COMMISSION

### STATEMENT TO THE 15<sup>TH</sup> MEETING OF THE ASCOBANS ADVISORY COMMITTEE

NAMMCO is an international body for co-operation on the conservation, management and study of marine mammals in the North Atlantic. The NAMMCO Agreement was signed in Nuuk, Greenland on 9 April 1992 by Norway, Iceland, Greenland and the Faroe Islands, and focuses on modern approaches to the study of the marine ecosystem as a whole, and to understanding better the role of marine mammals in this system.

NAMMCO provides a mechanism for cooperation on conservation and management for all species of cetaceans (whales and dolphins) and pinnipeds (seals and walrus) in the region, many of which have not before been covered by such an international agreement. Through regional cooperation, the member countries of NAMMCO aim to strengthen and further develop effective conservation and management measures for marine mammals. Such measures should be based on the best available scientific evidence, and should take into account both the complexity and vulnerability of the marine ecosystem, and the rights and needs of coastal communities to make a sustainable living from what the sea can provide.

NAMMCO has a Scientific Publications series that focuses on different topics of concern to NAMMCO member countries. These publications include peer-reviewed scientific papers by international experts, and the most recent publication - Volume 6 – *Grey Seals in the North Atlantic and the Baltic*, was the result of a working group on grey seals that was held in Reykjavik, Iceland, in April 2003. Two new volumes are currently in the pipeline: volume 7 on the North Atlantic Sightings Surveys, and volume 8 on harbour seals.

**The 16th Annual Meeting of NAMMCO** was held in Tromsø, 27 February – 1 March 2007 with agreement among the four member countries - the Faroes, Greenland, Iceland and Norway, on a number of issues related to the conservation, management and study of seal, walrus and whale stocks in the North Atlantic. The meeting was also attended by observers from the governments of Canada, Japan and Denmark and representatives from a number of inter-governmental and non-governmental organisations.

Among issues discussed and decisions taken at this 16th meeting, and of relevance to ASCOBANS, were the following:

#### **Listing of Endangered Species**

At the request of Iceland, the NAMMCO Scientific Committee carried out a review of the appropriateness of the current listing of the Central North Atlantic fin whales in Appendix I (threatened with extinction) of CITES (Convention on the International Trade in Endangered Species). The Scientific Committee concluded that this fin whale population does not meet any of the biological criteria for listing under Appendix I of CITES.

#### **Trans North Atlantic Sightings Survey (T-NASS) – 2007**

NAMMCO was pleased to see that plans for this survey, which is being organised by the Scientific Committee and includes participation from all NAMMCO member countries as well as Canada and the Russian Federation, are well underway. The survey will cover the northern North Atlantic from shore to shore in July this year and will be closely coordinated

with simultaneous surveys conducted off western Europe (CODA) and the USA. (Note that there is a status report of this completed T-NASS survey available now.)

### **Whales and Whaling**

The Management Committee on Cetaceans considered the latest scientific advice on whale stocks of interest to NAMMCO member countries and made a number of conclusions and recommendations, including:

- **Humpback whales off West Greenland**

NAMMCO accepted the conclusion of the Scientific Committee that a removal of up to 10 animals per year would not harm the stock off West Greenland and proposed that Greenland limit annual removals of humpback whales, including by-caught and struck and lost whales, to 10.
- **Narwhals and belugas**

NAMMCO has previously expressed grave concern on the apparent decline of stocks of narwhals and belugas in West Greenland, and while commending Greenland for the recent introduction of quotas, there is still serious concern that present takes of narwhals and belugas in West Greenland, according to the advice of both the NAMMCO Scientific Committee and the Canada/Greenland Joint Commission on Narwhal and Beluga Scientific Working Group are not sustainable and will lead to further depletion of the stocks.
- **Harbour porpoises**

Reliable estimates of abundance and estimates of directed and by-catch are lacking for this species from most NAMMCO member countries. NAMMCO therefore recommended that member countries conduct appropriate surveys and monitoring programmes to provide this information, so that the conservation status of harbour porpoises can be assessed.
- **Pilot whales**

Noting that it had been over 10 years since the Scientific Committee had concluded that the take of pilot whales in the Faroe Islands was sustainable, NAMMCO advised that updated estimates abundance and new information on biological parameters would be required to update the assessment. NAMMCO therefore recommended that this be taken into account in the planning of the T-NASS survey, and directed the Scientific Committee to develop a monitoring programme to gather basic biological data from animals taken in the hunt.
- **Fin whales in the Central North Atlantic**

In March 2006 the first joint workshop between the NAMMCO and IWC Scientific Committees was held, which dealt with the catch history, stock structure and abundance of North Atlantic fin whales. This Workshop was highly successful and NAMMCO looks forward to further scientific cooperation with the IWC.
- **Minke whales**

Noting that the sampling phase of the Icelandic Research Programme, which will provide required data on the feeding ecology of minke whales, will be completed this year, NAMMCO requested the Scientific Committee to review the new information and multi-species modelling as soon as these become available.

The next 17<sup>th</sup> Council meeting of NAMMCO will be held in Sisimiut, Greenland 2-4 September 2008.

For further information, contact NAMMCO

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