

Northwest Atlantic



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Report of the Sixth Meeting of the North Atlantic
Marine Mammal Commission (NAMMCO)

by

Delegate of Norway

NAFO was represented by Mrs. Lisbeth W. Plassa, Norway, as observer at the Sixth Meeting of NAMMCO.

The Sixth Meeting of the Council of NAMMCO was held in Tromsø from 27 to 29 March 1996. The meeting was attended by delegations from the member countries - the Faroes, Greenland, Iceland and Norway, as well as observers from the Governments of Canada, Denmark, Japan, Namibia and the Russian Federation. The Ministers of Fisheries from all NAMMCO member countries also attended the meeting, as did the Chairman of the Fisheries Committee of the Russian Federation. A number of inter-governmental and non-governmental organizations were also represented by observers at the meeting.

In his opening address, the Norwegian Minister of Fisheries, Jan Henry T. Olsen, expressed his hope for Canada and the Russian Federation to help further strengthen regional cooperation on marine mammal conservation and management by joining NAMMCO. Dr. Jan Jurgens, Permanent Secretary of the Ministry of Fisheries and Marine Resources of Namibia, gave a presentation on the management of seals in Namibia and expressed his desire for close cooperation between all countries with interests in ensuring the sustainable utilization of marine mammals.

Among major items dealt with by Council was the report of the Scientific Committee. Based on recent work carried out by the Scientific Committee, the Council agreed to the following conclusions presented by the Management Committee:

- It was confirmed that present removals of ringed seals in West Greenland and Canada are sustainable.
- Current combined catches of harp and hooded seals in Greenland and Canada are below estimates of replacement yields.

The Council was informed that work had begun in the Scientific Committee on the revision of abundance estimates in the light of results from the comprehensive North Atlantic Sightings Survey for cetaceans (NASS 95) carried out last summer. NASS-95 was planned and organized by the Scientific Committee.

The Council adopted the joint NAMMCO Control Scheme for the Hunting of Marine Mammals, which includes both common elements for national inspection of coastal whaling, as well as an international observation scheme for the hunting of all marine mammals. It is the intention of NAMMCO member countries to implement the Scheme or parts thereof by the 1997 hunting season.

The Council decided further to request the Scientific Committee to focus its attention on the food consumption of the minke whale, harp seal and hooded seal in the North Atlantic, with an emphasis on the study of the potential implications for commercially important fish stocks. As a follow-up to its recent assessment of the gray seal in the North Atlantic, the Scientific Committee was also requested to review the current state of knowledge of sealworm infestation, and to consider the need for comparative studies in the western, central and eastern North Atlantic coastal areas.

The Council identified the importance of accessible and reliable information on marine mammals. In this connection, it was agreed that in 1996 the NAMMCO Fund should be used for the development of a major information project on seals and sealing. It was also agreed that NAMMCO should publish the results of work generated through the Scientific Committee in the form of its own publication series.

The Council endorsed the Kyoto Declaration and Plan of Action on the Sustainable Contribution of Fisheries to Food Security.

The Council elected Arnór Haldórsson from Iceland as Vice-Chairman. The Faroe Islands offered to host the next annual meeting of the Council in Tórshavn in 1997.