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17TH ANNUAL MEETING - SEPTEMBER 1995

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

by

Delegate of Norway

NAFO was represented by Mr. Hallstein Rasmussen, Norway, as observer at the Fifth Meeting of NAMMCO.

The Council of the North Atlantic Marine Mammal Commission - NAMMCO - held its fifth meeting in Nuuk, Greenland, 21-23 February 1995. The Commission has as its objective to contribute through regional consultation and cooperation to the conservation, rational management and study of marine mammals in the North Atlantic. The members of the Council are the Faroe Islands, Greenland, Iceland and Norway.

The fifth meeting of the Council was attended by delegations from the member countries and observers from the Governments of Canada, Denmark, and Japan. Observers from ASCOBANS (the Agreement on the Conservation of Small Cetaceans in the Baltic and North Seas), the International Whaling Commission (IWC) and the Northwest Atlantic Fisheries Organization (NAFO) also participated at the meeting, as well as representatives from a number of non-governmental organizations.

Based on the comprehensive work carried out by the Scientific Committee in response to requests for advice from the Council, a number of specific conservation, management and research recommendations were made by the Council at this meeting:

- it was established that the population of northern bottlenose whales in the north Atlantic could sustain the traditional coastal drive hunt in the Faroe Islands and that removals of fewer than 300 bottlenose whales a year was not likely to lead to a decline in the stock;
- based on the Scientific Committee's recent extensive international review of the Atlantic walrus, and recognizing that priority should be given to further research on this species, it was recommended that Greenland take appropriate steps to arrest the decline of walrus along its west coast;
- further research was recommended on the ringed seal and the grey seal, with regard to general abundance, ecological factors and impacts of these species on the marine ecosystem;

- in relation to the importance of the further development of multi-species approaches to the management of marine resources, the Scientific Committee was requested to monitor stock levels and trends in stocks of all marine mammals in the North Atlantic;
- the 1995 North Atlantic Sightings Surveys (NASS-95) would provide updated abundance estimates for a number of species in the North Atlantic, and the Scientific Committee was requested to review results in the light of recent assessments of North Atlantic whale stocks.

It was also decided to request the Working Group on Inspection and Observation to further develop the details required for a reciprocal observer scheme for coastal whaling in the North Atlantic.

These recommendations, in particular with respect to the bottlenose whale and Atlantic walrus, have filled important gaps in international cooperation on the conservation and management of marine mammals in the North Atlantic.

The NAMMCO Secretariat would in the future function as a repository for data on small whales and seals in member countries. Plans are underway to develop a comprehensive database over these species in the Secretariat in Tromsø, Norway.

Other than maintaining and enhancing existing relations with a number of other international organizations, the Council also agreed to establish working relations with the Canada/Greenland Joint Commission on the Conservation and Management of Narwhal and Beluga.

The Council elected Mr. Halvard Johansen from Norway as its new Chairman for the following two-year term. The Scientific Committee had elected Mr. Tore Haug from Norway as its new Chairman.