

# NORTH ATLANTIC MARINE MAMMAL COMMISSION

## Seventeenth Meeting of the Council

1-4 September 2008, Sisimiut, Greenland (NAMMCO/17)

OGS/- 03.09.08.

## NAMMCO – Trade Issues

### Statement by Odd Gunnar Skagestad on behalf of the Norwegian Delegation

NAMMCO was founded on the principle of *sustainable use* of renewable natural resources. Not only in the biological or ecological sense: The harvesting of marine living resources should also be *economically sustainable*: The industry should be viable and contribute to positive value creation. This means that *trade*, including international trade in whale products and seal products – as with regard to the products of other legitimate industries - should be allowed and encouraged.

That is, at least *in principle*. In reality there are certain unfortunate facts that we have to take into account.

In the International Whaling Commission (IWC) there is a tendency to distinguish between viz. “commercial” and so-called “aboriginal subsistence” whaling. The 1946 International Convention on the Regulation of Whaling does not recognize such a distinction – apart from its provisions (Article VIII) concerning scientific permits, the Convention recognizes only one kind of whaling – the sustainable kind. Nevertheless in the IWC “Commercial” whaling is condemned as a sinful activity, while “subsistence” whaling is seen as somewhat more acceptable. The point of this distinction is that no commercialism i.e. no *trade* is supposed to be involved. One may of course *pretend* that it makes a difference in the moral sense if the hunter kills the animal and consumes it on the spot instead of trading the products with other people, but this is hypocritical and absurd. Such a distinction is artificial and dangerous, and should not be accepted. In my view, such a distinction between commercial and aboriginal subsistence whaling is simply wrong. In both cases we deal with human beings legitimately making a living from

utilizing natural resources. What counts, is whether we deal with sustainable harvesting of nature's surplus or unsustainable exploitation of these resources.

Thus, *trade* is a legitimate and indeed necessary component of the sustainable use of whale resources. So, what's the problem?

The problem is that international trade has been disrupted and virtually destroyed for political reasons, as a result of the destructive activities of well-organized and articulate interest-groups – so-called environmentalists and “animal-rights” fanatics who have succeeded in creating an unholy alliance between the anti-whaling majority of the IWC and the anti-trade forces that dominate the Convention on International Trade in Endangered Species of Wild Fauna and Flora – the CITES.

I don't think I need to say more with regard to the situation concerning international trade in whale products – this sad history is well known to everybody present here.

But we also know that the attacks on trade in products from marine mammals are not confined to the trade in whale products. Powerful forces are also out to destroy the sealing industry. We are especially concerned at the developments in the European Union – the EU. The EU Commission has recently submitted a proposal to ban all trade in seal products, - with two exceptions: (1) Products from Inuit seal hunts; and (2) Products where it can be ascertained that the hunt is conducted in a way that fulfils very strict and comprehensive condition i.a. to ensure that humane killing methods are applied, with a minimum of suffering on the part of the animal.

How these requirements are going to be implemented or practiced, we do not yet know. Obviously, we all agree that humane hunting method should be use. But we maintain that the proposed ban is in clear violation of international trade agreements, such as the GATT and WTO regulations. And there is no doubt that the ultimate aim of the trade ban is to destroy the sealing industry completely by destroying the trade.

Why do I say all these things which are well known to us all?

I think it is important to underline these problems because NAMMCO *has a role to play*.

NAMMCO should be in the forefront of opposing any moves to introduce further restrictions on international trade in marine mammals products. We should do this as a body and as individual member countries. We should follow a clear and consistent policy in this regard wherever and whenever we encounter this problem – in global and international for a (such as the IWC and the CITES) as well as in

regional fora, and in our dealings with regional bodies such as the EU, and in our dealings with individual countries.

But in order to be credible, we cannot restrict ourselves to criticizing the behavior of others. If we are serious in demanding of others that they allow free and unrestricted trade in whale and seal products, we must be equally consistent in our own practices. We cannot afford to apply double standards.

So, in conclusion, I would like to remind all and every one of us to take a hard look on our own policies, and do our utmost to promote international trade in whale and seal products, bearing in mind that such trade is vitally important for the whaling and sealing industries to survive in the modern world.