

Mr. Chairman, distinguished Delegates & dear Friends,

On behalf of the Government of the Kingdom of Norway, whom I represent in my capacity of Commissioner to the International Whaling Commission (IWC), I have the honour and pleasure to express my sincere thanks to the World Council of Whalers for inviting me to participate in your 3rd general Assembly, and also my thanks to the Treaty of Waitangi Fisheries Commission for their hospitality in providing this exciting and pleasant venue.

Norway is the only IWC member country that carries out so-called commercial whaling. We have, therefore, frequently been the target of attacks from the anti-whaling lobby. Sometime this is a bit tiresome, and makes us feel a bit lonesome. But then it feels good to remember that we are not alone in a hostile world; to know that we have friends – people who share our values and with whom we can work together. And we certainly appreciate the good work carried out for our joint cause by the World council of Whalers and its constituent member organizations.

Norway's whaling policy must be understood in terms of two basic elements or considerations:

1. The concept of sound environment conservation policies; and
2. The concept of rational resource management, based on the best available scientific advice.

These are actually two aspects of the same issue. And the key element in both is the concept of sustainability - sustainable management of our environment and its natural resources. Without sustainable use, conservation for its own sake makes little sense. Norway has a serious approach to its environmental policies. We are not just looking for cheap so-called "green" alibis. We maintain that in order to be consistent and credible, sound environment policies must include rational resource management, - and vice versa.

Which means – inter alia – sustainable harvesting of renewable natural resources. Since whales form an important part of the whole marine eco-system, whaling

constitutes a necessary component of our management – our multi-species management - of the marine living resources.

I am pleased to note that the Sustainable Use of marine Resources is a central theme of the conference. We have an exciting programme ahead of us, and I am looking forward to interesting and fruitful presentations and discussions!

Mr. Chairman;

In addition to the message from my Government, I have one obligation to carry out. Before leaving Norway for N.Z., I promised Mr. Jan Kristiansen (Chairman of the Norwegian Association of Whalers) and Mr. Steinar Bastesen (Past Chairman and now Member of Parliament), to convey the following message of greetings from the Association to the General Assembly:

”Dear Friends & Fellow Whalers,

The Norwegian Association of Whalers would have wished that we could have been together with you these days to discuss whaling issues, but when we finally succeeded in sorting out the financial obstacles, our members were already busily engaged in the fishing operations that have to be carried out by the end of the year in order to utilize their fishing quotas.

This year’s whaling operations yielded mediocre results for Norwegian whalers. We are still struggling with regulations which reduce profitability while at the same time the catch quotas are too low. We hope that next year’s catching season will mark an improvement.

The ban on export of minke whale products also leads to reduced profitability. We the whalers together with the coastal communities are leaning on the authorities to open up for export, so that whale products can be traded like other commodities.

Although this year’s CITES meeting was a slap in the face for us, we cross our fingers for a positive decision.

The Norwegian Association of Whalers extends its warm greetings to the World Council of Whalers, with its best wishes for a succesful meeting.

Signed, Jan Kristiansen (Chairman)”

Thank you for your attention.