



Animal Welfare Institute

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January, 27, 2022

The Right Honourable Múte Bourup Egede
Prime Minister of Greenland
P.O. Box 1015
3900 Nuuk

By mail and electronic mail: govsec@nanoq.gl

RE: Hunting quotas for narwhals facing imminent extinction in southeast Greenland

Dear Prime Minister,

I write on behalf of the undersigned animal protection and conservation organisations representing tens of millions of citizens around the world. We would like to congratulate the Naalakkersuisut for adopting several important conservation measures since the Inuit Ataqatigiit party came to power last year, including the ban on uranium mining and the suspension of oil exploration given the potentially severe environmental impacts of these activities on the fragile Arctic environment upon which people and wildlife depend.

In contrast to these positive steps, we are deeply concerned that the Naalakkersuisut recently issued hunting quotas for 50 narwhals from three populations in Southeast Greenland that are facing imminent extinction due to hunting pressure. This decision contradicts the recent advice of both Pinngortitaleriffik and the North Atlantic Marine Mammal Commission's (NAMMCO) Scientific Committee^{1,2} to reduce the quotas to zero.

Most recently, in October 2021, an ad hoc Working Group of the NAMMCO Scientific Committee on East Greenland narwhals stated unequivocally that an immediate reduction of quotas for narwhals in all three management areas in Southeast Greenland is needed "to avoid extinction of these stocks in the near future".³ Specifically, the working group warned that:

"with continued catches at the total 2021 quota level, there is a 30% risk that the hunt causes the population of narwhals at Ittoqqortoormiit to go extinct by 2025, a risk that increases to 74% by 2028. This risk of hunting-induced extinction is removed, i.e., reduced to 0%, if there are no removals after 2021. With continued catches at the total 2021 quota level, there is a 34% risk that the hunt causes the population of narwhals around Tasiilaq to go extinct by 2025, a risk that increases to 62% by 2028. This risk of hunting-induced extinction is removed, i.e., reduced to 0%, if there are no removals after 2021".

¹ Report of the 26th Meeting of the NAMMCO Scientific Committee. 2019. Available at: https://nammco.no/wp-content/uploads/2017/01/final-report_sc26-2019_rev230120.pdf. Page 42

² Report of the 27th Meeting of the NAMMCO Scientific Committee. 2021. Available at: https://nammco.no/wp-content/uploads/2017/01/final-report_sc27_2021.pdf. Page 34

³ NAMMCO-North Atlantic Marine Mammal Commission (2021). Report of the Ad hoc Working Group on Narwhal in East Greenland. October 2021, Copenhagen, Denmark. Available at https://nammco.no/wp-content/uploads/2021/12/final-report_negwg_2021.pdf

Concerns about the sustainability of this hunt were also raised at the last meeting of NAMMCO's Management Committee on Cetaceans (MCC) in March 2021. However, Greenland informed the Committee that the Cabinet had determined that "an immediate reduction to zero quota would threaten food supply and cultural continuity for the communities in East Greenland".⁴ In fact, narwhal mattak is "by far the most valuable hunting product in Greenland" and is exported from east Greenland to larger communities in southwest Greenland where the retail price per kilo has increased exponentially from 50 Dkr/kg in 1982 to 499 Dkr/kg in 2019.⁵ As the working group noted, this high commercial value provides a strong incentive to continue hunting narwhals in east Greenland.⁶

The working group "strongly reiterated its recommendation of zero catches of narwhals in all three management areas in Southeast Greenland and that it be implemented immediately to avoid extinction of these stocks in the near future."⁷ As Dr. Fernando Ugarte, department head at Pinngortitaleriffik, recently told Greenlandic press, this is the first time a NAMMCO working group has assessed that a marine mammal population will be eradicated if catches continue.⁸

We strongly urge the Naalakkersuisut to heed the advice of scientific experts, including its own advisers; immediately cancel narwhal hunting quotas for southeast Greenland and implement the other management and conservation recommendations of the Working Group on Narwhal in East Greenland set out in Chapter 9 of its October 2021 report.

Sincerely,



Susan Millward
Interim Executive Director
Animal Welfare Institute
On behalf of:

Anti-Whaling Society Inc.
Augusto Carneiro Institute
Australian Marine Conservation Society
Australians for Animals Int.
Brazilian Humpback Whale Institute
Brazilian Institute for Nature Conservation - IBRACON
Campaign Whale
CATCA Environmental and Wildlife Society
Center for Biological Diversity
Cetacean Society International
Centro de Conservación Cetacea
Conservación de Mamíferos Marinos de Mexico - COMARINO
Dolphin Connection
Eastern Caribbean Coalition for Environmental Awareness

Fundación Cethus
Humane Society International
Instituto de Conservación de Ballenas
International Marine Mammal Project of Earth Island Institute
legSeas
Marine Mammal Alliance Nantucket
MEER e.V.
Morigenos - Slovenian Marine Mammal Society
OceanCare
Oceanic Preservation Society
ORCA
Origami Whales Project
People for Nature and Peace
Peninsula Citizens for the Protection of Whales
Pro Wildlife
Society for the Conservation of Marine Mammals, Denmark
VIVA Instituto Verde Azul - Ilhabela / Brasil
Whale and Dolphin Conservation

⁴ NAMMCO-North Atlantic Marine Mammal Commission (2021). Report of the Management Committee for Cetaceans. March, 2021. Available at: https://nammco.no/wp-content/uploads/2017/08/report_2021-mcc-nammco28.pdf. Page 9.

⁵ M.P. Heide-Jørgensen. The economic incentive behind narwhal hunting and the hunter-biologist cooperation in Greenland. 2021. NAMMCO SC/28/NEGWG/06

⁶ Supra 3. Page 4.

⁷ Supra 3. Page 31.

⁸ Havbiologer advarer om mulig udryddelse af narhval-bestanden i Østgrønland. 30 December, 2021. Available at: <https://www.dr.dk/nyheder/seneste/havbiologer-advarer-om-mulig-udryddelse-af-narhval-bestanden-i-oestgroenland>