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Statement to 68th IWC Annual Meeting in Portoroz, Slovenia

Statement from KNAPK to IWC's 68th annual meeting in Portoroz, Slovenia.

KNAPK would initially like to thank the International Whaling Commission for approval as NGO observer status in the commission.

KNAPK represents fishermen and hunters in Greenland, and in its 69th year the organization has been Greenland's most widespread industrial organization, and thus the organization most represented in Greenland's settlements.

KNAPK is a strong advocate for securing the rights of fishermen and hunters to fish and catch. And the organization reserves the right to fight for these rights in all forums and organizations.

Right to freedom and decent life, income and living standards

According to the International Convention on Human Rights, people have the right to freedom, decent life, decent income and secure good standard of living.

This also applies to our right to feed ourselves.

Indigenous peoples must therefore have their voice and representation in all relevant bodies of the IWC. Indigenous peoples come before everything else.

It is not enough to have these inalienable rights. Now the IWC must also work to ensure that our rights are translated into practice. So our knowledge and experience is expressed in the commission's work.

If these elements of rights are not recognized, we must consider the possibilities so that our wishes and demands are heard by the IWC. It is important to listen to our voice.

Best practice must be compliance with human rights. KNAPK proposes the establishment of a group which oversees that the rights of the indigenous people are respected in working groups, committees and the commission.

Inclusion of user knowledge and make use of it

The members of KNAPK are people who spend most of their lives out in nature and the environment, which is why their knowledge and experience is enormous. Not just about wildlife, but to a large extent about the environment and nature. This also largely applies to climate change, as the effects are experienced first-hand.

There is a lot of focus on the scientific study of marine mammals. It is excellent with a scientific work. But they forget to take into account the users of nature and the environment, who have the most experience and knowledge, namely the hunters and fishermen.

KNAPK therefore works to raise the standard of users' contributions to greater knowledge about marine mammals and fish. Efforts must therefore be made to understand the importance of user knowledge, and it must be translated into use if there is to be a greater balance between science and traditional knowledge.

The inclusion of traditional knowledge is largely lacking. When traditional knowledge is used, the understanding between scientists and users will improve. So you don't leave out important actors.

There is a need to define user knowledge and how to make use of it.

Best practice can only be achieved by involving the users, the fishermen and the hunters in the scientific studies and work, and not least prior to consultations.

Free, prior and informed consent

The Indigenous Peoples Convention is about free, prior and informed consent prior to all measures and projects affecting indigenous peoples.

To a large extent, this also applies to Inuit in the Arctic, who are affected by their right to exploit living resources on land and at sea. If the rights of the Inuit are to be respected, an even greater degree of consideration must be given to the rights of the Inuit, also when it comes to whaling.

Interaction between science and traditional knowledge does not exist because traditional knowledge is not recognized on an equal footing with science.

If the rights of the Inuit are not respected, this will appear as a reluctance to recognize the rights of indigenous peoples. One is led to call this reluctance a form of imperialism used to oppress indigenous peoples. It's not okay.

We live in 2022, where indigenous peoples have a wide range of rights that their governments must work for. Theory is one thing. Practice shows that the rights of indigenous peoples are not respected when it comes to issuing quotas that benefit indigenous peoples.

Greenlands position in the international organizations has to be free

Despite 43 years of home rule and self-government, Greenland is still subject to Denmark, despite the introduction of self-government a long time ago.

Greenland is thus still not its own representative in the International Whaling Commission, despite many years of competence to make its own decisions to enter into agreements.

The competence for fishing and hunting has long since been taken over. Therefore, Greenland must have its own representation. Greenland has its own parliament, which is the legislature. Greenland has its own government, which governs. Greenland is responsible for fishing and hunting.

When it comes to international organizations such as the International Whaling Commission and other international organizations and forums, Greenland is subject to delegations under Denmark. Despite the fact that Denmark is not a whaling nation. Despite the fact that Denmark is a member of the European Union, which sometimes fights Greenland's interests in whaling matters.

These confusing signals are neither timely nor appropriate.

When Greenland possesses competences to make its own decisions, this must also be respected in practice. Therefore, Greenland deserves its own representation.

As long as Greenland does not have its own voice, this must be described as imperialism on the part of Denmark. The colonial era is long gone. Now sad remnants of this blot on history must also be wiped away, so that Greenland can have its own representation and vote internationally.

KNAPK will work actively within IWC

KNAPK has obtained NGO observer status in the IWC, and we thank you for this opportunity.

We will be champions for the rights of indigenous peoples and that these are also respected in the IWC.

We will seek influence when it comes to Greenland's interests, but also the interests of Inuit in general in the Arctic. And this also applies to other peoples who depend on, among other things, whaling for their business, economy and culture.

Sustainable exploitation of living resources

We represent fishermen and hunters who have centuries of whaling experience. Whaling has existed for thousands of years, when Inuit have lived in Greenland and the Arctic. This tradition and right is therefore very important to KNAPK, which considers it important to articulate traditional knowledge and traditional profession, which whaling is for us.

We protect our nature and wildlife, where sustainable use is the key to all use of living resources. The first written down example of sustainable exploitation comes from the Qaanaaq district, where the Hunter's Council laid down written regulations as far back as 1917 on how the catch should be organised, where, when and not least how.

In general, sustainable use of resources always means that discards must be as small as possible. And that applies to all animals and fish.

Future consultations on whaling quotas

KNAPK provides its expertise in whaling. The organization possesses a great deal of knowledge about catching, which is currently in short supply.

The consultation of traditional trappers must be based on the use of traditional knowledge that can support the scientific work carried out by the IWC Scientific Committee.

KNAPK brings other perspectives that we believe are important for IWC's future. We invite you to a good collaboration that is based on dialogue, inclusion and reconciliation of knowledge between science and traditional knowledge.

When traditional knowledge is involved, IWC will stand strong, since our knowledge is rooted in history, traditions and principles that are only acquired through self-taught experience handed down by our ancestors.

Allocation of future whaling quotas

KNAPK is confident that the IWC will honor its obligations to listen to the rights of indigenous peoples.

This also applies to whaling quotas, where Greenland's share and quotas have been at a level that KNAPK can live with.

Nikkulaat Jeremiassen
President