

**Press Release**

## **Faroese Fisheries Council proposes to continue dolphin slaughter**

***Wädenswil/Switzerland, 11th July 2022.* The Faroes Fisheries Council has proposed a half-hearted regulation of the dolphin hunt suggesting a quota of 500 white-sided dolphins for 2022 and 2023. The push for a quota, rather than a ban comes in the aftermath of a mass dolphin killing in Skálafjørður last year where 1,428 animals were killed. OceanCare strongly opposes such a quota and calls for a ban on the hunting of dolphins and pilot whales and for this cruel, outdated and unnecessary practice that is killing marine mammals in European waters to cease.**

According to an announcement made at the weekend, the Fisheries Council of the Faroese proposes a maximum quota of 500 white-sided dolphins for the rest of 2022 and 2023, which would then be subject to a further review by NAMMCO in 2023 or 2024. The announcement also states that the fishing committee in NAMMCO has recommended the development of a special tool for killing dolphins similar to the one for pilot whales which was recognized as unsuitable for their smaller cousins.

“When you think of what a worst-case scenario can be and then it becomes clear that it is even worse, this is how we read the current recommendation for setting a catch quota of up to 500 Atlantic-Whitesided Dolphins by the Faroese Islands. It is actually higher than the average annual killing number of this species in the past decade”, says Nicolas Entrup, Director of International Relations at OceanCare.

He adds: “It’s just a few days gone that the international community collectively called for intensifying efforts to reach the sustainable development goal towards healthy oceans, including the protection of marine biodiversity. The announcement by the Faroese government to sign off the killing of up to 500 white-sided dolphins per year is a slap into the face of any efforts to protect marine species”.

“We do not believe that the setting of any quota for the Atlantic white-sided dolphins can be properly substantiated scientifically. There is significant lack of knowledge about these dolphins in general and there may be several distinct populations within the North Atlantic. Available abundance estimates have a number of uncertainties, ambiguities and weaknesses which make them unsuitable for use in assessment of human impacts, including directed takes’, says Mark Simmonds, Director of Science, OceanCare.

Additionally, whilst OceanCare appreciates that human cultures and their traditions be protected, this should not be at the cost of severe animal suffering. In addition, whale and



dolphin hunting in the Faroe Islands is now conducted using modern motor vessels and modern forms of communication to control the driving of the animals. This is far from the traditional approach to whale hunting. Besides, the animals that roam the wider NE Atlantic region do not belong to any nation or community and the deliberate killing undermines the conservation efforts ongoing elsewhere in European waters to protect these same marine mammal species.

As the Faroe Islands are an autonomous part of the Danish Kingdom, OceanCare calls on the Danish government to actively engage in this matter to convince the authorities and the people of the Faroe Islands to meet the objectives of the biodiversity legislation of the European Union which provides protection to all cetacean species and includes the prohibition of direct takes.

The Faroes hunt is the subject of a UK parliamentary debate happening **this afternoon** in Westminster Hall in the Houses of Parliament.

"We will not rest until the pilot whales and all the other marine mammals are safe from the hunt. Now is the time to embark on a new path and we hope that the Faroese can find other ways to celebrate their special relationship with the sea," Mark Simmonds, Director of Science at OceanCare concludes.

### **Background Notes:**

On 12<sup>th</sup> September 2021, at least 1,428 adult Atlantic white-sided dolphins and dozens of juveniles were driven ashore and cruelly killed in Skálafjørður in the east of the Faroe Islands in the Atlantic. Directed hunts on pilot whales, another dolphin species, continued just a few days later.

A statement just issued by the Faroes government shows that an annual catch limit of 500 white-sided dolphins has now been proposed by the Ministry of Fisheries on a provisional basis for 2022 and 2023. The proposal was put forward for public comment on 8 July and is expected to be implemented as an executive order by 25 July.

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### **Further information and links:**

- Link announcement by Fisheries Council: <https://dagur.fo/fiskimalaradid-i-mesta-lagi-500-springarar-kunnu-haldast-til-um-arid>

- Official numbers of whale and dolphin hunts: <https://heimabeiti.fo/2013-2022>
- Video of the dolphin hunt on September 12<sup>th</sup>, 2021: [https://youtu.be/IB9E\\_PuHqFU](https://youtu.be/IB9E_PuHqFU)
- OceanCare's Report UNDER PRESSURE, Chapter 5 on the direct hunts on whales and dolphins in European waters: [https://www.oceancare.org/wp-content/uploads/2021/04/UNDER-PRESSURE\\_Chapter-05\\_whaling\\_low-res\\_web.pdf](https://www.oceancare.org/wp-content/uploads/2021/04/UNDER-PRESSURE_Chapter-05_whaling_low-res_web.pdf)
- Petition by OceanCare addressed to the European Commission and the European Member States: <https://www.oceancare.org/en/topical/petitions/faroe-islands/>
- News with further information about Atlantic White Sided dolphins: <https://www.oceancare.org/en/a-hunted-species-what-we-really-know-about-atlantic-white-sided-dolphins/>
- Scientific Report by Susannah Calderan on Population Status and Structure of Atlantic-White Sided Dolphins: [https://www.oceancare.org/wp-content/uploads/2022/02/AtlanticWhiteSidedDolphinsNEAtlantic-Calderan-2021\\_FINAL.pdf](https://www.oceancare.org/wp-content/uploads/2022/02/AtlanticWhiteSidedDolphinsNEAtlantic-Calderan-2021_FINAL.pdf)
- Webnews OceanCare with an update on the dolphin hunts in the Faroes (dated 16<sup>th</sup> February 2022): <https://www.oceancare.org/en/update-on-the-dolphin-hunts-in-the-faroese-islands/>
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### **Denmark's Role**

The Faroe Islands are an autonomic region within the Danish Kingdom. They are not a part of the European Union. However, Denmark represents the interests of the Faroe Islands and Greenland within the framework of international multilateral environmental agreements as well as in negotiations for a common position among EU member states. Accordingly, these vested interests have often been a barrier towards defining a more progressive position of the EU bloc within the International Whaling Commission (IWC).

### **Assessment led by the Prime Minister of the Faroe Islands**

Reports from the island show that many people in the islands were deeply unhappy with the conduct of the hunt on 12<sup>th</sup> September and that it has spawned considerable debate there. An opinion poll made soon after the event showed a majority opposed to the dolphin hunting.

The Faroese Prime Minister initiated a review on 16<sup>th</sup> September in response<sup>1</sup>. Four days after the tragic hunt he said: *"We take this matter very seriously. Although these hunts are considered sustainable, we will be looking closely at the dolphin hunts, and what part they should play in Faroese society. The government has decided to start an evaluation of the regulations on the catching of Atlantic white-sided dolphins."*

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<sup>1</sup> <https://www.government.fo/en/news/news/dolphin-hunt-to-be-evaluated/>