

Opening Statement made by the North Pacific Anadromous Fish Commission

Mr President, Mr Secretary, distinguished delegates, ladies and gentlemen:

On behalf of the North Pacific Anadromous Fish Commission (NPAFC), I would like to thank NASCO for inviting NPAFC to the Twenty-Fourth Annual Meeting at the very scenic spot of Bar Harbor.

Last year at our NPAFC Annual Meeting in Vancouver (Canada), we had a meeting with the NASCO Secretariat, and decided on several important issues. First, we agreed that the international joint symposium on marine mortality of salmon will be scheduled for the spring of 2010 in Europe. Second, in order to promote an early exchange of information between the scientists in the Atlantic and Pacific, and to raise the profile of the research program on salmon at sea, Special Sessions in conjunction with NASCO and NPAFC meetings in 2007 and 2008 were proposed. According to this agreement, a Special Session is scheduled at this Annual Meeting on the morning of June 7. We appreciate the NASCO Secretariat for its sincere response. This Special Session should be a good opportunity for both organizations to build up the research programs and partnership.

The NPAFC cooperative research program on the Bering–Aleutian Salmon International Survey (BASIS) 2002-2006 has learned much about the migratory habits of salmon and about the key factors influencing their growth and survival. To review the BASIS results and make a follow-up program, we have decided to hold the international BASIS symposium in Seattle (Washington, USA) in the fall of 2008. This symposium will focus on the effects of climate change on salmon production in the ocean. The first announcement and call for papers will be distributed this coming August. Scientists from the Atlantic will be invited to this symposium to continue the exchange of information.

Mr President, I wish you a very successful meeting and look forward to our cooperation over the coming years. Thank you.

Opening Statement made by Non-Government Organizations

Mr Deputy Assistant Secretary, Mr President, Delegates and Colleagues:

Since we are in North America, can I start by welcoming five new NGOs who are based here:

Clean Catch
College of the Atlantic
Connecticut River Salmon Association
Atlantic Salmon Conservation Foundation
Marine and Environmental Law Institute

Mr President, there are many pressing issues facing wild Atlantic salmon today and NASCO must be at the heart of conservation and restoration programmes for the species. That is why the NGO Group has campaigned for a more transparent and accountable Organization as part of the 'Next Steps' process. NASCO has delivered on the transparency issue, and of course we applaud that, but for us the bottom line is how effective the Parties are at delivering practical measures to implement NASCO agreements and guidelines, and how these impact on the status of stocks.

The key recommendation in this regard was that relating to the drafting of Implementation Plans; plans should contain a framework of commitments for management actions in line with NASCO agreements, coupled with associated timeframes. This would provide measurable outputs and enable critical evaluation of Parties' progress towards implementing agreements.

The results of the *Ad hoc* Review Committee will be examined in detail in a Special Session this afternoon. The results are revealing. Some Parties' plans seem to demonstrate a lack of engagement with NASCO agreements in their domestic salmon management policies. This criticism can also be extended to the NGO community.

The almost complete absence of commitments to action NASCO agreements with associated timeframes from the Plans of some Parties was also deeply disappointing. Many of the outstanding issues of concern to NGOs on both sides of the Atlantic, such as the remaining mixed stock coastal fisheries both in North America and Europe, the continuing impact of aquaculture on wild salmon, and the continued loss of salmon habitat in some countries, should have been addressed in these Implementation Plans; we are dismayed that in many cases they have not been, and we will be raising specific examples in the appropriate Commissions.

This is particularly appropriate for us meeting here in Maine, close to some of the most endangered stocks in North America. We very much hope that Parties will undertake to revise their plans in the light of examples of best practice, which the Review Group will identify.

Similarly, the apparent lack of commitment from some Parties to the SALSEA programme, which is investigating the key issue of survival in the marine environment, is disappointing.

However, we want to be positive about the whole 'Next Steps' review; in NASCO we are at the cutting edge of reform in international treaty organisations, and we want to encourage the process to continue. We will be picking up the theme of partnership between government and NGOs in promoting NASCO in general, and SALSEA in particular, later in the meeting.

In that vein there is much good news, in fact too much to list in this opening statement, to report from many countries on both sides of the Atlantic, and we will be highlighting that in the appropriate Commissions.

But I particularly want to congratulate the government of the Republic of Ireland on their decision to end drift netting for salmon at the end of the 2006 season - a decision we have campaigned for over the past 20 years - but is nevertheless welcome as it will benefit salmon stocks all over southern Europe, not least in Ireland itself. The Irish Government also took other robust measures, including the closing of two-thirds of its rivers for the killing of salmon.

Mr President, in finally ending drift netting, Ireland took a difficult political decision, with significant economic and social consequences for parts of its population, but they put salmon conservation first. That message should be uppermost in our minds throughout this meeting.

Thank you for your attention.