

***Welcoming Statement made by Dr William J Brennan
Deputy Assistant Secretary of Commerce for International Affairs,
National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration, USA***

Good morning and welcome to the Twenty-Fourth Annual Meeting of the North Atlantic Salmon Conservation Organization. It is a privilege for the United States to host this meeting, and on behalf of my government, Commerce Secretary Gutierrez, and the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration, I would like to welcome the NASCO Secretariat, and NASCO's distinguished Commissioners, delegates, and observers. I would especially like to welcome NASCO President Ken Whelan, and thank him for inviting me to join you.

It is indeed an honor for me in my capacity as a United States Government representative to welcome you to my country, but it is with great personal pride that I am also able to welcome you to my home State of Maine.

I grew up just down the coast from here and for many years prior to my appointment to Washington, I was the Commissioner of Maine's Department of Marine Resources, which is now headed by my good friend and one of your Commissioners, George Lapointe.

During my time as the State's Commissioner, I was co-chair of Maine's Atlantic Salmon Commission and I had also been a NASCO commissioner. With that background, both personal and professional, I have great interest in, and affinity for, the issues that you address.

The last commercial salmon fishery in the United States was on the Penobscot River here in Maine, and it closed in the 1940s. Despite significant reductions in harvest and substantial sacrifices by all of the NASCO Parties, adult returns to home water continue to be low. All signs point to some common factors affecting salmon stocks while at sea.

The plight of Atlantic salmon highlights how little we know about the ocean and how critical it is to improve our knowledge and understanding. The NASCO Parties should be commended for recognizing the critical importance of international cooperation and collaboration to better understand marine migration and attempt to identify factors affecting survival through the SALSEA initiative.

The conservation of Atlantic salmon requires understanding and management of complex ecosystems. We recognize the need to restore connectivity between freshwater, estuarine and marine systems to allow for the unimpeded completion of the lifecycle for diadromous species. While restoration of this ecosystem is our goal, Atlantic salmon play a key role as a keystone indicator species. They provide us with a barometer of the health of the riverine, estuarine and marine environments and the current prognosis is not good.

For the benefit of all living marine resources, NOAA is strongly committed to increasing our understanding of marine ecosystems. We recognize the importance of understanding the physical, biological and chemical components of these systems. Improvements in technology provide us with tools and techniques that have greatly increased our knowledge of marine systems and provide great promise for unlocking the mystery of salmon at sea.

Much attention has been focused on climate change and the potential for significant and profound effects on marine resources, including Atlantic salmon throughout the North Atlantic. NOAA's climate goal is to understand and describe climate variability and change to enhance society's ability to plan and respond.

The focus is on providing decision makers with a predictive understanding of the global climate system and to "translate" this information so the public can incorporate the information and products into their decisions. These outcomes are achieved through focused research to understand key climate processes, improved modeling capabilities, the development and delivery of climate information services, and through the implementation of a global observing system.

To that end, the United States is committed to the Global Earth Observation System of Systems or GEOSS. This system has the potential to provide us with the information we need to make sound policy decisions. GEOSS is a comprehensive, integrated and sustained Earth Observation System that will improve our global ability to, among other things, protect and monitor our ocean resource.

The full benefits of GEOSS and the implementation of an ecosystem approach depend upon consistently reported and accurate data and I am pleased to report that all NASCO Contracting Parties are among the 69 members of this important intergovernmental organization. As evidence of NASCO's commitment to the collection of accurate data, you will be having a Special Session this afternoon focusing on unreported catch.

Despite the significant challenges that face Atlantic salmon throughout their complex lifecycle, we remain optimistic about their future in the United States and abroad. Here in the US, we have a strong federal team with US Fish and Wildlife Service and NOAA Fisheries working closely together with our equally committed State partners.

NOAA is particularly pleased with its close and collaborative working relationship here in Maine with the Maine Department of Marine Resources and the Atlantic Salmon Commission. These federal and State efforts are complemented by extensive activities of our local partners including watershed councils, conservation organizations, industry representatives, and local citizens.

Despite the fact that we have no Atlantic salmon fisheries in the United States, we value this species highly. As an example of our strong commitment, the President's Budget for FY2008 includes \$10M to assist in the purchase and removal of main stem dams on the Penobscot River. The collaborative and cooperative spirit within NASCO also provides reason for optimism.

NASCO should be commended for the hard work, dedication and commitment of the Secretariat, President, the Parties and Observers. The work NASCO has undertaken to operationalize the Precautionary Approach and to critically review its fitness as an Organization through the "Next Steps" review process, establish it as a leader in Regional

Fisheries Management Organizations. Recently the international community has called for a similar review of the performance of all RFMOs.

The conservation and management of Atlantic salmon stocks poses significant challenges and I wish you good success this week and a pleasant visit here in Bar Harbor.

Opening Statement made by Canada

Deputy Assistant Secretary Brennan, Mr. President, Distinguished Delegates, Observers, Ladies and Gentlemen:

First, I would like to thank the United States authorities and the Secretariat for bringing the NASCO delegations to the very beautiful town of Bar Harbor.

Mr Chairman, salmon stocks in Atlantic Canada in 2006 continued to be characterized by a low number of adult salmon, and more severe declines for the two-sea-winter salmon. However, in 2006, conservation limits were met in 50% of the 70 reference rivers. The returns of one-sea-winter salmon are unchanged from 2005 in Newfoundland and Labrador but have increased in all other areas.

Returns have continued to decline in the southern areas and many populations are threatened with extirpation. In other words, despite some sign of improvements, the overall situation is still a major concern.

To further support and enhance our conservation efforts with respect to Atlantic salmon, Canada has undertaken a number of initiatives in 2006.

The first is an overhaul of the *Fisheries Act*, which is currently being considered by the Canadian government. The *Fisheries Act* is the federal law that governs the management of fisheries and the protection of fish habitat in Canada. The proposed overhaul was presented to the Canadian Parliament in late 2006. The new Act contains strong commitments to the Precautionary Approach to conserve aquatic resources and to ensure a science-based ecosystem approach to fisheries management.

Secondly, the Department of Fisheries and Oceans finalized its Atlantic Wild Salmon Conservation Policy Framework. It is now ready for consultations.

The key elements of the Policy are:

- protecting the genetic and geographic diversity of salmon;
- ensuring shared decision-making and open, accountable public processes;
- addressing habitat challenges; and
- ensuring that decisions are based on good science, with consideration of biological, social and economic consequences.

This Policy aims to maintain and improve Atlantic salmon diversity and ensure that ecosystem considerations will be incorporated into salmon management, particularly in relation to marine survival.

The Policy will be an important element to incorporate in Canada's Implementation Plan. We look forward to hearing this week from the Review Group on their assessment of the Implementation Plans. We also look forward to learning from the experiences of other Parties and to discussing how NASCO's Next Steps Process responds to performance criteria

being developed internationally and what additional steps may be required to demonstrate progress on this issue.

Another important Canadian endeavor was the official establishment of the \$30M Atlantic Salmon Endowment Fund (established January 23, 2007). The objective of the Fund is to help restore and conserve wild Atlantic salmon populations in rivers and streams in the Atlantic Provinces and Quebec. Proceeds from the Fund will finance projects that contribute to salmon restoration and conservation.

Mr President, as we all know, oceanic influences on salmon growth, behaviour and survival are very complex and costly in time and efforts to understand. The scale of research required demands cooperation and cost sharing domestically and internationally. This is why the work of the International Atlantic Salmon Research Board and SALSEA are important. It is also important that international salmon organizations cooperate and as such Canada strongly supports exchanges with the North Pacific Anadromous Fish Commission. The Special Session this week on research programs in the North Pacific and North Atlantic is most welcome.

To further Canada's commitment to research on understanding mortality at sea, the Department of Fisheries and Oceans has, in 2006, pursued its ongoing support of SALSEA projects in Canada to the tune of \$2M. Ten ongoing projects were included in the inventory of research relating to salmon mortality in the sea for 2006/2007. All ongoing projects can be assigned to tasks within the SALSEA Work Packages. For example, funding was provided for the purchase of acoustic tags for the tracking work related to movements and survival of Atlantic salmon. Other sponsored research activities included sponsoring samplers from Canada to participate in the West Greenland Commission sampling program. Funding was also provided for genetic identification to determine stock origin.

These activities complemented the \$35M Innovation Canada funding to Dalhousie University in Nova Scotia for its Oceans Tracking Network (OTN) to track all marine species. The Atlantic Salmon Federation is very involved in this project. Through the Network, thousands of commercial and endangered marine species will be tagged and monitored to help improve fishing practices and better understand the ocean's ecosystems. The OTN Research Themes include, among other things, the biology and behavior of migrating marine life and ocean physics modeling. This initiative will facilitate the management of numerous species, but it will also help address salmon ecology issues.

Mr President, SALSEA is an important endeavor for NASCO and for Canada. The Minister of Fisheries and Oceans has indicated he would contribute a cash amount of \$100,000 to SALSEA. I am hopeful that the process to transfer the funds will be approved shortly.

Thank you.

Opening Statement made by Denmark (in respect of the Faroe Islands and Greenland)

Mr President, Distinguished Delegates and Observers:

The Faroe Islands and Greenland are very pleased to participate in the Twenty-Fourth Annual Meeting of NASCO, which has brought us to Bar Harbor, Maine in the United States of America this year. It is always a great pleasure to take part in the NASCO Annual Meetings, which are organised so efficiently by the Organization's small Secretariat, and indulge in their pleasant combination of the useful and the agreeable in the form of, among other things, serious discussions on the future of the salmon and of NASCO as an organization, and enjoyable excursions and reunions with fellow delegates and colleagues from NASCO's member countries.

The salmon fishery was once very important to Greenland and the Faroe Islands. Unfortunately, this is now a long bygone past. Today, a salmon fishery in the Faroe Islands only exists in the form of farmed salmon, which is nevertheless very important to the country. As regards Greenland, since 2002 the fishery has been restricted to the amount used for internal subsistence consumption, i.e. we no longer even have a quota for salmon. Greenland still, however, retains the right to fix a quota.

Therefore, Faroe Islands and Greenland have looked forward to this meeting where the reports on the Parties' Implementation Plans will be discussed. Greenland and the Faroe Islands recognise the need to provide as accurate data as possible on salmon catches and we will continue this work.

One issue on which Greenland and the Faroe Islands continue to place great importance is the inclusion of homewater fisheries in the NASCO Convention. We have stressed this several times before and we reiterate this again now.

Hopefully, this Annual Meeting, and especially the further work on the Next Steps decided, will lead to some fruitful new initiatives whose results will soon be reflected in the Atlantic and in the salmon rivers, in future ICES reports, and, of course, in the fishery. With this in mind, Greenland and the Faroe Islands are ready to get started at this Twenty-Fourth Annual Meeting of NASCO.

Opening Statement made by the European Union

Deputy Assistant Secretary Bill Brennan, Mr President, Distinguished Delegates, Observers, Ladies and Gentlemen:

Firstly, on behalf of the European Union, I would like to thank the Government of the United States for organising this Twenty-Fourth Annual Meeting of NASCO in this very picturesque location of Bar Harbor in the beautiful State of Maine.

Secondly, may I say it gives me both personal and professional pleasure to be back again within the NASCO family as EU Head of Delegation, after many years of absence. Many things have changed within NASCO since that time, but I see Malcolm Windsor is still his breezy and efficient self, and doesn't seem to have aged a day!

Last year in Finland, NASCO introduced conservation measures designed to be applied on a multi-annual basis for both the West Greenland and the Faroe Islands fisheries, pending ICES producing a Framework of Indicators for multi-year catch advice. ICES has developed this advice, which would appear to meet NASCO's expectations for the West Greenland stock. We would hope that NASCO extends the measures adopted last year for West Greenland for the remainder of the multi-annual period. For the Faroes fishery, ICES was unable to produce a similar Framework of Indicators. Nonetheless, the advice is clear and arrives at the same outcome, to maintain the closure for a multi-annual period.

It is important also to take note of the initiatives taken during the last year in certain key fisheries jurisdictions to address the issue of the mixed stock fisheries. This is a clear demonstration that the homewater States, in particular within the EU, are in the process of implementing strong conservation measures. These will entail considerable socio-economic change for the coastal communities concerned and their impact should not be underestimated. However, such measures are necessary in order to conserve and manage, in a sustainable manner, the salmon stocks.

We particularly welcome the Special Session addressing Illegal, Unregulated and Unreported Activities, or IUU, as it is commonly known. For the EU this is a key issue, not only within the Community but also in the wider international context. The EU is currently developing a broad policy initiative to address IUU fishing activities. Along with other Parties we have been actively leading the debate in other Regional Fisheries Management Organisations, such as ICCAT, NEAFC and NAFO.

Without doubt, this scourge of IUU also affects the wild salmon fisheries and trade. Therefore, NASCO has its part to play in this issue. Already within NASCO, there are some jurisdictions that have introduced measures which go some way in countering IUU activities through the introduction of mandatory tagging regimes. Other initiatives which merit consideration by NASCO would be that of catch documentation schemes which track the fish on an individual basis throughout the process from the point of capture to when it is placed on the market. These are examples that NASCO should evaluate since they constitute possible directions to follow in combating IUU fisheries.

NASCO has addressed the implementation of the “Next Steps” approach in an impressive manner. The presentation of the individual Implementation Plans and the work of the *Ad hoc* Review Group demonstrated a firm commitment to undertake this work in a positive and transparent manner. Such Plans allow the Parties to review their progress in the application of the objectives and agreements of NASCO, but also their own policy objectives. Given the understandably differing levels of advancement in the development and implementation of management policies among the Parties, it is natural that such differences will be reflected in the Plans provided to NASCO. In our view, it would be misleading, and even unfair, to judge the performance of Parties on the basis of whether, in the *Ad hoc* Group’s work, a cross falls on one side of a line or another, since that would imply a questioning of the Parties’ intent and commitment to respect NASCO.

In parallel to the “Next Steps” approach, which focuses the spotlight on the Parties and their respect of NASCO objectives, there has been a recent development in the international community with calls on regional fisheries management organisations to carry out performance reviews on their stewardship of the resources under their responsibility. Each RFMO is being asked to look critically at their own activities and measures to assess the degree to which they are fulfilling the conservation and management objectives laid down in their Conventions. Indeed, they are also asked to judge whether those objectives need to be refined and updated.

We have proposed, therefore, that NASCO undertake such a performance review on the basis of certain general guidelines already established. This exercise, in the view of the EU, is perfectly compatible with the “Next Steps” process. This is a task that has been, or is in the course of being, undertaken in other RFMOs. NASCO may indeed have been in the forefront of reviewing its activities through the “Next Steps” review, but we are of the view that a Performance Review undertaken by a Panel, composed of Members and external experts, would be extremely beneficial to NASCO.

Finally, I would like to thank the Executive Secretary and his team for the excellent preparation they have put into ensuring that this meeting will run as efficiently and effectively as possible, even if I’m sure that there will be a few more extra hours to be put in before the week is out.

With these thoughts, I would like to wish this Twenty-Fourth Annual Meeting every success and I would reiterate our willingness to work with all other Parties around the table to further the work of NASCO towards the ultimate objective of a sustainable fishery of wild North Atlantic salmon.

Opening Statement made by Iceland

Mr President, Distinguished Delegates, Ladies and Gentlemen:

It gives me great pleasure to attend this Annual Meeting in this beautiful setting in the State of Maine, which is one of the few remaining sanctuaries for Atlantic salmon in the continental United States. During a period of global warming and declining sea-survival of salmon, it is a real challenge to maintain viable salmon populations in southerly areas. The US government and its agencies are to be commended for their efforts to rebuild salmon populations in the face of these challenges.

Demonstrating the increased transparency of the NASCO process, we now have three Special Sessions on the agenda, two dealing with the sensitive subjects of unreported catches and the Implementation Plans of the NASCO Parties. Unreported catches have always been somewhat secretive within the NASCO forum and one must hope that we can all approach the subject openly and with candour, as the extent of such catches may partly hold the key to the apparent decline in the marine survival of salmon. The third session, on research on salmon at sea, should be of great interest to us all and relates to the valuable efforts of NASCO's International Atlantic Salmon Research Board.

In June 2006 new Icelandic salmonid fisheries acts were enacted. In this revision the all-inclusive "Salmonid Fisheries Act" was broken into 4 separate acts, the first one on salmonid fisheries, the second on salmonid farming, the third on salmonid enhancement and the fourth on prevention of fish diseases. The revision did not change the principles of the Icelandic management system but was a useful update of various provisions. These documents are currently only available in Icelandic but English translations will be available at a later date.

The Icelandic angling catch in 2006 amounted to over 45,000 salmon, which was 17% below the record catch of 2005. The catch, however, was still 25% higher than the 30-year average angling catch. Almost 15% of the catch was from the Rangá rivers, where angling is entirely sustained through smolt releases. "Catch and release" amounted to almost 20% of the angling and was more prominent in the two-sea-winter age class. Grilse runs were satisfactory despite a small average size, but the runs of two-sea-winter salmon remained conspicuously low, especially in northern areas.

Salmon aquaculture is gradually decreasing in Iceland and most of the land-based facilities have been turned over to the rearing of char and marine species. This is partly due to unfavourable conditions for sea-pen rearing in Iceland and partly due to the economics of salmon farming, which tend to be highly variable. As a result, no fish farm escapees were observed in Icelandic rivers in 2006. Pen-rearing of marine species, especially cod, is, however, increasing in some areas, which may have detrimental predatory effects on salmon populations if there are large escapes in the vicinity of salmon rivers.

Once more ICES warns us of the precarious state of the multi-sea-winter stocks and advises that in the light of the "Precautionary Approach" only maturing one-sea-winter salmon from rivers with full reproductive capacity should be fished. We should all agree that this can only be done in terminal fisheries in, or close to, the respective rivers. In the light of this advice all NASCO Parties should refrain from mixed stock fisheries of both one-sea-winter and multi-sea-winter salmon in all jurisdictions.

Finally, Mr President, I want to thank you and the NASCO Secretariat for the efficient preparation of the meeting and our US hosts for their hospitality.

Opening Statement made by Norway

Mr President distinguished Delegates, Observers, Ladies and Gentlemen:

Norway is very pleased to participate in this Twenty-Fourth Annual Meeting of NASCO here in Bar Harbor.

The last yearly assessment of the status of salmon stocks in Norway concluded that 45 of the 450 stocks were extinct and 81 threatened or near threatened. Future changes in status are highly dependent on the success of the *Gyrodactylus salaris* eradication programme, the stock re-introduction programmes in limed rivers, mitigating measures in regulated rivers and future success in solving aquaculture-related problems.

Although progress is being made in all these fields, we have to conclude that the status of wild salmon stocks in Norway is far from optimal.

In this situation the Government proposed to Parliament a set of measures aimed at strengthening wild Atlantic salmon stocks, including the completion of the National Salmon Rivers and Fjords Scheme. The proposition was approved by Parliament in May this year.

The objective of the National Salmon Rivers and Fjords is to provide enhanced protection to a number of Norway's most important salmon stocks. In these rivers and adjacent fjord areas, the conservation of the salmon and its habitat will be given priority over any new activity that may adversely affect salmon stocks. The scheme is now completed and today comprises of 52 rivers and 29 fjords, or about three-quarters of the total wild salmon production in Norway.

The Parliament also supported the Government's proposals on new and strengthened measures to protect and conserve salmon stocks, including habitat management, liming, fisheries management, combating *Gyrodactylus salaris* and counteracting adverse effects of aquaculture.

Boosted by the ICES-NASCO symposium on effects of aquaculture on wild salmon, along with two years with the highest numbers of escaped farmed salmon ever recorded, the Norwegian Government has stated that the introgression of escaped farmed salmon into wild stocks, together with the further spread of *Gyrodactylus salaris*, are the most severe threats to the long-term existence of wild salmon in Norway. Thus, the Government has decided to start a programme aimed at developing an economically competitive sterile salmon for use in aquaculture.

The Government has also strongly indicated that it will be necessary to implement further restrictions on salmon fisheries in the next five-year regulatory period. The regulations will be based on advice from ICES, which suggests that mixed stock fisheries should be further reduced. The new regulations will also be aimed at meeting spawning targets and reducing the relative abundance of escaped farmed salmon in spawning stocks.

In Vichy we agreed that the most important tool for further progress in implementation of various NASCO agreements should be the development of national Implementation Plans. I am pleased to say that in Norway this has increased efforts to obtain necessary data. Stock-recruitment relationships have been studied for different types of rivers. Salmon-producing areas in rivers have been calculated and spawning targets set. Work has also started on developing feasible methods for assessing the potential impact of farmed salmon on the genetic diversity of single stocks.

A key area identified through the “Next Steps” process was to raise NASCO’s profile. We see it as particularly important to move on towards developing a status of the wild salmon report.

Mr President, I would also like to use this opportunity to thank our hosts and the Secretariat for having prepared marvellously for this meeting.

With these remarks I wish us all a good and productive meeting.

Opening Statement made by the Russian Federation

Mr President, Distinguished Delegates, Observers, Ladies and Gentlemen:

It is my pleasure, on behalf of the Russian Government, to greet all of you at this Annual Meeting of NASCO. I am particularly delighted to do this, because the meeting gathers people, who are not just mechanically doing routine work, but people who sincerely care for the future of salmon, people who are interested in progressing the cause, which has for many of them become the most important in their life. In my view, this has been convincingly demonstrated and proved by more than 20 years of work of this Organization.

In modern life, where technological progress is influencing all possible aspects of our living, and urbanization has reached the remotest depth of the countryside, coming to nature is, perhaps, the only possibility for us to, at least temporarily, get away from everyday chores and a hectic life, the pace for which we ourselves have set. Therefore, it is very important that the salmon, as a resource for recreation, generates interest amongst many people, and our task is not only to conserve and enhance this resource, but also to attract more attention to it, encourage people to know more about the mysteries of the salmon's life, to contribute to its conservation; this can only be done jointly and this is one of our main goals. Of no less importance is that recreational programmes are instrumental in addressing the socio-economic problems of many rural communities.

The Russian Federation attaches great importance to the development of recreational salmon fishing programmes. We can today boast significant achievements, though, the recreational fishery of Atlantic salmon began to develop in earnest in our country only 15 years ago. In this respect, I must mention the importance of not only the availability of necessary resources, but also the information on the best practices gathered through NASCO and used as a guide when recreational salmon fishing programmes were designed in Russia.

No one would ever doubt the importance of technological progress; however, at the same time it brings about adverse impacts, which have resulted in deteriorating salmon habitat and declining stocks. The unprecedented development of marine fisheries, aquaculture, national programmes on introductions and transfers, whose implementation only add to the problems in conservation of wild salmon, is also associated with the technological progress.

Therefore, NASCO's steps initiated recently to better address these challenges through enhanced implementation of existing NASCO Agreements and development of Implementation Plans by Contracting Parties were necessary and timely. It is obvious that, at the initial stage, certain difficulties may arise. In Russia, for instance, important pieces of legislation to support full implementation of the agreements are still lacking, but we are aware of the need to fill in the existing gaps and are prepared to work hard in order to preserve the biological diversity of wild salmon populations.

And, concluding this statement, I would like traditionally to address a few words to our hosts. Certainly, there is no point in giving once again praise to America and Americans; however, I want to commend the splendid arrangements for this meeting and express admiration for the beauty of this fantastic place. America has everything and in plenty. For example, picturesque towns like Bar Harbor. But the Atlantic salmon are not as plentiful in America as may be wished. I wish you good luck in restoring to abundance the stocks of these beautiful

fish in your rivers. I would also like to thank you for your hospitality and wish you success with all of your initiatives. Thank you.

Opening Statement made by the United States of America

Mr President, Distinguished Delegates, Observers, Ladies and Gentlemen:

It is a pleasure for the United States to host the Twenty-Fourth Annual Meeting of NASCO, and I would like to add my welcome to that extended by Dr Brennan. I would like to extend a special welcome to two former Commissioners to NASCO who are attending as members of the US delegation this year – Mr Bob Jones and Mr Bucky Owen. It is very appropriate that the meeting is being held here in Maine, where we have focused a great deal of time, effort, and resources in an attempt to recover endangered populations of Atlantic salmon.

As noted by Dr Brennan, the challenges facing Atlantic salmon in Maine and elsewhere throughout the North Atlantic are very significant. The challenges we face this week are also considerable, but I am optimistic that the NASCO Parties will continue their tradition of working together collaboratively and cooperatively and that we will have great success.

NASCO has made a significant investment in the Next Steps process to enhance its operations and improve its ability to conserve and manage Atlantic salmon stocks, including utilizing the scientific expertise and advice offered by ICES to best advantage. The Implementation Plans represent a very important step in this process. Parties undertook the development of these Plans to more specifically identify and describe actions they had undertaken and planned to implement in order to carry out the objectives and mandates of NASCO. These Plans were designed to increase transparency and the accountability of Parties and of NASCO as an Organization.

We have now received the report from the *Ad Hoc* Review Committee. How we respond to these reviews will greatly shape the future of our Organization. It will also say a great deal about the level of our commitment to salmon conservation at home and to international cooperation through NASCO. This has been a learning process for all of us, and it is important that we review and critique ourselves and each other in order to achieve the goals we collectively established for ourselves in the Next Steps Process.

At this meeting we will have to carefully select our first focus area for reporting under the Implementation Plans, create a new *Ad Hoc* Review Group, and develop Terms of Reference for this review. These focus area reviews will allow for much more detailed reporting and discussion on a specific area of work. Further, they should be designed to facilitate information exchange and improve our overall ability to conserve and rationally manage salmon stocks in the North Atlantic.

The United States is pleased with the progress made last year to establish multi-annual regulatory measures and welcomes the additional report from ICES on the Framework of Indicators. We believe this framework sets out a logical and reasonable way to annually check to see if there has been a significant change in indicators such that the multi-year catch advice can be retained or a reassessment is warranted. With the Framework of Indicators provided by ICES, we are now in a position to strengthen our commitment to multi-year regulatory measures. We also believe this new approach will allow ICES to direct its time and efforts, most appropriately, on scientific issues with the greatest benefit to salmon.

Last year was our first year with our new rules for NGO participation in the Annual Meeting and we feel it was very successful. We look forward to thoughtful and constructive contributions from our NGO observers throughout this Annual Meeting. The future of Atlantic salmon depends on the engagement and active participation of a wide variety of partners.

In closing, on behalf of the entire US delegation, I would like to thank the Secretariat for their assistance in making the arrangements for this meeting and welcome you to Bar Harbor and wish you a very pleasant visit.