

***Opening Statement by the representative of European Inland Fisheries Advisory
Commission (EIFAC)***

It gives me great pleasure to attend this meeting of NASCO as an observer from the European Inland Fisheries Advisory Commission.

For those that might be unaware, EIFAC is a statutory, advisory body of the Food and Agriculture Organization (FAO) of the United Nations. Established in 1957, it is an inter-governmental forum for collaboration and information exchange on inland fisheries and aquaculture across all European countries. Governments, institutions and agencies can benefit from international advice derived from the EIFAC network of policy-makers, managers, scientists and others working on inland fisheries and aquaculture issues. Scientific work is undertaken in Working Parties by specialists from member countries. Recent Working Party activity of relevance to salmon stakeholders includes the publication of the new Code of Practice for Recreational Fisheries and the ongoing development of best practice for migratory fish passage. The emerging issue of illegal, unreported and unregulated (IUU) fishing is also being addressed.

International consistency in the resolution of fisheries management issues is of increasing importance at the present time. Ecosystems and the services that humanity derives from them are being impacted by such pressures as land use practices, diffuse pollution, climate change and over-fishing, to name but a few. Consolidation and cascade of best practice advice to the inland fisheries sector and its stakeholders is where EIFAC has a major role. It has been recognised, however, that if EIFAC is to fulfil this role, and is to function efficiently, there is a need to enhance its relevance to the management and advisory challenges of modern times. Accordingly, a review of the functioning of EIFAC is being carried out.

At this stage of the review, information exchange and awareness of international emerging issues is vital. The social, economic, conservation and cultural value of salmon fisheries is not in doubt, and the need to maintain the sustainability of this resource is paramount. It is, therefore, very much appreciated that NASCO extended to EIFAC the invitation to observe this meeting.

I wish you all a productive session.

Thank you.

Joint NGO Opening Statement to Council

Mr President, State Secretary, County Governor, delegates, I think I speak for all the NGOs when I say this is probably the most spectacular location that NASCO has met in, so thank you for inviting us here.

I am pleased to present the joint opening statement on behalf of the NGO Group. This year we welcome two additional members, the Irish Seal sanctuary and the North West Marine Alliance. We wish to use this statement to highlight the main issues of concern to NGOs, which we will be returning to during the course of the week.

Madam State Secretary, in Norway everything about wild Atlantic salmon is “large”. You have the largest wild stock of salmon in the North Atlantic and the largest stock in one river, the Tana; unfortunately you also have the largest mixed stock coastal fishery, in Finnmark, that intercepts about 65% of Tana salmon, as well as fish from Russia and Finland. You also produce the largest number of farmed salmon, some 75% of the one million tonnes produced in the North Atlantic; unfortunately this means you also have the largest number of escaped farm salmon, causing genetic pollution, and probably also the largest number of parasitic sea lice too, which impact on the survival of both salmon and sea trout smolts. Norway is also a victim of *Gyrodactylus salaris*, with its potential to devastate wild Atlantic salmon stocks. So, there are no shortage of challenges. Fortunately, you have an environment ministry, many scientists and NGOs dedicated to try and address these problems, and many of them, including you, are in this room today. We will be returning to all these subjects during this meeting, and look forward to the debates.

Mr President, on wider NASCO matters and faced with continuing depressing news from ICES on the status of wild salmon stocks in the North Atlantic the NGOs want to re-affirm their support for the SALSEA project, and we look forward to a progress report. We hope that a line can be drawn under the mis-understandings that led to the failure of the extended sampling programme at West Greenland last year, and that it will take place this year. However, we note the rising internal use fishery which has crept up to 26 tonnes, and stress that it is absolutely essential to ensure that any additional sampling does not lead to any further increase.

On the subject of fishery management, we finished the meeting last year on a highly critical note concerning the lack of progress by some jurisdictions in closing mixed stock fisheries. A theme for us remains the balance and fairness between distant and home-water *fisheries*, as emphasized by Demark (in respect of Greenland and Faroes) in their opening statement. While there has been some progress to report – Norway and Russia have met for preliminary talks about the impact of the Norwegian coastal fishery, and Scotland has instituted a mixed stock fishery review – we remain concerned at this slow rate of progress. I am disappointed to note that EU Finland did not attend the talks referred to above, despite their interest in the Teno (Tana). We note that in Canada, the mixed stock fishery off Labrador reached 36 tonnes in 2008, the largest amount since the commercial fishery was terminated in 1998 and the catch in St Pierre and Miquelon has risen by 70%. This is particularly significant for its impact on endangered North American stocks. These examples also highlight the growing impact of subsistence or first nation fisheries.

In Northern Ireland, the Minister there has reneged on written undertakings, and a long-standing commitment to phase out their remaining drift nets, announcing a review instead,

which had already been carried out as described in their 2007 Implementation Plan. We take this particularly seriously as it is the first such breach of an IP and we will ask Council, through the President, how they propose to react.

We remind all the jurisdictions concerned of the conservation benefits in taking decisive action to close mixed stock fisheries as demonstrated recently by EU Ireland,

We look forward to the final report of the Fishery Management FAR group. The process has highlighted, as intended, the successes and shortcomings of the various parties, and we encourage those lagging behind, especially with regards mixed stock fisheries, to adopt the Best Practice guidance produce by the group.

We also look forward to the Habitat FAR group report. While the subject of habitat restoration is probably less controversial than fishery management practices, it is no less vital to salmon restoration

We are also pleased to note the first meeting of the Aquaculture Task Force. It would appear we now at last have a clear industry supported statement recognising the problems that escapes and disease – particularly sea-lice – can cause wild fish. This has been a long time coming but is nevertheless welcome and we regard this as a positive prelude to the Aquaculture FAR which starts later this year. However, I have to report that many of our NGOs on this side of the Atlantic are already calling for a move from voluntary to legal compliance, and taking robust measures to achieve this.

Finally, Mr President, this statement is rather longer than I would like. This is partly because of the number of challenges facing Atlantic salmon and partly a result of the Next Steps process, which has successfully incorporated the NGOs into the NASCO process. We are, of course, delighted with that, and would like to thank the secretariat and all the Parties for their help and co-operation in making this process work. It may sometimes be an uncomfortable process, but if it helps the conservation status of Atlantic salmon it will be worthwhile.

Thank you for your attention; we look forward to a productive meeting.