

Opening Statement made Canada

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

It is a great pleasure for the Canadian Delegation to be in Norway for this 26th Annual Meeting of NASCO. Molde is a most beautiful part of the country and I want to thank our hosts for providing us with the opportunity to work in such a beautiful, pristine and fresh environment.

Norway and Canada have many common interests in fisheries and aquaculture, but also in many other areas, and we cooperate and work closely together on many fronts bilaterally and in international organizations.

Atlantic salmon is clearly a most important area of common challenges, not only for Norway and Canada, but all of us in this room. And the primary concern for all of us has to be this most worrisome downward trend in Atlantic salmon returns. Year after year, efforts are made in hopes that salmon will come back, and they don't, or they only come back in small numbers – and no one knows exactly why.

Reproductive capacity is low in the North American and the Southern North-East Atlantic Commissions, and there has been no catch options in west Greenland for several years. As indicated by ICES, despite our concerted management efforts on reducing exploitation in recent years there has been little improvement in the status of stocks. The 1,696 t of salmon caught in 2008, although slightly higher than in 2007, is the second lowest in the time-series, and more than 660 t below the average of the last ten years (excludes catch and release).

In Canada, the provisional harvest of salmon was 148 t in 2008, which is 32% less than in 2007. The total population of 1SW and 2SW Atlantic salmon in the Northwest Atlantic has been around 600,000 fish on average over the 1993-2008 period, about half the abundance of the 1972-1990 period.

Regarding marine survival, Canada appreciates the efforts of NASCO under the SALSEA program and we hope that the 2009 campaign will be as successful as in the last year. In Canada, the Department of Fisheries and Oceans was able to organize a 24-day pelagic ecosystem survey of the northwest Atlantic to characterize the abundance and distribution of pelagic fish in the upper 10 meters of the water column.

Mr. President, NASCO is facing many major challenges: trying to better understand salmon behaviour and the impacts of climate change, ensuring that we all maintain our engagement towards better management, protecting and restoring habitat, and managing with the aquaculture industry the potential impacts on wild salmon. Efforts and cooperation are required at levels -- governments, non-governmental organizations, and the aquaculture industry. NASCO is where all these efforts can be brought together.

Before closing, Mr. President, I would like to say that Canada looks forward to a very productive week under your leadership. Joining me at the table is Commissioner Serge Tremblay, Chief, Forest Environment Protection at the Ministry of Natural Resources and Wildlife of Quebec. Unfortunately our Commissioner Bud Bird could not join us for personal reasons.

Thank you.

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

Mr. President, State Secretary, County Governor, distinguished Delegates, Observers, Ladies and Gentlemen

Greenland and the Faroe Islands are most pleased to participate in the 26th Annual Meeting of NASCO, which has brought us up here to this unique and beautiful location of Molde.

For us, it is always a great pleasure to participate in the NASCO Annual Meetings and this year is no exception.

As you are well aware, the commercial salmon fishery at sea was once of utmost importance both to the Faroe Islands and to Greenland. Unfortunately, this is no longer the case. Only responsible and improved management of the stock can lead to a reopening of this fishery for us in the future, and we continue to hope that this will be possible.

Both the Faroe Islands and Greenland have taken the responsibility to refrain from commercial fishery for salmon in our fishery zones for the time being with a view to rebuilding the stock.

The Faroe Islands salmon fishery is on hold, and since 2002 Greenland has restricted its fishery to a so-called subsistence fishery only allowing fishery of an amount corresponding to the local consumption.

In our view, these measures demonstrate our strong commitment to responsible fisheries management, and we expect other Contracting Parties to recognize this.

At previous meetings we have underlined that both the Faroe Islands and Greenland reserve our full rights to establish quotas for a sustainable salmon fishery at sea in the future when the biological advice allows for this. This is a right we still retain.

An issue which is of continuous concern in Greenland and the Faroe Islands is the fact that a considerable part of the salmon catches are taken in mixed stock fisheries in coastal areas. While Greenland and the Faroe Islands have refrained from commercial fishery for salmon, the mixed stock fisheries continues to threaten the salmon stocks. If the salmon stocks are to be rebuilt it is necessary to regulate fisheries in the coastal areas. We believe that home water salmon fisheries should be included in the NASCO Convention and that the home water Parties should take into account the advice from ICES in their management of the salmon fishery.

We have stated this at a number of previous meetings, but nevertheless we reiterate our strong views on this matter once again this year.

This annual meeting continues the "NEXT STEP APPROACH" guiding the future work of this organization. Initiatives concerning the Fisheries Management Focus Areas, Habitat Protection and Progress in implementing a Public Relation Strategy are main issues - all very relevant and interesting issues to address. Although the Faroe Islands and Greenland are not the main contributors of information on habitat protection we very much welcome the valuable work being carried out.

Mr. President, I would like to take this opportunity to thank our hosts as well as the Secretariat for all their efforts in the preparation of this meeting.

Finally, Mr. President the Faroe Islands and Greenland can assure you that we are prepared to work in a constructive way so we collectively can contribute to a successful outcome of this 26th Annual NASCO Meeting.

Thank you.

Opening Statement by the European Union

Right Honorable State Secretary, Mr Governor, Mr President, Fellow Delegates, Ladies and Gentlemen.

Firstly, on behalf of the European Union I would like to warmly thank the Norwegian government for hosting the 26th Annual Meeting of NASCO in this spectacular setting of Molde, and the warm welcome and hospitality that we have received since arriving. We would also like to thank Arne Eggereide and his team for providing the magnificent facilities in this unique hotel. This must be one of the most outstanding setting in which NASCO has met, and I feel it will be hard to maintain our concentration.

This year we are continuing with the "Next Steps" review process, and we hope that the good work that has been achieved up to now will be maintained. We for our part, will fully participate in the discussions which we would hope will lead to the continued further development of the organisation. This should, in an ideal world, lead to an improvement in the wild salmon stock status. A crucial element to this process is the adequate reporting of the Parties. The EU recognises that it has not fully met this requirement, but it will do its utmost to redress this situation in the very near future. Indeed we hope that it has already been done in some cases.

We would like to recognise, and welcome, the decision taken at Gijon last year that moves forward the process of a Performance Review of the organisation as required by the United Nations. We would anticipate that this work commence in 2011 when the "Next Steps" process will have completed its first cycle of reviews. This would permit the current review to play a full part in the in-depth review of the organisation, a process that we have all subscribed to in New York regarding all organisations such as NASCO.

From the scientific advice we have seen a slight improvement in the stock situation, but this cannot be taken to mean that we have turned the road regarding the situation of the wild salmon stocks. We continue to be concerned about the mixed stock fisheries and the threat that this poses to the status of the wild salmon stocks. For our part, the EU has taken significant steps in recent years to address this issue, to a point where there are minimal coastal fisheries, and this action is ongoing. In this regard, we welcome the discussions that have taken place earlier this year on this issue, and I would underline that the EU also has an interest in these discussions, even though we were unfortunately not able to participate at this meeting.

We look forward to the discussions that are ahead of us this week, and we will fully play our part in reaching a successful outcome to this 26th Annual Meeting of NASCO.

Finally, Mr President, I would once again like to thank our hosts for the facilities that they have provided and Malcolm and the NASCO Secretariat staff for the excellent preparation and arrangements they have made for the meeting and express, in advance, our thanks for the massive efforts that they will undertake in the week ahead.

Thank you.

Opening Statement made by Iceland

Secretary of State, County Governor of, Mr. President, Distinguished Delegates, Ladies and Gentlemen

It gives us great pleasure to attend this annual meeting of NASCO in the beautiful setting of the town of Molde. Møre and Romsdal with other areas of western Norway harbour some of the best Atlantic salmon rivers in the world making Norway a key player in the NASCO forum. We want to thank our hosts for these outstanding meeting facilities and the opportunity to see some of the beautiful salmon rivers and the outstanding scenery of the region after the meeting.

As usually we have many important issues to deal with at this meeting. In addition to regular business issues we have a special session on the Next Steps Process dealing with the final review of the Focus Area Reports on fisheries management and our first review of the Habitat Protection issues. Following that debate we need to decide on the process with respect to the management of Aquaculture. We will also hear the report of the International Atlantic Salmon Research Board, which will have some progress reports from last years SALSEA research cruises. We are delighted to report that the Icelandic government has enabled us to take part in the SALSE program by offering a research vessel for a cruise to the Irminger Sea this summer.

We are also happy to report that the Icelandic salmon catches were record high in 2008. The total angling catches were over 80 thousand salmon which was a 50 % increase from the previous year and 75 % over the 33 year average. Over 28 thousand salmon were caught in rivers, where angling is maintained through enhancement with smolts, which was about 35 % of the total angling catch. This increase seemed to be related to increased marine survival especially in the grilse component and over 19 % return rates were observed in wild microtagged grilse returning to the River Elliðaár, which is one of our index streams. Such return rates have not been observed in Iceland since the late 1970s. There are still concerns with respect to the 2SW component although some improvement was observed. There was an increase in the release of larger salmon especially in natural salmon rivers, where catch and release amounted to 34 %. The total proportion released in angling was, however, only 19 % as fewer salmon were released in rivers maintained through enhancement with smolts.

Salmon cage culture on Iceland's east coast has been decreasing in recent years and Icelandic aquaculture is currently more or less dominated by the freshwater culture of arctic charr which amounted to 3000 tonnes in 2008. In the wake of drastic changes in the exchange rate of the Icelandic Krona there seems to be renewed interest in the marine aquaculture of salmon in the northwestern part of Iceland. All salmon producing areas are, however, protected from aquaculture activities through regulation nr. 460/2004 on protection areas with respect to salmon aquaculture.

This year ICES once more warns us of the precarious state of the MSW stocks and advises that in the light of the "precautionary approach" only maturing 1SW 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.

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

Thank you Mr. President

Opening Statement made by Norway

Mr. President, State Secretary, Distinguished Delegates, Observers, Ladies and Gentlemen:

It is a pleasure for Norway to host the Twenty-Sixth Annual Meeting of NASCO and I would like to add my welcome to that of the State Secretary. In her welcoming speech she summarised some of the major challenges facing Norwegian Salmon management and efforts to protect and conserve the Atlantic salmon. These challenges are by no means unique to Norway, but are more or less common to all North Atlantic countries. It was such common challenges that once led to the establishment of NASCO. The threats facing salmon stocks have not diminished, and NASCO is as important today as ever before.

NASCO has had a great impact on Salmon fishery policy and has contributed to sustainable harvest of Salmon among its member countries. In Norway this has led to more goal-oriented and structured fishery regulations. Mixed stock fisheries have been greatly reduced. However, there are still tasks ahead, especially concerning mixed stock fisheries both in the sea and in some larger rivers, and interceptory fishery in the sea. With regard to the latter, the Norwegian delegation will invite relevant NASCO members to discussions here in Molde.

Concerning habitat issues there are still good reasons for strengthening international cooperation. In Norway significant progress has been made concerning liming of acidified rivers, the battle against *Gyrodactylus* and adjustments to hydropower regulations. However the pressure on salmon habitat exerted by man is still a matter of the greatest concern both to Norway and other NASCO members. We, therefore, look forward with great interest to the special session at this meeting.

Aquaculture issues are no less relevant to NASCO members than they were in 1994 when the organization adopted the Oslo Resolution. Since then, the industry has increased manifold, and so have the problems with escaped farmed salmon and sea-lice. Last year, it was observed that on several fish-farms the Sea-lice had become resistant to pesticides. If this is a trait that spreads, the Sea-lice situation can come out of control. Salmon aquaculture is a formidable and fast growing industry throughout the North Atlantic. This poses equally formidable challenges to conservation of wild Salmon; challenges that require international cooperation and concerted actions. I will, therefore, emphasise the importance of continued NASCO engagement in this field.

Implementation of the precautionary approach in Salmon management is one of the most important undertakings by NASCO. It is a strategy which is turned into practice by concrete guidelines. It is a fruitful strategy that already has proven its worth in the management of Salmon fisheries, and I trust this meeting will take this important work a step forward.

Mr. President, in closing I would like to thank the Secretariat for excellent preparation and assistance in arranging this meeting and I wish you all a productive meeting and an enjoyable stay in Molde.

Opening Statement of the Russian Federation

Mr President, Distinguished Delegates, Observers, Ladies and Gentlemen

I am pleased on behalf of the Russian delegation and the Federal Agency for Fisheries, representing the Russian Government in NASCO, to greet all participants of the 26th Annual Meeting of NASCO.

First of all, I would like to use this opportunity to express my appreciation of the cordial welcome and excellent arrangements for this meeting provided by our Norwegian hosts, and the magnificent beauty of the place, we are honoured to see.

A lot of important work lies ahead of us, and we are confident, that decisions of this meeting will be for the benefit of our collective course with the main objective of conservation of the pearl of our rivers, the Atlantic salmon, for future generations.

We are much concerned about declining numbers of salmon. We all know how diverse factors affecting its abundance could be and how often fragmentary and contradictory our knowledge of this species is, particularly, of its life in the ocean. Therefore, we are looking forward to progress reports on research undertaken last year under the SALSEA Programme, which, we are confident, will improve our understanding of the marine life of Atlantic salmon and factors behind increased mortality.

If before unsustainable exploitation of salmon both at sea and in homewaters was a major factor contributing to the decline of stocks, in the last decades, in our view, the NASCO Contracting Parties took unprecedented actions to reduce the pressure of fisheries and today there are other factors, which play the key role. Among them the deterioration of salmon habitat caused by human activities should be mentioned.

In this light, efforts made by Contracting Parties to fully implement the NASCO agreements relating to salmon habitat are very important. However, it may be that sometimes the progress with restoration of salmon habitat and the possibilities to implement the agreements do not fully meet the tempo of modern life. However, clearly there is a determination to resolve these issues, which means that eventually success will be achieved.

We have already highlighted on earlier occasions that the Russian Federation attaches great importance to enhancing the effectiveness of the use of Atlantic salmon resource and to the development of recreational salmon fishery to this end. We can today boast significant achievements in this area. This became possible thanks to that we could not only preserve the resource, but that we also used the best international practices available, in NASCO including. Despite the global crisis, to which we often refer nowadays, the recreational fishing companies operating in Russia are expecting a successful fishing season on salmon rivers this year too.

We continue to improve our legislation relating to conservation and management of Atlantic salmon. New amendments were made to the Law on Fisheries, recently established Anadromous Fish Commissions began working, a number of bylaws was adopted to fully implement the Law on Fisheries.

And in conclusion, our Annual Meeting is taking place in the country with which Russia has had close long-standing relations, particularly in the fisheries, I would like to note our good neighbourly cooperation of many years with Norway and common interests in both science and management of joint biological resources, in the Barents Sea, in the first place. We also have successful cooperation under joint long-term research programmes on Atlantic salmon and are working closely together to identify ways to resolve problems in the management of salmon fisheries.

I would like to thank Norway hosting this Annual Meeting once again for hospitality, and wish all of us success in working together during this week.

Thank you for attention.

Opening Statement made by the United States of America

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

On behalf of the United States, I would like to thank Norway for hosting this Twenty-Sixth Annual Meeting of NASCO in this beautiful location, so close to the many magnificent salmon rivers of Norway.

Since the last annual meeting of NASCO, we have taken further difficult steps in the United States to propose expansion of our endangered species listing to include Atlantic salmon populations in the Penobscot, Kennebec and Androscoggin Rivers. In addition, we have proposed to designate critical habitat for Atlantic salmon. Our commitment to salmon conservation and recovery is clear in the application of our strongest law to protect salmon and salmon habitat. The commitment comes at a significant cost to those industries, organizations, agencies and individuals who must modify their plans and activities to avoid and minimize impacts to Atlantic salmon. We recognize that these efforts at home are a prerequisite to our coming here to NASCO to work in a collaborative, balanced and fair way to rebuild Atlantic salmon stocks worldwide.

The Next Steps performance review process undertaken by NASCO has been a learning experience for the Organization, its Contracting Parties, and for each of us as individual salmon researchers and managers. The special session this afternoon will complete our first focus area review on fisheries management and highlight our second focus area review which examined implementation of the Habitat Action Plan. At this meeting we will also agree on terms of reference for the final focus area review on aquaculture, introductions and transfers and salmonids. Once we complete this cycle of implementation plans and focus area reviews it will be important to reflect back on the process and evaluate whether it has achieved the objectives of increased collaboration, accountability and transparency and improved the efficiency and effectiveness of NASCO.

Also consistent with the recommendations from the Next Steps process, multi-annual regulatory measures were adopted for the West Greenland Commission in 2006. With the Framework of Indicators developed by ICES, we are in a position this year to adopt a regulatory measure for 2009 through 2011. While not precisely in the same position as the WGC, we are also optimistic that the Northeast Atlantic Commission will both be able to agree on an appropriate regulatory measure this year and also to develop specific management objectives to allow ICES to develop quantitative catch advice for that Commission in the future. We also look forward to adoption and implementation this year of an Enhanced Sampling Program in Greenland, consistent with the recommendation from ICES, and view this as a critical component of the SALSEA program. It is very exciting to see the progress that has been made in SALSEA Merge and SALSEA North America and this provides evidence of what can be accomplished with international collaboration and a shared commitment to finding answers to critical questions facing salmon.

We welcome the interim report from the ISFA-NASCO Task Force on Best Practice in Aquaculture to Address Impacts on Wild Salmon Stocks. Agreed international goals, best management practices, and metrics to track our progress toward these goals provide a strong foundation upon which to rebuild our cooperative relationship with the international salmon farming industry.

In 2008, we saw significant increases in Atlantic salmon returns to U.S. Rivers and we are hopeful this is the sign of more improvement to come. But, while we are optimistic, we are also realistic. The challenges facing salmon in freshwater, estuaries and during their extensive marine migration are significant and we must remain vigilant in our efforts to identify, evaluate and reduce threats and seek to continuously improve our understanding. International collaboration is essential for salmon conservation and we look forward to working with the NASCO Parties and observers this week. Finally, I would like to thank our hosts and the Secretariat for the excellent preparations for this meeting.