

### *Opening Statement made by the President of NASCO*

Statssekretær Sörensen, Fylkesman Befring, ærverdige Repræsentativer, mine Damer og Herrer.

Det gir mig en stor fornøjelse at holde den seks og tyvende NASCO årsmöte i Molde og det skønne Möre-Romsdal område. Eg vil takke Miljøverndepartementet for indbydelsen og en udmærket forberedelse for dette möte. Personlig föler jeg mig altid som “heima” når jeg er i Norge og i dette område er der mange ord som påminner at Norsk og Islandsk en gang var et fælles sprog.

It gives me great pleasure to hold this meeting in this beautiful area of Norway, where wild Atlantic salmon are still abundant in many rivers. Norway with its long coastline bordering the Atlantic has the largest catches of Atlantic salmon in a jurisdiction among the NASCO parties. As such it has always been active in NASCO matters and contributed a lot to the conservation of wild salmon. Paradoxically it has also pioneered and is the leading world producer of farmed salmon, which has been a real challenge with respect to the management of these diverse resources.

I hope you aware that it is exactly 25 years since we held our first NASCO Annual meeting in Edinburgh in 1984. On this 25<sup>th</sup> Anniversary I think we can be very proud of the achievements of our organisation. Over the years we have developed and approved agreements on fisheries management, on protection and restoration of habitat as well as the Williamsburg resolution on aquaculture introductions and transfers. These are all vital for our work today. We have also negotiated agreements with Greenland and the Faroe Island to protect migrating salmon and subsequently seen numerous measures introduced in homewaters. All these have involved considerable sacrifices for the stakeholders.

I also look back with some satisfaction to our pioneering work on development of the principles of the Precautionary Approach and the new light shed on all the socio-economic values of the wild stocks. I believe too that in integrating all these issues on fisheries, habitat, and aquaculture we are taking some steps to implement the ecosystem approach, which international fisheries organizations have been urged to do. When you consider too, the consultations with stakeholders in two continents on NASCO’s work as a part of the “Next Steps” process, we have re-structured our organization in a particular way and become more inclusive and transparent. I thus believe to a great extent that we have met the concerns of our stakeholders and NGOs. Although some salmon stocks are still in precarious state we can be sure that all the NASCO agreements we have implemented have made a positive impact in many jurisdictions.

At this year’s meeting we have some very interesting issues on the agenda. At the special session this afternoon we have the final report of the review group on the “Management of Salmon Fisheries” Focus Area. Since we will be leaving this issue for the time being it is very important to hear the views of managers as well as NGOs on the success of this process. Were the issues properly highlighted and are the conclusions regarding the management of Atlantic salmon in various jurisdictions correct. We strongly urge the Parties and respective NGO groups to participate in the debate as the special session is open for everyone’s input. The Parties responded in writing to the earlier criticism from the Review Group and these responses have been compiled in the final report of the group. The Group has also developed best practice guidance in relation to the management of salmon fisheries which the Council will need to consider carefully and decide if it wishes to adopt.

The second issue covered at the special session will be the first review of the Habitat Protection Restoration and Enhancement Focus area. This Focus Area is in many ways more difficult to deal with than the one on Fisheries Management as it falls a little on the fringes of the expertise and management responsibilities of many NASCO participants. Since we are at an early stage in this process it is very important to get constructive criticism and balanced debate on this issue.

I would like to use this opportunity to thank the members of the two Ad Hoc Review Groups for their elaborate work on Fisheries Management and Habitat Protection issues.

Finally we will discuss the progress in implementing a NASCO Public Relations Strategy, where we are being guided by our NGOs.

We have some other very interesting issues before the Council such as the report of the International Atlantic Salmon Research Board, where we will hear about the success of the SALSEA program and any other research activities relating to salmon in the North Atlantic. We will then of course also deal with the work of NASCOs Commissions which will have to adapt the harvest of Atlantic salmon to the precarious state of many salmon stocks which emerges from the ICES advice. We will also have to come up with some terms of reference for a new Ad Hoc review group which will be dealing with Focus Area Reports on Aquaculture.

As usual we have a full agenda before us and a limited time to cover it. I am looking forward to a lively discussion and debate both in the "Special Session" and Council. The Next Steps Process opened up the floor for our NGOs to participate in the work of NASCO and I urge them to do so. Finally I want to reiterate my gratitude to the Ministry of the Environment for the invitation to hold this meeting in Norway and for excellent preparations for the meeting. As usual our Secretariat has secured efficient running of the meeting and are prepared to assist you in any way possible. Our Norwegian hosts have planned some interesting Post-NASCO tours on Friday and Saturday, which will offer some of us a chance to see more of this beautiful part of Norway.

Thank you