

Opening Statement made by Canada

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

I would like to start by saying, on behalf of the Canadian delegation, what a great pleasure it is for Canada to host the Twenty-Seventh Annual Meeting of the North Atlantic Salmon Conservation Organization here in Québec City. Québec City celebrated its 400th anniversary in 2008.

It was founded by the French explorer Champlain in the early 17th century. It is the only North American city to have preserved its city walls, together with the numerous bastions, gates and defensive works which still surround Old Québec. The Upper Town, built on the cliff, has remained the religious and administrative centre, with its churches, convents and other monuments like the Dauphine Redoubt, the Citadel and Château Frontenac. Together with the Lower Town and its ancient districts, it forms an urban ensemble which is one of the best examples of a fortified colonial city.

The last time Canada hosted NASCO was in 2000, on the Miramichi River, in the neighbouring province of New Brunswick: a beautiful salmon river indeed, and one that fascinates many anglers. We would have liked to organize this meeting close to one of the many fabulous salmon rivers of Québec. But this large group most often could not be accommodated, or distances were a major constraint. However, I am confident we have met NASCO's commitment to meet near a salmon river – I would say that we are not close to just one salmon river, we are close to many salmon rivers.

Mme President, NASCO is an organization dedicated to the protection, conservation, and recovery of wild salmon stocks. However, this particular meeting is also about the reality of salmon aquaculture development.

In Canada, both fisheries and aquaculture are important industries providing employment in many small communities along the coast as well as Aboriginal communities. I will have the opportunity later this week to give you a snapshot of Aboriginal fisheries in Atlantic Canada.

In Canada, we have placed both wild and aquaculture within a common policy framework and under a single Department. Fisheries and Oceans Canada is involved in all aspects of fisheries and aquaculture and recently underwent a major reorganization. The objective was to enhance policy capacity and provide a stronger focus on ecosystems and fisheries management as well as integrating Oceans and Science sectors. This new structure asserts the significance of a solid science foundation to our work and promotes ecosystem-based management. This new structure brings together all operations under Resource Management, Aquaculture, Habitat and Species At Risk.

This is important in the context of a recent decision by the British Columbia Supreme Court. The Court ruled that marine finfish aquaculture is a fishery and as such strictly a matter of federal jurisdiction. While this does not directly affect the Atlantic Province or Québec, it is a significant development.

Turning to recent developments concerning Atlantic salmon, the year 2009 did not bring much hope of a major shift on the dire situation of Atlantic salmon generally. Mme President, in 2009 we found ourselves yet again in this situation where the number of large salmon

returning is low, particularly 2SW salmon, and small salmon are greatly below 2008 returns. With few exceptions the returns of small salmon to eastern Canada were very low, a result of poor marine survival relative to the previous cohort (2007). In 2009, conservation limits were met in 44% of 64 assessed rivers, 27% of rivers had less than 50% of conservation achieved. Based on the poor survival of the 2008 smolt cohort, a low abundance of large salmon is anticipated for 2010. Suffice to say, the overall situation is a major concern.

The total harvest of wild Atlantic salmon in Canada was 119 tons in 2009 – down 17% from the previous 5 years. It is fair to say that fishing (both angling and aboriginal fisheries) is not the most serious cause of this decline, but fishing constraints are vital to ensure maximum escapement of the available spawning runs, particularly large female fish. We will have the opportunity this week to consider best practices for fishing management in our rivers, including habitat management which is one of the most important factors in protecting wild salmon, and Canada will be ready to contribute strongly in these respects. However, given that the number of smolts produced in rivers has remained relatively steady, it can be concluded that marine mortality and related factors are the most important challenges to wild salmon survival and abundance.

While Canada supports the important work undertaken by the SALSEA research program to improve our knowledge of what happens to salmon during their migration at sea, it appears at this time that the results of this major research may leave many question marks on the reasons why salmon return in only smaller numbers every year. Although aquaculture could have impacts on wild salmon, it is clear that it is not the only challenge to the conservation of wild salmon. For example, there are around 750 salmon rivers in Atlantic Canada, with 95% of these rivers totally remote from salmon farming activities. Nevertheless, wild stocks in many rivers away from salmon farms are also experiencing declines, which underlines, as we have long known, that there are other major factors beyond aquaculture that require concerted attention, with mortality at sea obviously prime among them.

Mme President, it is one reality about aquaculture that we must acknowledge. Atlantic salmon farming is a major industry in Canada as in several other areas of the world. It generates value above one billion dollars a year, and is a major source of employment in British Columbia and the Atlantic provinces. Salmon farming occurs in three main areas of the Atlantic: in the Bay of Fundy in southwest New Brunswick, on the south coast of Newfoundland in Baie D'Espoir, and along the south shore of Nova Scotia.

There is no disagreement that aquaculture is a growth industry for the future. There is no disagreement either that it needs to be managed in a sustainable manner, with as little impact as possible on the marine ecosystem. Like many other activities it has to occur in a way that minimizes potential impacts on other species and the environment.

In this context, I am pleased to report a recent major development concerning aquaculture science in Canada. The federal government recently created some 20 Excellence Research Chairs each with 10 million\$ for research programs over seven years. Dr. Ian Gardner will be the research Chair at the Atlantic Veterinary College at the University of Prince Edward Island to study interaction of wild and farmed fish. Dr. Gardner will develop cost-effective testing strategies and surveillance programs for the prevention and control of diseases, and will investigate disease dynamics and health interactions between farmed and wild fish populations.

Mme President, this week promises to be a very interesting and challenging one. The Canadian delegation looks forward to the discussions we will have, particularly on the Focus Area Reports on Habitat and on Aquaculture and Related Activities, but also on moving ahead in the context of the Next Steps process.

Before closing, I would be remiss not to mention and recognize a previous Commissioner of the Canadian Delegation: M. Pierre Tremblay. M. Tremblay lives here in Quebec City and would very much have liked to be here today to welcome his many friends. I understand he will try to come this week; however, he is not well and may not be able to. As you all know, NASCO and the Atlantic salmon have always been, and continue to be, his passion. I wish him well on your behalf.

I look forward to working with you all this week in our collective efforts to conserve and restore our Atlantic salmon stocks.

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

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

On behalf of the governments of the Faroe Islands and Greenland I would like to thank Canada warmly for bringing us to these spectacular surroundings in the beautiful city of Québec.

A number of years ago, the Faroe Islands and Greenland took the responsibility to stop the commercial fishery for salmon in our fisheries zone. This was in order to contribute to the rebuilding of the North Atlantic salmon stocks.

Unfortunately, these measures have not led to any significant recovery of the stocks. There are many different reasons for this, some are still unknown. One explanation is that some Parties have continued their coastal fishery, even though it has been underlined again and again that mixed-stock fisheries present a particular threat to the salmon stocks.

The Faroe Islands and Greenland are, therefore, pleased to see, and do acknowledge, that other Parties have also begun to share the responsibility through large reductions of salmon taken in coastal waters. And these catches are at the lowest level ever.

However, more than a third of all catches are still taken in coastal waters or estuaries. Our view is, as we have stated before, that home-water fisheries should also be regulated by NASCO.

In this way we can create the best possible conditions for rebuilding the salmon stocks and thereby improve the prospects for the Faroe Islands and Greenland to make full use of our right to a sustainable salmon fishery at sea.

One of the main issues at this meeting will be the Special Session where the preliminary Focus Area Report on aquaculture will be presented.

Salmon farming in the North Atlantic has increased significantly since NASCO was established. The industry has become a central part of the economies of several North Atlantic countries, including the Faroe Islands. At the same time the aquaculture industry can pose a threat to the wild salmon stocks, if the industry is not regulated carefully.

We are well aware of the importance of implementing and maintaining high regulation standards in our industry in order to safeguard wild salmon stocks. This is a responsibility which is shared by all countries in the region with aquaculture industries.

Madame President, we would like once again to thank our Canadian hosts as well as the Secretariat for all their efforts in preparing this meeting.

The Faroe Islands and Greenland are looking forward to a productive week.

Thank you.

Opening Statement made by the European Union

Madame Chair, Distinguished Delegates, Ladies and Gentlemen.

On behalf of the European Union, I would like to thank the City of Québec and the Government of Canada, for hosting the 27th Annual Meeting of NASCO, in this beautiful and historic city of Québec, which has many links with Europe, both past and present. It is therefore, appropriate that NASCO is meeting here to underline these important links that encapsulates the co-operation that is fundamental to NASCO today.

At this meeting, we are arriving at an important point in NASCO with the conclusion of the first round of special reports under the “Next Steps” exercise, an exercise that began in 2004. We will be looking at the Final Report of the Habitats Review Group, which, from the EU perspective, has been well received. We will also be looking at the Draft Report on Aquaculture and Related Activities.

This is a more delicate issue, as, while considering NASCO’s own objectives, we should not ignore that there are also other legitimate interests associated with activities that go beyond NASCO’s competence. This discussion on the draft Aquaculture Focus Area Report will, in our view, require delicate handling, as this could potentially develop extreme, polarised positions, between NASCO’s interests and those of the aquaculture industry. It is maybe worthwhile pointing out at this time, that, in the view of the EU, it is not the aquaculture industry that is under review in this report, but the jurisdictions and administrations who are implementing the NASCO Agreements. Therefore, the discussions to be held later today should keep this in mind.

In any event, this should be an opportunity for further fostering the goodwill and co-operation between NASCO and the aquaculture industry and should not lead to any erosion of this relationship, which has been growing and developing in the past, and should so continue.

We are of the view that the “Special Sessions” held to review the Focus Area Reports are useful tools in the operation of NASCO and the implementation of its objectives by the Parties. However, they should be seen purely as a vehicle for guidance and advice as to where there may be shortcomings or lapses, and not as a means to be critical of the compliance of the Parties. A role that is not given to NASCO.

As we have noted earlier, this is the end of the first cycle of the “Next Steps” process and it is an opportune time to review the progress that has been made thus far. At the same time, we also feel that it would be an appropriate moment to engage in a wider examination of NASCO as a whole, with an external component, in line with the UN Resolution 61/105. Indeed, this was agreed at a previous meeting of NASCO. NASCO should not shy away from such an external review, indeed it may well be to its benefit. It is worth noting that our sister organisation in Pacific, is also undertaking such a review, so NASCO would not be the sole salmon conservation organisation to undertake a performance review as required by the UN Resolution.

We have also seen this year the unexpected withdrawal of Iceland from NASCO, for valid reasons. However, we regret this withdrawal, as we are of the view that this withdrawal deprives NASCO of a valuable source of data and information as well as much information and knowledge. Therefore, we believe that Iceland should be invited to attend NASCO

Annual Meetings as an Observer and continue to provide NASCO with the important data that would help NASCO in its operation.

Finally, we would like to thank Malcolm and his team for the long hours of work that they will undertake this week, and hope that they will be able to get some sleep and also take advantage of these wonderful surroundings.

Madame Chair, we have a long and hard week ahead of us, but we are certain that with your strong leadership and guidance we will arrive at a positive outcome, come Friday. The EU is willing to play its part in open and constructive discussions and negotiations, which should lead ultimately to improving the possibility of the long-term recovery and sustainability of the wild North Atlantic salmon stocks.

Thank you.

Opening Statement made by Norway

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

It is a pleasure for Norway to participate in the Twenty-Seventh Annual Meeting of NASCO in beautiful surroundings here in the historic city of Québec.

For the wild stocks of salmon, however, the surroundings and outlook seem less preferable. In Norway, both reported catches and estimates of pre-fishery abundance of salmon stocks for 2009 were among the lowest in history, indicating a need for further action.

Implementation of the Precautionary Approach in salmon management is one of the most important undertakings by NASCO. Here a strategy has been turned into practice by concrete guidelines that have already shown their worth in management.

In 2009, Norway established a scientific advisory committee for Atlantic salmon management. The committee provided scientific advice for this year's regulations of the fisheries in rivers, fjords and coastal regions based on an assessment of the probability of achieving spawning targets.

New regulations for the salmon fisheries have now been decided for this year. More than a hundred of around 400 salmon rivers have been closed, and the fisheries have been further reduced in most of the remaining rivers. After consultations with the European Union and Russia new restrictions have also been imposed in coastal fisheries. These typically include shortening of the fishing season, reduction in the number of fishing days per week and even closure of the fishery in some areas.

Although strict regulations have been imposed to secure salmon stocks, we are in a situation where further steps are necessary. The situation in the River Tana, where Norway and Finland have a bilateral agreement for the management of fisheries, represents one example. Norway has, therefore, taken an initiative to re-open negotiations with the aim to modernize the agreement.

Since the last annual meeting the focus on effects from aquaculture on salmon stocks has increased considerably in Norway, where sea lice and escaped farmed salmon are so far considered to be the two major problems. In the Special Session on aquaculture these and other issues will be discussed, and we welcome this opportunity to find a common understanding of these problems.

Finally, I would also like to use the opportunity to inform the Parties that significant progress has been made in the battle against *Gyrodactylus*. Last autumn, the Rana river system was declared free of Gs, and this represents the largest river system so far where rotenone treatment has been successful. We can, therefore, hope that the battle against this parasite may be won also in the remaining infected rivers.

Madame President, in closing I would like to thank the Secretariat and our Canadian hosts for excellent preparation for this meeting.

Opening Statement made by the Russian Federation

Madame President, Distinguished Delegates, Observers, Ladies and Gentlemen

It gives me great pleasure to be in Québec City at the 27th Annual Meeting of the North Atlantic Salmon Conservation Organisation. On behalf of the Russian Federation, I would like to express my delight at being for the first time in the province of Québec renowned for its many beautiful salmon rivers and for being a prestigious place for recreational salmon fishing. I would also like to take this opportunity to thank our Canadian hosts for organizing the meeting in such a magnificent historic city as Québec, and again in the heart of the wild salmon community.

Atlantic salmon is an important resource for the Russian Federation, valued highly by anglers, generating income and providing employment to local communities, particularly, through the development of recreational fisheries in the last two decades.

Many rivers in Russia today remain in pristine condition and have healthy salmon stocks. We are proud of this! In today's challenging environment we achieved this, in the first place, by optimizing the use of resource and applying precaution as advised by approaches and principles developed and promoted by NASCO. We really benefited from the experience of other Parties and from learning about the international best practices in management and conservation of Atlantic salmon here at NASCO, a forum for international cooperation.

Given the continuing poor survival of salmon in the ocean attributed to climate effects, as advised by ICES, Russia is taking further actions to protect the Atlantic salmon. We are reducing the pressures, we can control, through reduction of the exploitation rate in commercial fisheries and phasing-out the fishery in coastal waters, we educate users of the resource and disseminate information on the international best practices among relevant authorities in the five regions in the northwest Russia with salmon rivers. Our Government now puts much emphasis on the recreational use of fish resources in fresh water, Atlantic salmon too. We continue to improve our legislation. Last year Atlantic salmon was removed from the list of species subject to regulation by a total allowable catch. This amendment made it possible for the recently established Anadromous Fish Commissions to work in a more flexible and effective way and make in-season adjustments to catch limits and other measures based on scientific advice.

But we are also aware of problems facing us such as illegal fishing and inaccuracies in catch statistics, misuse of fishing rights by some user groups and difficulties with implementing management measures unpopular with local communities, but protecting salmon.

It is clear that further and appropriate measures for the home waters need to be taken by all the relevant Parties to safeguard the future of the wild salmon. Measures for the mixed-stock fisheries in the sea are among them. In managing these fisheries, before they are brought to an end, the real challenge for us is to have enough political will to strike an appropriate and equitable balance between salmon conservation and socio-economics.

Report of the Aquaculture and related activities Focus Area Review Group and liaison with the salmon farming industry are among important topics on our agenda this year. Though the Russian salmon aquaculture industry does not have the scale of production we see in other countries of the North Atlantic, and, therefore, its impacts are not that evident, we are very

concerned about the threats these activities pose to wild salmon, among them transmission of diseases and parasites and impacts of farm escapees. Reinforced legislation, stronger standards and enforcement are needed. Continued dialogue with the salmon farming industry is essential.

This year NASCO completes the first three-year cycle of Focus Area reporting under the “Next Steps” process, we embarked on in 2004. It was a new and often challenging exercise for the Parties, a process of learning and introducing changes. A number of useful guidelines and recommendations on best practice were developed. We now need to review the whole process, assess the results and take decisions on how we are going to move further. Russia is looking forward to comprehensive and thorough discussions on this important issue with other Parties.

Finally, Madame President, I would once again like to thank you, our hosts and, of course, our very efficient Secretariat for the excellent arrangements for this meeting. The delegation of the Russian Federation looks forward to a very productive and successful meeting.

Thank you.

Opening Statement made by the United States of America

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

On behalf of the United States, I would like to thank Canada for hosting the Twenty-Seventh Annual Meeting of NASCO in this beautiful and historic location.

Since the last annual meeting of NASCO, the United States has taken further action to halt the dramatic and alarming declines of our salmon populations. Significant additional protection, through the Endangered Species Act, is now afforded to the last remnant populations of Atlantic salmon in the US, including those inhabiting the Penobscot, Kennebec and Androscoggin Rivers of Maine. These additional protections are not taken lightly by the US Government; they come at significant economic and social costs to a variety of stakeholders. However, as the last remnant stocks of Atlantic salmon in the US, the potential to lose these valuable genetic resources is too costly an option. We understand that taking these steps domestically is pre-requisite to working collaboratively at NASCO to find balanced ways to rebuild salmon stocks across the North Atlantic.

Throughout the Northeast United States, non-governmental organizations, government agencies, industry groups and academic partners are working diligently to understand and correct the underlying reasons for the continued depressed status of US stocks of Atlantic salmon. Through many collaborative partnerships, we are beginning to understand the complicated and interwoven reasons for these declines. While corrective measures are underway, more research is needed on many fronts, particularly in relation to the plight of salmon at sea and during their migration from fresh water to the ocean. The United States has taken steps to facilitate this important work, including direct funding of over 1.3 million (USD) for pre-dam removal monitoring associated with a restoration and dam removal project on the Penobscot River. This investment is in addition to the approximately 50 million (USD) in both public and private investment for the purchase and removal of the dams. This project is a partnership of varied interests that will restore access to 500-1,000 miles of historic Atlantic salmon habitat. We view the scientific assessment of this project as critical to advancing toward a more holistic understanding of the salmon's role in the North Atlantic ecosystem. The Penobscot Project is truly an exciting partnership that we hope to build on well into the future.

This year marks an important juncture for NASCO as we receive the final report from the Habitat FAR Review Group, receive the preliminary report from the Aquaculture FAR Review Group, and undertake a comprehensive review of our own lessons learned from the "Next Steps" process as we agreed in 2008. We welcome the commencement of this work as it provides an opportunity 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.

In the United States, the last two years have seen substantial increases in adult returns when compared to recent adult return data. We are hopeful that this trend continues in 2010. However, we are fully cognizant of the difficult road to recovery that lies ahead in our home waters. Continued improvements in freshwater habitat and migratory corridors remain a priority along with continued collaboration internationally at NASCO.

We wish to thank our Canadian hosts and the Secretariat for their excellent preparatory work in advance of this meeting and look forward to a productive week here in Québec.