

Opening Statement made to the Council by the Non-Government Organizations

Minister Hansen, Madam President, Colleagues

I am pleased to present the joint opening statement on behalf of the NGO Group. I do so as deputy to Chris Poupard, who sends his apologies for not being able to attend this year, and wishes us well for a positive and successful meeting. You will also note a much smaller NGO delegation than normal, notwithstanding the significance of the issues facing us here, but due mainly to costs and travel restrictions; however pre-meeting discussion has taken place to enable me to present a united NGO position today.

First of all, we would like to thank the Greenland Government delegation for hosting this year's meeting in these stunning Arctic surroundings, and for extending such a warm welcome to us all. It is opportune that we are in Greenland for this crucial stage in the 'Next Steps' process, for this is a country that, despite a worrying increase in the internal catch in 2010, has sacrificed more than most to conserve wild Atlantic salmon. It is ironic, therefore, that while enjoying the Greenlanders' hospitality some 27 years after NASCO's inaugural meeting, we still have, as Minister Hansen and our Greenland colleagues suggested, Parties at this table supporting homewater mixed-stock fisheries. Some also support poorly regulated and operated fish farming industries, and policies within their freshwater environments, many of which impact adversely on wild salmon populations rather than offering them the protection this forum demands. The results of the FAR reviews show that much remains to be done to align management measures by the Parties with NASCO agreements

The ICES advice for this year's salmon fishery is that there is no opportunity for mixed-stock exploitation on any of the stock complexes, a situation likely to extend until at least 2014. ICES continues to urge that mixed-stock fisheries present particular threats to stock status, yet tens of thousands of salmon are still caught each year in homewater fisheries, principally in Norway, Scotland and England. And although we greatly appreciate the continuing conservation measures undertaken by several parties, particularly the USA, Ireland, the Faroes and Greenland, too many countries continue to ignore the best available scientific advice on wild salmon exploitation, and fail to implement NASCO agreements regardless of the fact that NASCO's fundamental principal remains the Precautionary Approach .

And ICES is not concerned exclusively with problems in the marine environment. Once again, the organisation warns that due regard should be given to environmental issues when planning renewable energy schemes, and in-river hydropower projects are a particular worry, as is fish passage and the ability of migratory salmonids to reach all available spawning and nursery habitat within individual river systems.

Madam President, the NGOs wish this to be the year when NASCO's focus returns entirely to the conservation of wild Atlantic salmon, for we believe that too many Parties still see the support of competing commercial interests, such as aquaculture, as more politically expedient than driving measures to ensure a sustainable future for this iconic natural resource.

We look forward, for instance, to the final report of the Aquaculture FAR Review Group, and to Parties acknowledging the failures identified. In 2009 Best Management Practice (BMP) Guidelines were agreed which established the important principle that wild salmon should be

free from the additional pressures posed by increased lice burdens and the impacts of farmed escapes. We still await the implementation of that principle.

The future of the Liaison Group is up for discussion, and the NGOs have concerns about its value. There are still fish farming representatives that agreed the BMP Guidelines, only to return home and for their organisations to continue to deny any impact on wild Atlantic salmon. This is unacceptable, especially in the light of the ICES report which confirms that, for example, in Norway throughout 2010, lice levels were on average higher than the previous year. This, together with the increase in geographic spread of incidences of treatment failure and resistance, gives ICES ongoing cause for concern, and so it should for everyone sitting in this room.

Madam President, the NGOs have regularly lobbied for Convention change so that NASCO resolutions become binding on all parties in their management policies at home, and this remains our ultimate objective. It is no accident, for example, that binding EU Directives have had the most significant impact on wild salmon conservation in NEAC over the last 5 years. However, our short term concern is for the immediate future of 'Next Steps', which has so far focused on process.

We see it as imperative that the next Implementation Plan cycle picks up the failures of the first round of Focus Area Reviews, and concentrates on measurable outcomes, which can be scrutinised within Special Sessions at future Annual Meetings. This would at least put more pressure on Parties to abide by their responsibilities under NASCO, adopting the Precautionary Approach and making salmon conservation their foremost priority.

Finally, Madam President, although our statement pours a certain gloom on the present status of salmon management, we greatly appreciate the increased transparency within NASCO, and the full part that NGOs are able to play in the debate. We thank you, the Secretariat and our hosts for the excellent organisation for this meeting, and we look forward to open and robust debate, and to Parties agreeing to resolutions that they will actually implement when they return home. Wild Atlantic salmon conservation must be our primary objective, and we urge all Parties to embrace that basic principle.

***Opening Statement made to the North American Commission
by the Non-Government Organizations***

The NGOs believe that NASCO's ability to achieve a low Internal Consumption Fishery and maintain a zero commercial quota at Greenland is compromised by the large harvest of wild Atlantic salmon in Canada. An increased fishery at Greenland puts at further risk endangered salmon that are protected under national legislation in the US and salmon from many rivers in Canada that have recently been designated as endangered, threatened or of special concern by the Committee on the Status of Endangered Wildlife in Canada (COSEWIC).

We urge Canada to ensure that management plans for First Nations and the recreational salmon fishery require reduction in harvest and adherence to the ICES advice with respect to the elimination of harvests of large spawners from rivers not meeting spawning targets and from mixed stocks.

The final report of the Aquaculture Focus Area Group concludes that neither the United States nor Canada has demonstrated progress towards achieving the international goals for sea lice and containment.

There were reported escapes of about 200,000 farmed salmon in the Bay of Fundy in the final quarter of 2010. These escaped salmon are not only threats to endangered populations in the Bay of Fundy, but also in the Gulf of Maine.

In Canada, open cage salmon farms are located near rivers where wild salmon populations are designated as endangered or threatened. In the US, salmon farms are located at the mouths of wild salmon rivers with endangered populations. A peer reviewed study, published by Dalhousie University in 2008, found that the presence of salmon farms reduced wild salmon survival by more than 50% per generation.

A recent peer-reviewed scientific report published in *Heredity Journal*, authored by Laval University, DFO, ASF and the Norwegian University of Life Sciences, documented that the wild salmon population of the Magaguadavic River in New Brunswick now contains farmed salmon genes and the progeny of these fish have significantly reduced survival compared to wild populations. This river is in the heart of the salmon aquaculture industry and is the North American index river for monitoring interactions between wild and farmed salmon. Its run of wild salmon has decreased from an annual average of 800 in the 1980s to 12 in 2010.

We look to both Canada and the US to ensure that their obligations as Parties to NASCO are met through exercising the Precautionary Approach and ensuring that the health and survival of wild salmon take precedence over the development of industries that threaten them.

Opening Statement made to the North-East Atlantic Commission by the Non-Government Organizations

I am pleased to present the joint opening statement on behalf of the NGO Group.

NGOs still have serious concerns about the management and conservation of wild Atlantic salmon in the North-East Atlantic, and the commitment of Parties to take the robust decisions necessary to protect this iconic natural resource. Our concerns mirror those contained within the ICES report, which annually draws NASCO's attention to the following issues, and yet we still continue, year after year, to find ourselves bemoaning the lack of action by Parties to address them.

While Greenland and the Faroes continue to refrain from resuming commercial fishing, Norway, Scotland and England all prosecute significant home-water mixed-stock fisheries, in contradiction of all best scientific advice, killing tens of thousands of salmon that were initially saved from exploitation on their marine feeding grounds. Even in Ireland, where the drift net fishery was closed in 2006 on conservation grounds, the Castlemaine mixed-stock fishery is set to reopen this year, despite a lack of robust scientific evidence that all impacted stocks are protected at or above their conservation limits, so flying in the face of the Precautionary Principle.

This remains a constant frustration for NGOs, who see an underlying lack of fairness compared with the sacrifices made in distant-water fisheries. NASCO should, in our view, enable a consistent international approach to fisheries management, yet we continually hear excuses as to why more robust action is not politically expedient within individual countries supporting mixed-stock netting. It is patently obvious to NGOs that if Greenland and Faroes finally lose patience with this policy imbalance and decide to re-open commercial fisheries, which is still their right, then the impact on home-water fisheries will be significant, jeopardising salmon populations within many river systems. Once again, therefore, NGOs urge Parties in the strongest possible terms to phase-out coastal mixed-stock fisheries under their jurisdiction, otherwise failure to achieve this will undermine the very basis of NASCO's principle conservation objective.

We see a similar lack of political commitment to regulate salmon farming in the NEAC region, with Norway, Scotland and Ireland all having significant problems in controlling both sea lice numbers and escapes. This is despite the Liaison Group's agreed Best Management Practice (BMP) Guidelines for targets of zero escapes, and for the health of wild salmon in the vicinity of fish farms to be no worse than that where farms are absent. Peer reviewed scientific evidence across the entire North Atlantic region indicates that there is a severe threat to the survival of the Atlantic salmon stocks from the impacts of introgression of farmed genes on wild populations and from parasites and diseases emanating from salmon farm units, far above natural levels.

Indeed, there are still fish farming representatives that agreed the BMP Guidelines, only to return home for their organisations to promptly deny any impact on wild Atlantic salmon. Were this to be otherwise, and the industry accept that there are indeed impacts on wild salmon stocks, then a genuinely open dialogue can proceed towards actions that protect wild salmonids. Fortunately, Government scientists are not so reticent, as in Scotland, for instance, Marine Scotland Science personnel now warn local planning authorities of the

potential for salmon farms to impact wild salmonids, and they have their own peer reviewed papers to back up their position. NGOs urge Parties to act more robustly towards the eradication of sea lice impacts, escapes and the other impacts from salmon farming, and for the industry to meet its moral obligations to protect the natural environment which it exploits for its own benefit.

NGOs remain concerned at the continuing threat posed by *Gyrodactylus salaris* and urge retention of this topic as a standing item on this Commission's agenda.

Although Baltic salmon is outside the NASCO forum, its management could benefit from objectives and practices developed within NASCO, such as the setting of conservation limits for individual rivers. We believe that NASCO should provide its experience to the Baltic salmon management plan, now being developed within the EU.

***Opening Statement made to the West Greenland Commission
by the Non-Government Organizations***

I am pleased to present the joint opening statement on behalf of the NGO Group.

The NGOs express deep concern with the significant increase in Greenland's Internal Consumption Fishery. NASCO has been successful since 2003 in reaching agreement with Greenland to limit their salmon fishery to internal consumption only, but the number of salmon that this fishery kills has ballooned from 12 tonnes in 2003 to 43 tonnes in 2010, as estimated by ICES. ICES states that 81% or about 10,000 of the large salmon killed in this fishery in 2010 were of North American origin and 2,600 of European origin. In addition, ICES estimates an unreported harvest at Greenland of 10 tonnes (another 2,500 salmon).

There is potential of killing salmon from the United States that are protected as endangered species under national legislation and salmon from many rivers in Canada that have recently been designated as endangered, threatened or of special concern by the Committee on the Status of Endangered Wildlife in Canada (COSEWIC). Recovery programs for endangered salmon are underway in both countries at significant expense.

To protect fragile populations from both North America and Southern Europe that migrate to feeding grounds off Greenland, the NGOs urge NASCO to implement measures to better quantify, monitor and control the internal consumption fishery at Greenland to keep it at the lowest level possible.

The NGOs are greatly concerned at the imminent likelihood of a commercial fishery being re-established in Greenland waters. To prevent this occurring, we believe that urgent action must be taken by all NASCO Parties to phase-out all remaining mixed-stock fisheries within their own jurisdictions, and enact laws and policies that are consistent with ICES advice and precautionary management.

***Opening Statement made to the Council by the
European Inland Fisheries and Aquaculture Advisory Commission
(EIFAAC)***

I am grateful for the opportunity to represent the European Inland Fisheries and Aquaculture Advisory Commission (EIFAAC) as an observer at the 28th Annual meeting of NASCO.

EIFAAC 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. EIFAAC currently has 34 members. Governments, institutions and agencies; including NASCO, can benefit from international advice derived from the EIFAAC's network of policy-makers, managers, scientists and others working on inland fisheries and aquaculture issues.

A coordinated international approach to the resolution of fisheries management issues has increased in importance as we see ever increasing pressures and rapid changes in our ecosystems. EIFAAC has a major role in the provision and dissemination of best practice advice to the inland fisheries sector and its stakeholders. In order to meet the dynamic requirements of member states and stakeholders, EIFAAC has gone through its own 'Next Steps' programme. This process has resulted in the development of a new structure for the organisation which takes a focused project-based approach to the development of advice and research programmes under the guidance of a technical/scientific and management committee.

EIFAAC's mission is to promote the long-term sustainable development, utilization, conservation, restoration and responsible management of European inland fisheries and aquaculture and to support sustainable economic, social, and recreational activities through:

- providing advice and information;
- encouraging enhanced stakeholder participation and communication; and
- through the delivery of effective research.

Formal adoption of the new EIFAAC rules of procedure is expected to be approved by member states at an EIFAAC Special Session in October.

EIFAAC and NASCO share the common goal of wild Atlantic salmon conservation while respecting the social, economic and cultural value of this unique species. It is, therefore, very much appreciated that NASCO extends EIFAAC an invitation to observe at this meeting. In return EIFAAC offers NASCO its technical and scientific resources to support research or advice pertaining to salmon in its fresh water environment.

Thank you kindly for your attention.