

*Address by Kalaallit Nunaani Aalisartut Piniartullu Kattuffiat
(KNAPK - The Association of Fishermen and Hunters in Greenland)*

I am proud to welcome you all to:

- the home of growing numbers of wild North Atlantic salmon;
- one of the cleanest waters of the world where the wild Atlantic salmon can find its most important feeding grounds and enjoys its stay with us;
- the place where responsible professional fishermen in Greenland, members of KNAPK, have done a lot to restore the wild North Atlantic salmon;
- the place where the wild Atlantic salmon is present all year around.

I hope that before you leave you will be able to help benefit the professional fishermen who are members of KNAPK by giving us approval to utilize the increasing numbers of wild Atlantic salmon in our waters.

Thanks to the North Atlantic Salmon Fund and to the Atlantic Salmon Federation, the members of KNAPK have individually helped the restoration of wild Atlantic salmon numbers by agreeing not to fish salmon but to concentrate on other species. For instance the lumpfish fishery in Greenland is now biggest in the world.

This has only been possible through generous funding donated internationally by private individuals over the last 20 years.

This cooperation between our fishermen and conservationists has resulted in growing numbers of wild Atlantic salmon. The observation that this is the case comes from our members along the coast. These fishermen are now reporting to our headquarters that wild Atlantic salmon are being seen and caught occasionally as a by-catch during the winter months of December, January and February. Last summer the fishermen also noted that there were so many salmon in August and September that the numbers resembled the 1970s when there were catches by commercial fisheries. Some of our members, further north for instance in the Kangarsuatsiaq – community in the Upernavik area 72 degrees north, have asked the organization to open the way for an experimental fishery of wild Atlantic salmon. Another fisherman in Qaqortoq reported that he caught more than 20 salmon in February 2010, under the ice, while trying to fish Greenland halibut and cod.

Those are some of the reasons why our members are now asking for commercial fisheries of wild Atlantic salmon to be reopened.

Last year, we presented this request in a formal letter to our government.

Some members of our local branches in Ilulissat have arranged a demonstration and you will be able to meet them during the first break this morning.

Please show your interest by taking the opportunity to meet with the fishermen face to face during the break and take a minute to talk to them.

While professional fishermen in Greenland have voluntarily restrained from catching wild North Atlantic salmon commercially directly and indirectly based on decisions by NASCO,

other fishermen in Norway, Scotland, Ireland and Canada have been given approval by the same organization to fish the wild North Atlantic salmon in their waters.

This is fundamentally unfair and no longer acceptable to our members in KNAPK.

There ought to be the same set of principles, same science, rules and opportunities given to all members of NASCO instead of dividing members into two groups of nations – one being Greenland and the Faroe Islands who have also done much to allow the wild stocks of north Atlantic salmon to grow in numbers and the other privileged group being those who are allowed to have commercial fisheries in their coastal areas.

More and more we hear suggestions that a new Salmon Treaty is necessary, a new Treaty where every nation has an equal standing.

We propose that this should be changed as follows:

- It must be scientifically demonstrated that rivers of origin are clean and not polluted. I think we all can agree that salmons will spawn much more successfully in clean rivers. We must consider the whole life cycle completely pollution free in the fresh water as well as in the sea water.
- We have lately heard of more farmed salmon escaping from their cages. This allows them to mix with the wild salmon stocks and results in the wild Atlantic salmon getting more sea lice problems and potentially genetic confusion.

Therefore, the KNAPK and our members are asking you honorable guests and delegates to support our need and right to catch and use the North Atlantic salmon – not only for subsistence purposes but also for commercial use. We would find it hard to understand a lack of support for this demand from you because the rationale behind our efforts for the restoration of stocks was based on our need to utilize the wild Atlantic salmon.

It will be very hard for me to explain to many of our members why they have been doing all they can to restore the wild stocks but are not allowed to make commercial use of the stocks now they have improved.

On behalf of our more than 1.900 members I propose that members of NASCO give Greenland a quota of wild North Atlantic salmon for commercial use already this year.

We are proud that our members together with our conservation partners have helped the wild stocks of North Atlantic salmon to grow in numbers everywhere, in Greenland and in all other salmon countries. It is now time for us to enjoy some recompense for these efforts.

Give Greenland a quota of wild Atlantic salmon for this year. If not, KNAPK will strongly insist and advice the Government of Greenland to leave NASCO.

We are all depending on a clean environment. Please understand that the salmon is especially dependent on a clean environment.

I am delighted to welcome you to what is still one of the cleanest waters in the world where the salmon is happy to stay and grow.

I hope you will enjoy your stay in Ilulissat and I wish you good results of your meeting.

The necessary actions are in your hands.