

Opening Statement made by Canada

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

I am pleased to be here and to represent Canada for the first time at a NASCO annual meeting. I would first like to thank our hosts for inviting us here to this extraordinary setting in Ilulissat and for providing such an excellent meeting facility.

All along the Atlantic Coast of Canada, wild Atlantic salmon are found in rivers from the US border at the mouth of the Bay of Fundy to the north of Nain, Labrador, as well as in Ungava Bay. Wild Atlantic salmon is an essential resource of significant cultural and economic importance to many coastal communities across Atlantic Canada.

Canada's concern for the conservation of wild Atlantic salmon is paramount. In November 2010, the Committee on the Status of Endangered Wildlife in Canada (better known as COSEWIC) assessed the status of wild Atlantic salmon in Canada. For those of you unfamiliar with COSEWIC, it is a committee of experts that assesses and designates which wildlife species are in some danger of disappearing from Canada.

Of 16 Designatable Units in eastern Canada, COSEWIC drew the following conclusions: Five wild Atlantic salmon population segments have been assessed as endangered, one as threatened, four as of special concern, one as extinct, four as not at risk and one data deficient.

Suffice to say, we face a challenging road ahead to conserve and restore wild Atlantic salmon stocks.

Continuing efforts to improve our understanding of the biology of wild Atlantic salmon is crucial to supporting its conservation. The cooperative scientific research and exchange of information on Atlantic salmon by the Parties and accredited observers around this table, including in support of the SALSEA research program, is very important to Canada. We are eagerly awaiting the results of SALSEA and believe that the results of the research program will improve our understanding of the biology of Atlantic salmon, including the carrying capacity in the North Atlantic Ocean to produce salmon, an issue which is of particular interest to Canada and NASCO.

We hope that our cooperation through NASCO, our cooperation with ICES and with NGOs, will enhance our capacity to address the conservation of salmon stocks.

While we await the results of the SALSEA research program, we must balance our efforts and focus on issues we can control to increase returns such as habitat conservation and recovery initiatives in freshwater and near-shore environments.

Habitat conservation and recovery initiatives are important aspects of Canada's Wild Atlantic Salmon Conservation Policy. The policy reinforces the federal government's commitment to conserving wild Atlantic salmon in Canada's coastal and inland waters. A Working Group, comprised of Federal and Provincial officials, First Nations and NGOs has recently developed an action plan to implement the Wild Atlantic Salmon Conservation Policy. This is a significant step forward for the conservation of wild Atlantic salmon in Canada that would

not have been possible without the active engagement and participation of stakeholders. Canada looks forward to continued engagement with our stakeholders throughout the implementation of the action plan.

Turning to the business we have this week, several items on our agenda for the next three days are focused on the future direction of NASCO. We believe that the 'Next Steps' Process has been a valuable and worthwhile endeavour and that this process will also be viewed as such by those we appoint to the external performance review panel.

A formal, independent, external review process for identifying the strengths and weaknesses of the organization is an extremely useful and positive undertaking. Once we have approved the work plan for the external performance review this week, I expect this performance review to showcase many of the positive and cooperative programs the organization has undertaken throughout its history. At the same time, it will be important to assess whether NASCO is continuing to meet its objectives and to highlight any areas where reform or modernization may be required.

I look forward to working together with you this week and trust that we will have constructive discussions which will prove beneficial for all involved.
Thank you.

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

Madame President, Distinguished Delegates, Observers, Ladies and Gentlemen

I would like to start by saying, on behalf of the Greenlandic delegation, it is a great pleasure for Greenland to host the 28th Annual Meeting of the North Atlantic Salmon Conservation Organisation here in Ilulissat.

I would also like on behalf of both the Government of the Faroe Islands and the Government of Greenland to warmly welcome you all here today. Unfortunately, due to other important commitments back in the Faroe Islands, our colleagues from there will not be able to be here with us this week.

Madame President, since the last Annual Meeting important preparation for this annual meeting has taken place, and unfortunately, neither Greenland nor the Faroe Islands were able to participate in the 'Next Steps' meeting earlier this year. My delegation recognises the outcome of this meeting and can certainly concur with many of the conclusions drawn.

We certainly welcome the proposal to establish a Working Group to look at how the current reporting format can be streamlined and developed so as to capture all relevant information of the nature of this fishery.

At the last Annual Meeting it was agreed to conduct a performance review of NASCO similar to reviews conducted by other important RFMOs. We look forward to having this process initiated shortly, and we look forward to receiving the results and to take appropriate actions with a view to strengthen the organisation.

We also recognise, Madame President, that a comprehensive review cannot be conducted without imposing additional cost on the organisation. We should be prepared to allocate the necessary resources for that work, and hopefully, the review will prove cost efficient in the long term.

We have noted with concern that the recent biological advice, despite measures taken by the different parties to lower the outtake of salmon in coastal waters, does not look encouraging for the rebuilding of the stock.

In this context, let me remind all parties, that both the Faroe Islands and Greenland have imposed severe restrictions on their fisheries for many years.

We still see that by far the main parts of the catches are taken in coastal waters and estuaries. Our fisheries on the mixed stock only represent an insignificant activity. Madame President, we have said it many times before, but nevertheless, I will reiterate our view again today that the homewater fisheries should be regulated by NASCO.

We firmly believe that such a step could be one way to rebuild the stocks and eventually lead to re-opening of salmon fisheries in Faroe Islands and in Greenland. Pressure from our fishermen to open up for commercial fisheries is growing day by day.

Before closing, I would like to finish by bringing very warm regards from our previous delegate to NASCO and President of NACO, Mr. Einar Lemche. Back in 1997, when Greenland first hosted the NASCO Annual Meeting, Mr. Lemche was here in this same hotel in his capacity of President for this organisation.

I can inform you that Mr. Lemche retired from his duty a few years ago and he lives north of Copenhagen. Mr. Lemche still keeps a close eye on NASCO and I can assure that Mr Lemche would have enjoyed being back here for this event to have a “scent” of NASCO, but not least to see former colleagues and friends.

Finally, Madame President, our delegation looks forward to working with you and all other parties this week. We are confident that this meeting in your skilful hands, Madame President, will bring us to a successful conclusion.

Thank you

Opening Statement made by the European Union

Right Honourable Minister Hansen, Madame President, Distinguished Delegates, Ladies and Gentlemen.

On behalf of the European Union and its Delegation, I would like to thank Denmark, and in particular the Home Government of Greenland, for hosting the 28th Annual Meeting of NASCO, this week, in Ilulissat. We cannot think of a more spectacular setting for a meeting, and I am sure that we will find it hard to maintain our concentration when dealing with the issues at hand during the meeting.

This year we have to continue our deliberations on some issues from last year, in particular the development of a risk-based management approach for the Faroe Islands fishery. This work should enable NASCO to apply similar measures in the West Greenland and Faroe Islands fisheries, once commercial fishing activities hopefully become viable under NASCO objectives. For this, we have to thank the ICES Salmon Working Group for the work that it has undertaken and material that it has produced. This will enable a science-based discussion to take place. However, we do have to note, with regret, the absence of the Delegation from the Faroe Islands to this meeting. Without the participation of the main interested party in this fishery it is very difficult to have any conclusive discussion, or make any significant progress at this time. We sincerely hope that the Faroe Islands administration will fulfil its undertaking to continue this work in the intersessional period, and notably by participating in a possible special meeting of the NEAC.

The information in the ICES Scientific Advisory Committee report appears to be promising, as there has been an increase in catches of wild salmon in 2010, which we hope is a result of improved abundance rather than as a result of improved reporting. This may well be a reflection of the efforts that Parties have made, notably as regards the reduction of the mixed stocks fisheries in some jurisdictions, and we would hope to see this effort reciprocated by an improvement in the degree of the catch and return from the rod fishery, which we note is variable depending on jurisdiction.

In light of this promising information from ICES and the increased wealth of knowledge flowing from the SALSEA project, we can also provide a clear illustration of the progress in the sustainable management of Atlantic salmon, underlining the advances that can and have been made by the different jurisdictions on this issue, which are fully in line with NASCO's objectives. I would like to highlight this recent example from the Irish jurisdiction.

In Castlemaine Harbour, Co Kerry, on the basis of the results of a detailed pilot study undertaken last year, it has been possible to consider the reopening of a public commercial fishery on mixed stocks without the risk of jeopardising the contributing stocks from individual rivers, each of which are meeting their individual conservation limits. The additional information supporting this re-opening was gathered from a comprehensive monitoring programme covering the duration of the season, and all areas of the Castlemaine harbour, thereby covering both the temporal and spatial presence of the stocks concerned. This was also supported by genetic sampling of fish during 2010. If requested, we can provide further information on this action.

Later today, we will have the Special Session where we will have the presentation of the final report of the Aquaculture, Introductions and Transfers and Transgenics Focus Area Review Group. Earlier this year the NASCO/Industry Liaison Group meeting was held in Boston. It was very constructive and co-operative. We would like to welcome the approach taken by the industry in re-affirming its commitment to the international goals in the Best Management Practice Guidance and the progressive way that they will strive to achieve this. It should be remembered that absolute goals cannot be achieved overnight, it takes time to arrive at the final destination.

The Special Session will provide an opportunity for all those concerned in the aquaculture sector, be they from administrations or industry, to have a final opportunity to respond to the FAR Report. I am certain that this will provoke some comments and provide the opportunity, if necessary, for corrections of possible inaccuracies. In addition to the aquaculture sector's presence at the Special Session, I think that it is appropriate to encourage the participation of the aquaculture industry representatives in NASCO meetings, as we do with NGOs, to enable NASCO to have a view of the whole picture regarding aquaculture.

Madame President, before closing I would like to wish you every success for this Annual Meeting, and assure you that the EU will play its part in the forthcoming discussions willingly and openly with the other Delegations, so that NASCO will come to the appropriate decisions at the end of the meeting to further the moves towards the improved conservation of the wild Atlantic salmon, which we have seen from the example I provided earlier, is achievable. I would also like to thank the Secretary, Malcolm, and his team for the excellent work in preparing this meeting, and thank them in advance for the hard work and long hours that they will put in before the end of the meeting. It is much appreciated.

Thank you.

Opening Statement made by Norway

Minister, Madam President, Distinguished Delegates, Observers, Ladies and Gentlemen:

On behalf of Norway, I would like to thank Greenland for hosting the Twenty-Eighth Annual Meeting of NASCO, and once again giving us all the truly spectacular experience of 'The Fiord of the Icebergs' - Ilullissat.

NASCO has through the years been of vital importance for improving management and conservation of Atlantic salmon among its member countries. Implementation of the Precautionary Approach in Salmon Management has been one of the important undertakings by NASCO. This has been a fruitful strategy that already has proven its worth in the management of wild salmon.

In Norway, the advances in NASCO have led to improvements in most aspects of Atlantic salmon management. At this Annual Meeting the 'Next Steps' will be in focus, and the Norwegian delegation looks forward to strategic discussions of what the organization shall focus on and its working form, in the coming years.

Pre-Fishery Abundance in Norway was at a historically low level in 2010. Nevertheless, the spawning escapement was maintained on an adequate level in most rivers due to restrictions on the fishery.

Both river fisheries, coastal fisheries and most of the fjord fisheries for Atlantic salmon in Norway were further restricted from 2010 on. However, mixed-stock fisheries in the sea and in some large rivers, not least in the river Teno, still need attention, and this also applies to interceptory fishery in the sea. With regard to the latter, the Norwegian delegation will invite relevant NASCO members for discussions in the course of this meeting. For your information, Finland and Norway have agreed to start negotiations on the bilateral agreement on fishing in the river Teno this autumn.

A risk assessment on environmental impacts of Norwegian fish farming has been published this year. The document gives an assessment and evaluation of different challenges from aquaculture.

A comprehensive quality standard for wild salmon stocks has been suggested. The quality standard encompasses both spawning targets, criteria for genetic integrity and limits for exploitation. The document contains considerations of both quantitative and qualitative nature, and is now subject for debate in Norway.

Madam President, in closing I would like to thank our hosts and the Secretariat for excellent preparations for this meeting. The Norwegian delegation looks forward to a productive and successful meeting.

Opening Statement made by the Russian Federation

Madam Minister, Madam President, Distinguished Delegates, Observers, Ladies and Gentlemen!

On behalf of the Russian delegation I am pleased to greet all participants of the 28th Annual Meeting of NASCO here in Greenland.

First of all, I take this opportunity to thank Greenland for hosting this meeting in this beautiful place which is renowned in the world on account of its proximity to the picturesque Ilulissat Icefjord. We are also very pleased by the splendid arrangements made for us in Ilulissat which, as we know, means icebergs in Greenlandic!

Atlantic salmon, often described as ‘a symbol of a healthy ecosystem,’ has a high socio-economic value in northern countries both through commercial and subsistence coastal fisheries and recreational fisheries in rivers.

However, the extensive salmon migrations between open sea and home rivers pose a major problem for fish managers regulating fisheries in different areas. While the river fisheries mainly exploit river-specific stocks, the coastal fisheries inevitably exploit a mixture of stocks from widely different areas, including fish from neighboring countries. This is a problem, as the coastal mixed-stock fishery can simultaneously exploit salmon from both healthy and struggling stocks.

Physiographically, Greenland is a part of the continent of North America. Unfortunately, there has been a dramatic decline in the Atlantic salmon stocks all over the Atlantic region of North America. The status of individual river stocks varies considerably and many salmon stocks are suffering reduced numbers of spawning salmon. Therefore, better targeted management measures should be developed and implemented for the mixed-stock fishery in coastal areas.

One strategy to protect the wild salmon stocks is to reduce landings and to enhance recreational fishery based on catch-and-release principles. In the Russian Federation the reduction of commercial fishing effort in the 1990s was aimed at conserving Atlantic salmon stocks and enhancing the recreational fishery which nowadays is renowned in the world as one of the highest quality and most prestigious in the North Atlantic. In Russia, rational management of Atlantic salmon stocks couldn't be productive and fruitful without NASCO's recommendations which cover the whole range of the problems relating to conservation and management of Atlantic salmon.

This year Norway, Russia and Finland started a new project: ‘Trilateral cooperation on our common resource: the Atlantic salmon in the Barents region’ (Kolarctic Salmon), which aims to merge modern science with traditional salmon fishing knowledge to create a future sustainable, long-term and knowledge-based salmon management regime for the Atlantic salmon stocks of the Barents region. The project is a joint venture between management, research, salmon fishing organizations and salmon fishermen in the participating countries. We hope that the results from this cooperative initiative will ensure the conservation and sustainable use of stocks allowing the introduction of the best possible constraints for the respective fisheries of fishery owners and traditional coastal fishermen.

Atlantic salmon is a national treasure in any country. And we realize that without international cooperation in conserving this resource, without combined efforts in developing a strategy for future actions one could hardly expect to be successful. Therefore, we do not have doubts that the work that will be accomplished in the course of this Annual Meeting will contribute to the preservation of this valuable species for future generations.

And in conclusion, I would like to thank Greenland for hosting this Annual Meeting once again for hospitality, and wish all of us success in working together during this week. Madam President, my delegation is looking forward to having important and fruitful discussions during this meeting.

Thank you for your attention!

Opening Statement made by the US

Madame Minister, Madame President, Distinguished Delegates, Members of the Secretariat, Observers, Ladies and Gentlemen:

On behalf of the United States, thank you to our Greenlandic hosts for their excellent accommodations for the Twenty-Eighth Annual Meeting of NASCO in this awe-inspiring location. Although I must admit it is a bit of a shock to come from approximately 30 degrees Celsius at home to a view of snow and icebergs.

Since the last NASCO meeting in Quebec City, the United States has taken significant measures to reverse the alarming declines in wild Atlantic salmon abundance trends in our rivers. We are fortunate in the United States to have a diverse group of supportive stakeholders assisting us with Atlantic salmon recovery efforts. Three significant dams were removed from important salmon rivers in 2010, and we look forward to 2012 when the first of three mainstem dams on the Penobscot River will be removed. In addition, we have been working with a number of science partners to enhance our understanding of the factors leading to the declines in marine survival affecting US stocks. We look forward with great anticipation to the 'Salmon Summit' in La Rochelle, France in October of this year. The US will be presenting information from several research initiatives and also looks forward to receiving new research findings from other partners throughout the salmon's range. It's our hope that the information that is exchanged at the Summit can and will be applied by the Parties in the near term in a management context.

This year NASCO continues the good work initiated through the 'Next Steps' process to increase collaboration, accountability and transparency within the Organization and among its Parties. At this meeting, we are completing the first cycle of the 'Next Steps' process and embarking on a further performance review of how NASCO and its Parties have conducted the important work of the Organization. There are clearly some important decision points ahead. We look forward to working with and ultimately receiving the findings of the review panel. We are confident that their findings and recommendations will build on the strong foundation of increased openness and inclusiveness generated through the 'Next Steps' process and that this review will help NASCO and its Parties improve our roles as we work through the many challenges facing the wild salmon in the North Atlantic.

In 2009, the West Greenland Commission adopted regulatory measures, which would also apply in 2010 and 2011, if there was no significant change in the Framework of Indicators developed by ICES. As in 2010, the Framework of Indicators Review Group has concluded that there was no significant change in the indicators used and, as a result, the agreement to limit catch at West Greenland to internal consumption will continue. We are grateful for Greenland's strong commitment to rebuilding these stocks. Since the US ceased all fishing for Atlantic salmon several years ago, we have some understanding of and acknowledge the sacrifices of the Greenlandic people in this regard. Although we will not be negotiating measures for West Greenland until next year's annual meeting, we hope at this meeting to continue a collaborative dialog on responsible fisheries management with an eye toward a future of healthy, productive stocks of Atlantic salmon.

Madame President, thanks again to our hosts, to you and to the Secretariat for the facilities provided and for the excellent preparations for this meeting. The US looks forward to working with you all this week to ensure a productive and successful meeting.