

Welcoming Address made by The Honourable Ane Hansen, Minister for Fisheries, Hunting and Agriculture, Government of Greenland

Madame President, Distinguished Delegates, Observers, Ladies and Gentlemen

Good morning

It is a great pleasure for me here today to welcome you all to Greenland to this spectacular city, Ilulissat. It is indeed a great pleasure for Greenland to host the Twenty-Eighth Annual Meeting of the North Atlantic Salmon Conservation Organization here in Ilulissat.

Ilulissat is a unique place in the world with its fantastic Icebergs and glaciers through which the Greenland Ice cap reaches the sea. You now find yourselves about 250 km north of the Arctic Circle.

Back in 2004, Ilulissat Icefjord was admitted onto UNESCO's World Heritage List. This certainly indicates that the entire world sees a need to protect these natural heritages against destruction.

Besides having a spectacular nature, Ilulissat is one of our most important places for tourism. Fishery is also of great economic importance here, in particular fishing for Greenland halibut.

Greenland has once before, back in 1997, hosted a NASCO Annual Meeting – to be precise - the Fourteenth Annual Meeting – in exactly the same place as we are here today. I believe that those of you who were here at that time recall the beauty of Ilulissat, but also have noted that the hotel is different with much more modern facilities.

Greenland has been a member of NASCO ever since Greenland withdrew from the European Community back in 1985. In NASCO as well as in many other Regional Fisheries Management Organisations (RFMOs) Greenland cooperates very closely with the Faroe Islands, and we normally act as one single party as Denmark in respect of the Faroe Islands and Greenland.

Greenland recognizes the objectives of the organisation and appreciates that cooperation, conservation, rebuilding of stocks and sound management are all very important elements for ensuring sustainable fisheries on the stock.

I firmly believe that Greenland in this respect has done its utmost by introducing measures to limit catches. As you know, Greenland has not allowed any commercial fisheries for salmon in our waters since 2002. We also, at the same time, introduced a ban on export of salmon. However, we do maintain a so-called subsistence fishery which in a global context is insignificant, but nevertheless of great importance for our people.

Only one single and small stock of Atlantic salmon is native to Greenland. The stock is located at the creek of Kapisillit, further south of this place. Greenland is fishing on a so-called mixed stock which is composed of salmon originating from North America and from Europe. I realise this gives rise to critical remarks.

In this context I would encourage other parties to carefully look at their home water fisheries and consider whether additional management measures are necessary for these fisheries. Certainly, it is both desirable and necessary that all parties involved cooperate in a constructive way with a view to finding long term solutions for sustainable salmon fisheries.

I'm well aware that the stock situation, despite many sacrifices over the years, is still on a low level and, of course, the low abundance is of great concern to all of us.

Our fishermen have, in particular over the last three – four years, continuously reported of higher salmon abundances in our waters.

These observations have led to a demand from our fishermen to re-open our commercial fishery for salmon. If our fishermen in the years ahead still report back of increased abundance, we might contemplate introducing regulations and measures to allow for re-opening of a commercial fishery at a sustainable level for the Greenlandic market.

Over the past three years, Greenland has been part of an extended research programme with valuable contributions from the USA, Canada and the EU. The scientists involved are in Greenland taking samples and doing research during the fishing season. We highly appreciate taking part in this research work and believe that it brings us a much more comprehensive understanding of the nature of this fishery. We hope the cooperation in this field can continue in future years. We are committed to this work and hope also that KNAPK will facilitate and continue its cooperation in this field.

From the agenda, I see you have many important issues to address in the days ahead. I wish you every success in your work and I am confident that your efforts will bring this 28th Annual Meeting of NASCO to a successful conclusion.

I also hope you would allow yourself some time to take a closer view of the city and the beautiful surroundings here and climate changes. It is my sincere hope that you on your return to your home countries safe and sound and will recall good memories from the NASCO 28th Annual Meeting.

I know that a boat trip and a walking tour have been arranged. Unfortunately, even if we so wished, we cannot take you to a salmon river, as we have only one small salmon creek many miles away from here.

Tonight, I have the pleasure on behalf of the Government of Greenland to host a dinner, and I hope you all accept my invitation.

Finally, I would like to hand over to you a little book gift to remind you of the 28th NASCO Annual Meeting and the beautiful surroundings of Ilulissat.

I wish you a successful meeting.

I welcome you all.

Thank you.