

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

Madam President,

Once again this year's ICES advice reminds us that wild Atlantic salmon stocks in the North Atlantic are close to their lowest historic levels. I want to remind Council that eight years ago at the 20th anniversary meeting of NASCO in 2004, ASF and WWF(US) presented a Vision Statement which concluded that the NASCO convention needed teeth - despite the excellence of the various NASCO agreements and guidelines, Parties were either failing to implement them, or implementing them so slowly as to have a minimal impact on Atlantic salmon conservation.

The “Next Steps” process emerged out of this dialogue, but despite real gains in participation and transparency, it is an unfortunate fact that NASCO agreements and guidelines, and ICES advice, are still being ignored. Due to a lack of political commitment some of the major threats to Atlantic salmon are not being adequately addressed (issues such as mixed-stock fisheries, the impacts of aquaculture and human impacts on freshwater habitats). Coupled with wider climatic influences, stocks have not significantly improved over these past eight years.

So it is with some pleasure that we welcome the recommendations of the three international experts whose External Performance Review will be presented to Council this week. These experts recognize that the NASCO Convention does not adequately reflect current applicable law and practice, and recommend that it be reviewed with a view to strengthening and modernizing the legal mandate of NASCO and the obligations of the Parties. Among their recommendations are that NASCO ensure the application of the Precautionary Approach to all impacts of human activity on the Atlantic salmon life-cycle, close the remaining mixed-stock fisheries in home waters, and make further progress towards achieving the international goals for sea lice and containment. The NGO Group supports all its recommendations.

This is a long and detailed report with many other positive recommendations. We are pleased that the report commends the ‘Next Steps’ process and recommends (for the second cycle) a focus on the effectiveness of measures undertaken. This is essential to maintain our momentum in the immediate future and it is also important to recognise and build on the results of the SALSEA project.

The key recommendation though, is a thorough review of this Council’s decision-making process in light of the need for binding decisions in all areas of the organisation’s focus, taking into account best practice by other RFMOs. For some Parties this might appear a challenging process, but we urge you to work with the wider stakeholder communities which we represent to explore every alternative to make this happen.

Madam President, as we all know, Atlantic salmon are a hugely valuable and iconic species under a multitude of threats from both natural and human impacts; NASCO has worked hard over the past 28 years to identify best conservation and management practice, but some governments have been slow to respond. The External Performance Review provides a real opportunity for NASCO to make a sea-change in wild Atlantic salmon conservation. We urge The Parties to join us in embracing this report and begin the modernisation process as soon as possible. Atlantic salmon deserve nothing less.

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

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

We enthusiastically welcome the recommendations of the international performance review. Three international experts recognize that the NASCO Convention does not adequately reflect current applicable law and practice, and recommend that it be reviewed with a view to strengthening and modernizing the legal mandate of NASCO and the obligations of the Parties. Among their recommendations are that NASCO ensure the application of the Precautionary Approach to all impacts of human activity on the Atlantic salmon life-cycle, close the remaining mixed-stock fisheries in home waters, and make further progress towards achieving the international goals for sea lice and containment. The NGOs heartily concur.

We hope that Canada and the United States will give thoughtful consideration to strengthening the NASCO mandate, with some sense of urgency, to enable implementation of strong measures to save and restore salmon within all Party jurisdictions. In the meantime, the NGOs support the recommendations of the Working Group on future Reporting Under Implementation Plans. We urge the support of Canada and the United States in ensuring that future reporting by Parties clearly specify actions to be taken to achieve the goals of NASCO agreements. Reporting must include the expected and measureable outcomes of Party actions, along with approaches to monitoring, including enforcement.

We commend the support provided by the US government and State of Maine in working with several conservation organizations, including the Atlantic Salmon Federation, and the Penobscot Indian Nation to remove three dams on Maine's Penobscot River. The first of these dams, the Great Works, a 1,000-foot mass of concrete, timber and cribwork, will be removed next Monday, on June 11, amidst great celebration and fanfare. Once all three dams are removed, this precedent-setting restoration project will reopen nearly 1,000 miles of habitat for Atlantic salmon, shad, alewives and other sea-run fish.

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

Mr Chairman, I'm pleased to present a joint opening statement to this Commission on behalf of the NGO Group.

NGOs welcome the recommendations of the External Performance Review. We note that two of our long-term concerns for this Commission area, mixed stock fishing in home-waters and minimising the impacts of aquaculture, are specifically mentioned in the report and we look forward to working with the Parties in taking these recommendations forward.

Every year NGOs have expressed concern at failure by some Parties to act decisively to close mixed-stock fisheries in their home-waters following the good example set by EU - Ireland in 2007. This year we note with even more concern trends of a significant increase in catch by coastal nets in EU - Sweden and EU - UK (England & Wales) and an increase in effort in EU - UK (Scotland). As a result the proportion of salmon taken by coastal nets in the NEAC area is now more than a third of the total.

ICES advice has been consistent for the past several years, pointing out the threats posed by mixed-stock fishing on both components of the NEAC stock, which continue to remain close to historic low levels. NGOs have campaigned for many years for the closure of mixed-stock coastal fisheries in line with the NASCO principle of fairness between distant and home-water fisheries. We trust that Denmark in respect of Greenland and The Faroes will also deplore any increase in coastal mixed-stock fishing by any jurisdiction, and join us in putting pressure on the Parties who continue to permit the operation of such fisheries.

Some of the largest remaining mixed-stock fisheries continue to operate on the Norwegian coast and within the cross-border River Tana (Teno). We are pleased to note that discussions to limit mixed-stock fisheries in the Tana (Teno) have been instigated by Finland and Norway, and the start of the Trilateral project in Finnmark aimed at determining the genetic make-up of the Norwegian coastal fishery. However, these are unlikely to result in management changes before 2014. We are also pleased to note the request that coastal drift netting should cease in UK Northern Ireland, thanks to threats of action under the EU Habitats Directive.

In this context we acknowledge the availability of powerful genetic tools arising from the SALSEA-Merge programme to facilitate the identification of individual populations of salmon, and we urge Parties to make full use of these tools in eliminating the adverse impacts from the remaining mixed-stock coastal fisheries.

Progress in achieving the BMP guidance (in relation to minimising the impacts of aquaculture) continue to be disappointing. The twin targets of zero escapes and "natural" lice levels are far from being achieved in all jurisdictions. In Norway the number of escaped farm salmon rose last year to 365,000, a long way from zero. However, we do welcome Norway's commitment to make lice levels one of the defining factors in future salmon farming applications. I can also report that ASF and AST are working with partners to promote a range of alternative containment technologies.

The External Performance Review indicates that both these areas need further action. In the meantime the new Implementation Plan structure and reporting guidelines approved by

Council offer the opportunity for more rapid progress, particularly, as the Review points out, if failures from the first cycle are identified and firm commitments obtained from the jurisdictions involved.

In terms of fish passage in freshwater, we want to re-iterate our concerns about the impacts from the proliferation of micro-hydro schemes across Europe. The good news is that three major dams have been removed in EU France, significantly improving fish passage on the Allier and Selune rivers.

Mr Chairman, wild Atlantic salmon stocks are still at perilously low levels. The Parties round this table manage some of the largest remaining stocks in the Northern hemisphere, and we call on you to honour NASCO's agreements and guidelines with firm and prompt action.

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

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

We urge NASCO Parties to heed ICES advice and implement another three-year agreement for a zero quota on Greenland's commercial salmon fishery. Scientific advice from ICES is that there is no option for a fishery in Greenland in the next three years that would allow the number of large Atlantic salmon returning to North American rivers to reach their minimum overall conservation limit. Although ICES did predict that large salmon returns will continue to increase over the next three years, their numbers will not increase enough to sustain a harvest at Greenland. In 2011, 91% of the salmon harvested in Greenland were of North American origin. In addition, ICES states that despite some increases in salmon stock size of southern NEAC, these stocks are at or near historic low levels and there is no basis for fishing them at Greenland.

ICES indicates that fishing mixed stocks poses a particular threat. Because salmon from many rivers are mixing in feeding grounds off Greenland, it is impossible to restrict harvest to healthy stocks. Stocks that are endangered or threatened, such as those from Maine, southern Newfoundland, and the Atlantic coast of Nova Scotia are also vulnerable to harvest at Greenland.

Negotiating a zero commercial quota at Greenland for the next three years requires leadership from other Parties to NASCO. The External Review experts recognized the need for fairness and balance between regulating mixed-stock fisheries in the distant waters of Greenland and Faroe Islands and those in the jurisdictions of NASCO Parties. Their recommendations include the closure of the remaining mixed-stock fisheries in home-waters.

In conclusion, we need to ensure that we give ample time and opportunity to restore the large salmon of both North America and Europe, and this requires following ICES advice not only for distant water fisheries, but for fisheries in the home-waters of NASCO Parties as well.

Opening Statement made to the Council by ICES

Madame President, distinguished colleagues, ladies and gentlemen, dear colleagues,

I am very pleased to participate in the 29th annual NASCO meeting – which is also my first meeting at NASCO in my position as General Secretary of ICES.

While confirming and underlining the role of ICES in providing best available science for use by NASCO in making your management decisions, we also aim to be responsive to changes in your needs. For this reason, we are closely following the review of your activities and how you decide to handle and implement the recommendations stemming from this review.

It is – I believe – no coincidence that the Chair of the external ICES advisory review panel, Mr. Kjartan Hoydal is also participating in and chairing the NASCO review, together with esteemed colleagues Mr. Michael Shewchuk and Ms. Judith Swan.

This will ensure synergies between these two reviews and in that ICES will be up-to-date in providing scientific advice requested by its clients.

As usual ICES is represented here by my colleagues, Henrik Sparholt Advisory Programme Professional Officer and Gerald Chaput, Chairman of the Salmon Working Group, thus ensuring continuity and the same high standards when it comes to the presentation of the report from the ICES Advisory Committee.

The decreasing trend in the salmon stocks over the past decades, in spite of serious reductions in the exploitation at sea, is both mysterious and cause for concern. The reasons are linked to survival at sea of the young salmon but the actual mechanisms are not fully understood and are therefore not easy to resolve. ICES is working on many biological aspects of this issue involving, for example, aquaculture impacts via sea lice, marine ecosystems in general, species interactions in particular, by-catches in open sea fisheries for mackerel and herring, climate effects in the North-East Atlantic, among others. I can also mention that ICES has decided to strategically strengthen our research regarding aquaculture effects on the marine ecosystem including salmon. All this should enable us to constantly improve our scientific advice to NASCO.

Dear Malcolm – even if new in the business, I would like to join in the appreciation of your work and your person as such. Both of which, even with my limited time within ICES, has not gone unnoted for me.

Together with my colleagues I look forward to the discussions and outcome of this week's meeting.

Thank you

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

Madam President, Mr Secretary, delegates, observers, ladies and gentlemen.

I am grateful for the opportunity to provide an opening statement on behalf of the European Inland Fisheries and Aquaculture Advisory Commission (EIFAAC) at this the 29th Annual meeting of NASCO.

By way of background 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 European countries. EIFAAC has currently 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 every 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. To make the work of EIFAAC more efficient, 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 and Scientific Committee under the general supervision of a 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
- the delivery of effective research.

Formal adoption of the new EIFAAC Rules of Procedure has been completed and we look forward to the 27th EIFAAC Session and Symposium in October 2012, which will be hosted in Finland. EIFAAC would welcome a NASCO representative as an observer at this Session. 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; EIFAAC has currently active project groups looking at a number of prioritised research areas including management strategies for aquatic invasive species, sustainable management actions on Cormorant populations, fish handling and fish passage. EIFAAC is well positioned to offer expert

advice and support to NASCO on issues affecting the Atlantic Salmon in the freshwater element of its lifecycle.

Finally, can I wish all of you a productive and enjoyable NASCO session. Thank you kindly for your attention.