

Opening Statement made by Canada

Madame President, distinguished delegates, observers, ladies and gentlemen:

I am pleased to be here again this year to represent Canada at a NASCO annual meeting. This is my third NASCO annual meeting and my second as Head of the Canadian delegation. First, I would like to thank our hosts, the Secretariat, for inviting us here to this extraordinary setting in Edinburgh and for providing such an excellent meeting facility.

On the Atlantic Coast of Canada, anadromous Atlantic salmon are found in rivers from the border with the USA, at the mouth of the Bay of Fundy, to Labrador, as far north as Nain, 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. Of 16 Designatable Units in eastern Canada, COSEWIC has 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.

We hope that through our cooperation NASCO, with ICES and with NGOs, we will continue to enhance our understandings on how to better address the conservation of salmon stocks.

We believe that balancing our efforts and focus on issues we can control to increase returns, such as habitat conservation and restoration, as well as recovery initiatives in freshwater and near-shore environments are important matters to Canada.

Habitat conservation and recovery initiatives are important aspects of Canada's Wild Atlantic Salmon Conservation Policy. The policy reinforces our 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 last year 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 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. We have seen the fruits of the 'Next Steps' program labour, most recently through the work of the Working Group on Future Reporting under Implementation Plans, which met in late 2011. Canada has seen much value from the 'Next Steps' and thanks all involved with its processes to date.

Canada also welcomes the report of the External Performance Review panel and thanks the three esteemed panellists for their work. We look forward to working with other NASCO parties to review the recommendations with hopes of continuing to move NASCO in a positive direction.

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:

On behalf of the governments of the Faroe Islands and Greenland I would like to start by saying that we are delighted to be here in Scotland and especially in the charming city of Edinburgh.

NASCO is at a crossroads. The External Performance Review Panel has highlighted what the Faroe Islands and Greenland have been saying for all these years. If NASCO is to live up to its fundamental purpose – to conserve and restore North Atlantic salmon – then this organisation must also regulate home-water fisheries.

In the words of the Review Panel, there is an apparent imbalance and disconnect between the Convention-based decisions which concern the Greenlandic and Faroese fisheries and the soft law measures which concern the conservation of the salmon stocks in the river nations.

This is unfair. It is not rational management of the salmon stocks. And it is certainly not in the light of modern international principles and best practice in international cooperation on fisheries resources. Especially, when the sacrifices of the Faroe Islands and Greenland haven't led to any significant recovery of the stocks. Because the main threats to the salmon stocks are elsewhere.

The Faroe Islands and Greenland have fulfilled our part of the responsibility. Now it is up to the river nations to live up to their responsibilities. We are looking forward to hear the views of other parties and to contribute to discussions this week on whether and how this can actually be achieved through NASCO.

ICES continues to underline that mixed-stock fisheries present particular threats to the salmon stocks. But thousands of salmon are still caught each year in coastal fisheries. Although we appreciate the conservation measures undertaken by other parties, we are disappointed to see that more than a third of all catches are still taken in coastal waters or estuaries.

We urge the river nations to create the best possible conditions for rebuilding the salmon stocks in order to improve the prospects for the Faroe Islands and Greenland to make full use of our rights to a sustainable salmon fishery at sea.

Madame President, we would like once again to thank the Secretariat for all their efforts in preparing this meeting and for bringing us back here to the hometown of NASCO. And also a very special thanks to you Malcolm for your great efforts and dedication in your work for the conservation and management of the North Atlantic Salmon.

Thank you

Opening Statement made by the European Union

Madam President, Mr. Secretary, Distinguished Delegates, Observers, Ladies and Gentlemen:

It is a pleasure for the European Union to be here in Edinburgh at this 29th NASCO meeting.

We are excited for being back to the hometown of NASCO.

All these years, NASCO has had a major role for the sustainable management and conservation of salmon stocks, in particular by promoting principles that are at the heart of the European Common Fisheries Policy, such as the precautionary approach and a science-based management.

Looking back in time, we might ask ourselves if NASCO has delivered on the objectives we had set for this Organisation, but in doing so, we should also ask ourselves what would have happened if NASCO had not been there during all this time.

This year we have a great opportunity to start looking for answers to both these questions. The External Performance Review that NASCO has just undergone will help us in doing so. It is the opinion of the European Union that such Review is an important and powerful tool to decide which NASCO we want for the future. We are therefore looking forward to this first exchange of views. In this respect, the European Union comes here with no prejudged positions on the final outcome of such process. However, it is clear to us that here in Edinburgh we can only commit to starting the debate but not to closing it. That will certainly take a bit more time.

The debate on the future of NASCO will also benefit from the findings of the 'Salmon Summit', which took place in La Rochelle last October. Our understanding of the mortality at sea of Atlantic salmon has dramatically improved under the SALSEA project and it is of key importance for our management decisions in the future.

More generally, increased knowledge and improved scientific advice are paramount to our work. To this extent, we welcome the ICES advice on the mixed-stock fisheries and we believe that Contracting Parties should take it into the biggest account, in particular regarding the development of a risk-based management approach for the Faroe Islands Fishery.

Madam President, we look forward to working with you this week and wish you every success for this Annual Meeting.

But before closing, on behalf of the European Union, I would like to already thank our Secretary, Malcolm, and his team for the excellent work in preparing this meeting. Malcolm, I know that this is going to be a very special meeting for you. I just want you to know that it will also be very special for us. It is difficult to picture NASCO without you: you are much more than a Secretary to NASCO and to us. As such, I would like to express the gratitude and admiration of the EU for all the efforts and dedication that you put in our Organisation and the unique spirit that you have given us during all these years.

We wish you all the best for your future undertakings. We will miss you.
Thank you.

Opening Statement made by Norway

Thank You Madam President,

Delegates, Observers, Ladies and Gentlemen:

I feel comfortable that we can all agree that the key issue at this meeting will be how to deal with the recommendations of the external performance review panel.

The review panel's analysis is surely thorough and comprehensive and we have to respond to them in a swift and effective manner. Under Your leadership Madame President, and in the good tradition of consensus among the NASCO parties, I am sure we will be able to do so.

Opening Statement made by the Russian Federation

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

On behalf of the Russian delegation I am pleased to greet all participants of the 29th Annual Meeting of NASCO here in NASCO's home city of Edinburgh. I would like to express my delight at being in the country renowned for its many beautiful salmon rivers and for prestigious recreational salmon fishing.

The important issues at this Annual Meeting will be the External Performance Review and the 'Next Steps' Strategy. Therefore, we are looking forward to the report from the External Performance Review Panel on its examination of the past, present and future of NASCO and to the report of the Working Group on Future Reporting under Implementation Plans. We realize that without international cooperation, without combined efforts in developing a strategy for future actions NASCO cannot be successful. We are looking forward to discussing these reports together with all other participants of the Annual Meeting and deciding jointly how we shall live in NASCO in the future.

The international cooperation has always been a basis for NASCO work. Informal consultations between Norway and the Russian Federation concerning coastal fisheries are a good example of such cooperation. I would like to note our good neighbourly relations with Norway and common interests in both science and management of Atlantic salmon. We are working closely together to identify ways to address challenges in the management of salmon mixed-stock fisheries.

I would also like to inform you that due to recent changes in the structure of the Government of the Russian Federation the fisheries management has once again been devolved to the Ministry of Agriculture. However, despite these administrative changes the management of Atlantic salmon commercial and recreational fisheries will remain under the authority of Regional Commissions on regulation of anadromous fish exploitation.

We all know that this NASCO Meeting will be the last one for Dr. Malcolm Windsor as a Secretary of the Organization. On behalf of the Russian delegation I would like to thank him very much for his excellent work and wish him best luck, pleasant post-NASCO life and new achievements.

Finally, Madame President, I would like to thank our very efficient Secretariat for the excellent arrangements for this meeting. The delegation of the Russian Federation looks forward to a very productive and successful meeting.

Thank you for attention!

Opening Statement made by the US

Madame President, Mr. Secretary, distinguished delegates, colleagues, friends:

On behalf of the United States, I would like to take this opportunity to thank Scotland for hosting the 29th Annual Meeting of NASCO. It is fitting that this year's meeting is being held here in Edinburgh, NASCO's hometown. We have many important changes and initiatives before us this week. The next few days will, no doubt, mark the end of one era for NASCO and begin another.

Looking first to the future, NASCO is at an important juncture, and we have the critical responsibility of making sure this organization is fit for the future. An important first step in this regard will be to take on-board the lessons learned from implementation of the first full cycle of the 'Next Steps' Process—a process in which we, as an organization, are deeply vested. Toward that end, we are grateful to the members of the Working Group on Future Reporting for their hard work. Once implemented, the recommendations of this group will ensure that future reporting focuses on outcomes while reducing reporting and review burdens by all jurisdictions. We feel that the suite of recommendations within the group's report strike a reasonable balance between reporting burden and transparency.

An important second step this organization needs to take relates to the recently completed independent performance review report. From our perspective, the review panel did a thorough and comprehensive job and their recommendations deserve serious thought as we consider the best ways to move the organization forward. We were particularly pleased that the review panel was so supportive of NASCO's 'Next Steps' process and the work of the Working Group on Future Reporting. It is re-assuring to hear such strong support for the overall direction and steps we have taken toward greater accountability in implementing NASCO's decisions and, more generally, toward supporting transparency and inclusivity in all aspects of our work.

We look forward to the Special Session this afternoon where we will hear directly from the review panel. Clearly, there is much in the report to consider and discuss, and the session will provide an excellent opportunity for everyone to share views on the report itself and, more importantly, on where NASCO goes from here.

There is also much work to be done in each of the Commissions. From our perspective, the work before us in the West Greenland Commission is extremely important. We are fortunate to report a banner year for adult returns to U.S. Rivers in 2011. According to ICES, 2011 was the 12th highest estimated return of 2-sea-winter adults since 1971, which is good news. However, such news must be tempered by the reality that this still only represents 13% of our conservation limit. The path for successful recovery of endangered stocks in the United States involves continued international cooperation, and we look forward to working with our NASCO partners to develop a new multi-annual regulatory measure for the period of 2012 through 2014.

Having said that, we take very seriously our responsibility to support international actions by taking strong measures at home to protect and recover Atlantic salmon and its habitat. For example, I am happy to announce that the removal of Great Works Dam, a large hydroelectric dam on the Penobscot River, starts this week. It is a momentous occasion that represents the work of a broad-based partnership of federal and state agencies as well as

many NGOs. In addition to this large project, there are many other smaller scale dam removal and habitat improvement projects being implemented throughout the North-East United States. The United States is committed to the conservation of Atlantic salmon and to meeting its NASCO responsibilities. By sharing information on these kinds of domestic investments, our intention is to clearly demonstrate that on-going commitment.

Our last comments as this meeting opens relate not to the future, but to the ending of an era for this organization. This year is the last meeting for our esteemed Secretary, Dr. Malcolm Windsor. The United States would like to take this opportunity to express our profound gratitude to Malcolm for his leadership, hard work, and dedication to this organization and, more importantly, to the conservation and management of Atlantic salmon. There is no denying that NASCO and Atlantic salmon have benefited greatly from Dr. Windsor's deep commitment to and support of sustainable conservation and management of shared resources through international cooperation. As NASCO's first and only Secretary, it is difficult to imagine NASCO without Malcolm. His organizational skills and wise counsel together with his great wit and charm made even the toughest NASCO meeting a pleasure. Dr. Windsor, the United States would like to thank you most sincerely for what you have done for this organization during your remarkable tenure as Secretary. We will miss you, and we wish you all the best in your next adventure. .

Madame President and Mr. Secretary, thank you again for your excellent preparations for this meeting. We look forward to a very productive week.