

## *Opening Statement made by the President of NASCO*

Distinguished Delegates, Observers, Ladies and Gentlemen:

It is my pleasure to welcome you to the Twenty-Ninth Annual Meeting of NASCO. This is a very exciting and special meeting for a number of reasons. In the coming days, we will be receiving and discussing two reports that will help guide the future of the Organization. In addition, this will be the last meeting for our Secretary, Dr. Malcolm Windsor, who has been the guiding force for the Organization since its creation.

It has now been approximately eight years since NASCO initiated a comprehensive review intended to identify the current challenges facing the Organization in the management and conservation of wild Atlantic salmon and ways to address these challenges; review the management and organizational structure of NASCO; and consider the procedural aspects of NASCO and the relationship between the Organization, its Parties and Stakeholders. During the past few years, NASCO has increased its engagement and interaction with NGOs and stakeholders, improved reporting, worked cooperatively to investigate marine mortality, and worked to improve transparency in its operations. The steps that have been taken have been part of an evolution toward the stated vision of the restoration of abundant Atlantic salmon stocks throughout the species' range with the aim of providing the greatest possible benefits to society and individuals.

This year we will be receiving the report from the Working Group on Future Reporting under Implementation Plans and Evaluation of These Reports. The recommendations of this group are designed to ensure that the next reporting cycle includes new Implementation Plans that specify clear actions planned over the next five years, the expected outcomes and the approach to monitoring the effectiveness of the actions. Given the depleted status of Atlantic salmon in many jurisdictions, it is important that we work to implement the recommendations of this Working Group without delay.

Importantly, we will also be receiving and discussing the report from the External Performance Review. Given the time and energy NASCO, the Contracting Parties and the NGOs have invested in the 'Next Steps' process, I think we should all be proud that the Panel complimented the process and the great efforts made to address issues affecting all phases of the salmon life cycle. The Panel recommended that this progress should continue and the excellent recommendations from the Working Group on Future Reporting provide us with a productive path for the next cycle of reports and review. The External Review also made a number of recommendations regarding the need to review the Convention, role and function of the Council and Commissions, and the responsibilities of the Contracting Parties. Additional time will be required to fully evaluate these recommendations and determine what action is appropriate to modernize, strengthen and best equip NASCO, the Contracting Parties and our NGO partners to further the conservation and management of Atlantic salmon.

We will also have the opportunity at this meeting to hear the results of the 'Salmon Summit'. This is another example where the cooperation among the Parties and the NGOs resulted in the launching of significant at sea monitoring that no party alone could have undertaken. While our quest to understand the factors affecting salmon survival at sea has only just begun, the information gained through these surveys and the partnerships formed among researchers in a range of disciplines will pay dividends for years to come.

While the challenges and obstacles facing wild Atlantic salmon are great, the cooperation and dedication of all of you in this room have made accomplishments possible. A great deal of credit must go to Dr. Malcolm Windsor who, as Secretary since the formation of NASCO, has created and fostered an atmosphere of respect, good will and determination. His strong commitment to the future of Atlantic salmon and his calm and easy going manner have not only made our work possible, but enjoyable. I have personally benefitted from Malcolm's knowledge, experience and insights as a member of a delegation, of working groups, and now as President. While we will have occasion later in this meeting to more properly thank Malcolm for his service to NASCO, I could not let this opening session pass without acknowledging his tremendous contribution to the Organization and to the species.

Thank you and I look forward to working with you all this week.