

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

We welcome you all to Ireland and to the banks of the Boyne River, where a great battle was fought in 1690 that defines our history to this very day. The battle to restore our wild Atlantic salmon is especially urgent today, and we hope that the legend of the 'Bradán Feasa' or Salmon of Knowledge will inspire this 30th Annual Meeting of NASCO to take real action in conserving this iconic North Atlantic species.

In last year's Opening Statement, the NGOs welcomed the recommendations of the External Performance Review. While we do regret the marginal involvement that was given to our group by the Parties in the process of considering the recommendations, we appreciate being allowed to present a brief to the meeting of Parties in February. In it, we urged that NASCO establish a Working Party to consider various ways of strengthening NASCO as recommended by the External Reviewers, including the addition of new language to the treaty to broaden its legal authority. However, the Parties balked at reopening the Convention and at giving consideration to NASCO having power to ensure that appropriate actions are taken to conserve and protect wild Atlantic salmon within Party jurisdictions. There will be an opportunity later today to consider in more detail the outcome of the inter-sessional meeting of the Parties, but, at this point, we simply record our extreme disappointment with this decision.

As Denmark (in respect of the Faroe Islands and Greenland) has repeatedly pointed out, there is hard, treaty-based law to constrain their ability to exploit the resource. But there is only the softest of soft law to control the exploitation of the 'home' nations and to require them to take the measures necessary for the welfare of the species.

The NGO group has consistently supported the Implementation Plan and Review system as a means of bringing greater transparency to bear on the plans, activities and outcomes of salmon conservation measures in individual jurisdictions. But transparency can only go so far when there are no redlines against which to measure progress. The limitations of transparency as a management tool are further constrained by the failure of Parties to question and exert pressure on each other to conform to the agreed guidelines.

Since our last meeting, there has been no improvement in the key indicators of the overall state of salmon abundance in the NASCO area. Nor have we seen much progress in the key areas of mixed-stock fishing in certain home waters. On the salmon farming front, there is little evidence from any jurisdiction of improved siting or regulatory decisions by the authorities or of improved management practice by the operators. Problems of disease and discharge of waste are now being added to the previous priority threats of sea lice infestation to migrating smolts and of escapes.

The future for Irish salmon appears especially bleak in the face of new policy that will allow unbridled development of offshore open pen salmon farms to increase production from 14,000 to 150,000 tonnes in the salmon's migratory channel off the west coast. The first mega farm is planned for Galway Bay, a mecca for domestic and international tourists. The NASCO NGO Group, on behalf of millions of people around the North Atlantic who value their wild Atlantic salmon, urges the Irish Government to stop this destructive expansion of open net pens. The Irish Government must develop alternative industries and employment opportunities such as expansion in tourism and fisheries, which depend on a pristine

environment and abundant wild fish populations. It's time for government to rethink its obsession with open net pen salmon aquaculture, which contributes to declining salmon populations, and displaces fishermen and tourists wherever it operates.

The reaction of the Parties to the External Review is putting a lot of faith in Implementation Plan review and annual reporting to ensure that the goals of NASCO agreement are met through clearly described, measureable outcomes and timescales. Yet only 9 of 17 of the Parties submitted their Implementation Plans by the February 1 deadline, three Parties did not submit at all and a fourth submitted almost three months late, and well after the Review Group had met. Few Parties consulted with stakeholders in preparing their plans. Many of the Parties had to be prodded by the Review Group to supply evidence in the form of measurements that would signify effective actions, such as progress in sea lice management and containment.

You will understand then why the NGOs remain unconvinced that the Implementation Plan process alone will inspire Parties to better conserve and protect wild Atlantic salmon in their jurisdictions. We hope to be proven wrong but, for the time being at least, our main concern continues to be a perceived lack of political commitment across the range of wild Atlantic salmon to effectively protect this species, and to restore its many diverse stocks to anything close to their former status.

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

The NGOs are astounded by the clarification by Denmark (in respect of the Faroe Islands and Greenland) at the meeting of the West Greenland Commission that Greenland is conducting what is essentially a commercial fishery through factory sales that have a quota of 35 tonnes. In addition, Denmark (in respect of the Faroe Islands and Greenland) has confirmed that Greenland considers its subsistence fishery to be limitless. We appreciate the objections registered by the US and Canada but urge more leadership in convincing Greenland to adhere to the multi-year NASCO agreement.

We urge Canada to lead by example in controlling its own harvests. We note that the total harvest of salmon and grilse in Canada has been reduced from 177 tonnes in 2011 to 135 tonnes in 2012. This is mostly due to the major decline in returns in 2012 rather than more restrictive fisheries management measures. In Canada's own mixed-stock fishery off Labrador, the harvest of large salmon was 4,022, the second largest in the past 13 years. It is concerning that Canada does not follow the NASCO guidelines that state that rational management of a mixed-stock fishery requires knowledge of the contributing stocks and the status of each of those stocks and management actions should aim to protect the weakest of the contributing stocks. We recognize that Canada is partnering in a genetics study to provide data on this topic, but decry the lack of precautionary management that has historically characterized this fishery.

We note that, despite NASCO protocols on transfers and introductions, Canada is considering the application by two salmon aquaculture companies on the East coast to import Norwegian-origin Atlantic salmon from an Icelandic facility for the purpose of conducting performance trials in net cages at sea. In view of the ongoing escapes from open net pens, and the genetic risks to wild Atlantic salmon when wild and farmed salmon interbreed, the NGOs urge Canada to prohibit the use of foreign-origin salmon in open net pens.

The NGOs encourage Canada and the United States to work together to develop consistent measures to manage their aquaculture industries in view of the common ecosystem occupied by their respective industries, and the threat of escapees from the industry of one country to its neighbour. Escaped salmon can travel long distances as attested by the escapees presumed to be Canadian that have shown up at facilities on Maine's rivers, where this type of interaction is monitored. Escapees bring the risk of disease, parasite, and genetic impacts to Maine's endangered wild salmon populations. Regulatory changes are needed in Canada to bring management of the aquaculture industry up to standards presently in place in Maine, where there is a focus on escape prevention, reporting of all escapes, site specific marking of all farmed fish and third party audits.

We urge that the US take a strong stand in ensuring that the State of Maine's own progress towards environmentally-responsible salmon farming is not compromised by Canada.

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

Chairman, Delegates;

In our Opening Statement to Council last year the NGOs welcomed the recommendations of the External Performance Review. I will not go over again the regrets and continuing concerns we have over the Parties' response to the Review process, which we feel fell short of the changes of mandate required to effectively protect and restore Atlantic salmon stocks across the northern hemisphere. I will, however, reiterate the key issues which persistently frustrate the NGO sector, because they all have particular relevance to the North-East Atlantic Commission.

Following SALSEA and the 'Salmon Summit' in La Rochelle, we now know the main routes taken by post smolts and the times when they are likely to be in specific areas. We therefore call on NASCO to commission ICES for advice as to when and where pelagic fleets should desist from fishing so as to avoid killing post smolts as by-catch, and then for Parties to do all in their power to ensure their pelagic fishermen follow that advice.

The NGOs have concerns about the increase in the Greenland harvest in 2012, and following the West Greenland Commission meeting this morning, even stronger worries that a quota of 35 tonnes has been set internally for factory sales, over and above a subsistence harvest which was confirmed as being without quota. However, at least this is now transparent within NASCO and a very close eye will be kept on developments this year. And, of course, the Faroese continue to abide by their agreement not to fish for salmon at all in their home waters.

However, contrary to agreements made at this table and the recent historic spirit of the Faroese and Greenlanders, Parties in the North-East Atlantic Commission region continue to prosecute mixed-stock fisheries in their home waters. This is, the NGOs maintain, totally unacceptable if there is to be any meaningful efforts to control the exploitation of salmon in their marine phase. Northern Ireland has closed mixed-stock fisheries, and England is speeding up the eventual closure of its North-East drift net fishery, both of which are to be applauded. However, that is countered by evidence that Scotland is actually presiding over an increase in fishing effort on coastal mixed salmon and sea trout stocks, and Norway continues to prosecute a significant mixed-stock fishery in Finnmark. Wild fish conservation groups view this as nothing short of a kick in the teeth to their efforts, and a classic example of the lack of political commitment towards protecting Atlantic salmon.

This lack of commitment is further exemplified by the way in which the North-East Atlantic Commission Parties regulate salmon farming. It is a deep frustration that some Parties at this table still refuse to accept the negative impact that open net cage salmon farming can have on wild salmon and sea trout stocks and the marine environment around farm units. Sea lice and escapes have long been accepted by peer-reviewed science as major threats to wild fish, but we are collecting increasing evidence that disease and waste products are also significant hazards. However, the regulation and necessary independent inspection regimes to verify and ensure the proper control of identified environmental hazards associated with the operation of salmon farming is still woefully lax across the North-East Atlantic Commission region. Unless regulation is tightened legally and genuinely adhered to by individual Parties in home

waters, aquaculture will continue to be a major threat to the abundance of wild Atlantic salmon stocks.

We know that some countries are planning significant expansion of their aquaculture industries. For example, the Irish Government has plans to introduce a series of large scale offshore open pen salmon farms on the West coast, even though these could well be sited in a major migration corridor for wild salmon originating in Southern England, France, Spain and Portugal, as well as Ireland itself. Similarly, Scotland has stated that it seeks a huge increase in farmed salmon production, yet our best scientific evidence shows the potential for these units to seriously threaten the survival of migrating wild salmon and sea trout stocks - and we only have to look at the significant impacts being suffered in Norway as a result of lice infestations and escapee farmed fish contaminating wild gene pools, to see where other countries could be heading. Yet relevant governments still ignore the evidence that is to hand, or seem equally reluctant to conduct further research before they jump in with both feet to support the aquaculture industry at the potential expense of the environment and its dependent species. This is morally unjust and, in many cases we believe, illegal under environmental legislation.

So, reiterating what we said in our opening statement, since our last meeting, there has been no improvement in the key indicators of the overall state of salmon abundance in the NASCO area, nor have we seen much evidence that Parties within the North-East Atlantic Commission region are taking salmon conservation any more seriously than this time last year. Our main concern, therefore, continues to be a lack of political commitment across the wild Atlantic salmon's range to effectively protect this iconic species, and that, Mr Chairman, can only be rectified by a seismic change in the attitude of Parties at this table.

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

ICES indicates that the total catch of North American and European salmon at Greenland increased from 27.5 tonnes in 2011 to 34 tonnes in 2012. The majority of these salmon (79%), which amounts to about 7,800 salmon, are of North American origin. All of the salmon that migrate to West Greenland from the United States are from populations that are endangered, and for which expensive recovery programs are being carried out, including a \$62 million dam removal program on the Penobscot River. Many of the salmon from Canada that migrate to Greenland have been categorized by the Committee on the Status of Endangered Wildlife in Canada as ranging from “endangered” to “of special concern” and are potential candidates for listing under species at risk legislation. The remaining 21% are of southern European origin, and many of these salmon populations are failing to meeting conservation limits. The Greenland fishery threatens any benefit from the millions of Euros invested by anglers on habitat restoration to maximize smolt production in these rivers that are closed to salmon fishing.

There is presently no quantitative approach for estimating the unreported catch, according to ICES. However, in 2012, it is assumed to have been at the same level proposed in recent years (10 tonnes or about 2,700 fish).

ICES’s advice for 2012 through 2014 is that the predicted number of North American 2SW salmon will be substantially below the conservation limits, and there should be no harvest where salmon from various rivers are mixed together, such as in Greenland waters. In 2012, the large salmon that had migrated to Greenland suffered declines in abundance when compared with 2011. For the already endangered southern populations, the decline was especially dramatic, in some cases approaching the lowest levels in more than 40 years.

Taking into account both recorded and unreported harvests, an estimated 10,500 North American salmon were killed at Greenland in 2012. Another 2,100 European fish were killed. For the first time since the commercial fishery was closed, Greenland fishermen were allowed to sell fish to factories in 2012. This disturbing new addition of factory sales threatens to be an incentive for an increased internal commercial fishery. Greenland has agreed for 2012 to 2014 to restrict its salmon fisheries to internal use, which historically had amounted to no more than 20 tonnes. Despite this, Greenland indicates in its 2012 annual report to NASCO that the government has, for the first time, brought into force a national quota for subsistence fisheries for salmon of 35 tonnes.

The NGOs recommend that the West Greenland Commission take steps to stop the sale of salmon to factories, reduce the harvest to at least the NASCO agreement’s present goal of a 20-tonne allowance, and conduct better monitoring to control all fisheries, including unreported catch.

Opening Statement made to the Council by the Sami Parliament - Norway

The Sámi Parliament of Norway wishes to express its gratitude for being accorded Observer Status by NASCO. It is important that indigenous peoples themselves take part in the development of international law, not least with a view to understanding the Convention for the Conservation of Salmon in the North Atlantic Ocean, as well as the NASCO guidelines.

The Sámi Parliament respectfully points out the need to incorporate the indigenous dimension into the guidelines for salmon cooperation.

Indigenous peoples are entitled to influence development and we are entitled to our fair share of the value of the resources found in our traditional territories. Indigenous industries have been and continue to be hard pressed by other players and by state regulations.

It is difficult for the Sámi Parliament to render visible the situation of traditional Sámi industries, and this is especially true of the difficulties facing Sámi sea salmon fishermen. The Sámi Parliament strongly underscores the urgent need to implement special measures for sea salmon fishing.

For the Sámi Parliament, it is important to emphasise that wild salmon are a natural resource that is crucial for the cultural and economic activities of Sea Sámi and River Sámi alike. Our people are dependent on healthy wild salmon stocks, and we also have an interest in protecting the wild salmon for future generations. It is crucial that indigenous peoples have a say in the protection process.

The Sámi Parliament underscores the importance of identifying and systematising traditional knowledge about rivers and the sea as the basis for salmon management. Sámi industries have long traditions of managing natural resources in a sustainable manner. Indigenous peoples often possess a great deal of very useful information that could be beneficial to others. This should also be acknowledged by NASCO.

Thank you for your attention.

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

Minister, Madame 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 30th 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 currently has 34 members including the European Union.

Governments, institutions and agencies, including NASCO, can benefit from international advice derived from EIFAAC's network of policy-makers, managers, scientists and others working on inland fisheries and aquaculture issues.

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.

A new EIFAAC structure has been designed to deliver advice and research through an efficient project management approach supported by a Technical and Scientific Committee. This structure was formally adopted at the 27th EIFAAC session last year. EIFAAC has currently active project groups looking at a number of prioritised research areas including: on Eel (which is a joint working group with ICES); Invasive species (FINS conference – Galway in April 2013); Sustainable Management Actions on Cormorant Populations, on Fish Passage Best Practices; on Welfare of Fishes in Aquaculture; on Ecohydropower and on Recreational Angling.

The project on recreational angling is one that may be of interest to NASCO Parties as it seeks to bring together all stakeholders including anglers, managers, scientists, commercial interests, equipment providers and legislators to discuss topics relating to the future of recreational angling. This will culminate in a Symposium which will be hosted by the Norwegian Government in May/June 2015. EIFAAC would certainly welcome NASCO's input into this project.

EIFAAC and NASCO share the common goal of wild Atlantic salmon conservation while respecting the social, economic and cultural value of this unique species. EIFAAC is well positioned to offer expert advice and support to NASCO on issues affecting the Atlantic salmon in the freshwater element of its life-cycle, with this in mind EIFAAC is delighted to accept NASCO's invitation to contribute to the NASCO Special Session on Socio-Economics which is planned for next year.

Finally, can I take this opportunity to also welcome you here to Drogheda, to thank our hosts and facilitators and to wish all of you a productive and enjoyable NASCO session. Thank you kindly for your attention.

Dr. Cathal Gallagher
Chairman EIFAAC