

Opening Statement made by Canada

Introduction

Minister, Madame President, Distinguished Guests, Heads of Delegations, Commissioners, Observers, Ladies and Gentlemen.

As many of you know, I am Richard Nadeau, Head of Canada's Delegation to NASCO and Regional Director General for Fisheries and Oceans Canada's Quebec Region.

I am quite pleased to be here in Ireland to represent Canada. As this is my 3rd meeting as Head of Delegation, I know the amount of work, effort, and expertise that is necessary from our Secretariat in order to prepare for this Annual meeting. I wish to thank everyone in the NASCO Secretariat for their work in preparing for this meeting.

I also wish to thank our EU, and specifically our Irish, hosts for providing us with a picturesque venue for this meeting as well as an excellent facility.

I would like to point out the presence of Canada's Commissioner, seated beside me, Mr. Serge Tremblay, and thank him for his continued contributions to NASCO and wild Atlantic salmon. I would also like to point out to all that Canada's other Commissioner to NASCO, Mr. Bud Bird, will not be joining us this week. As Bud is one of Canada's most passionate voices for wild Atlantic salmon, we will keep him updated on all of this week's activities upon our return to Canada.

Where We Are

NASCO is currently undergoing an exciting modernization and Canada is excited to be a part of changing the organization to meet the current needs of its Parties and stakeholders. We live in an ever-changing world with ever-changing priorities. However, the constant for us here this week, is to work together to ensure that wild Atlantic salmon reclaims its important place in the North Atlantic ecosystem, and can someday return to a commercially viable species. We are not there yet, but working together to increase our scientific knowledge is a necessary step.

The Work – Implementation Plans

A recent sign of successful collaboration was the work of late 2011 to improve the way that information is obtained from domestic sources and communicated to NASCO Parties – The new Implementation Plans.

Parties are now using these plans to concisely communicate how we work to improve the plight of wild Atlantic salmon, and how we as Parties are working to bring the species back to abundance.

We also hope that these Implementation Plans are effective for our consultations with our many domestic and international stakeholders, many of whom are represented here in Drogheda as accredited NASCO NGOs. Canada will continue to work with you for the benefit of the wild Atlantic salmon, and for those who rely on wild Atlantic salmon as a valued resource.

External Performance Review

Building upon the success of amended Implementation Plans, Parties gathered in London this past February to work together in order to address the recommendations of NASCO's External Performance Review. I am pleased to be a part of a process that resulted in a 'Plan of Action', which will be officially tabled during this Annual Meeting. This 'Plan of Action' has addressed most of the recommendations contained with the External Performance Review and we look forward to a full and in-depth discussion during this week's proceedings.

Schedule of Meetings in Line With ICES advice

Finally, we will also see at this meeting multiple proposals to address the schedule of NASCO meetings, and the way in which we all gather.

Canada places a high priority on NASCO meetings and knows that continued international cooperation remains essential to ensuring the return of the species in which we all care much for, and work for; wild Atlantic salmon.

Canada also knows that as multi-year advice is provided from our ICES colleagues, there will be opportunities to alter the way NASCO meets, in order to ensure the right conversations are taking place, for the overall good of wild Atlantic salmon, and not just the good of NASCO. We must ensure the primary focus of NASCO remains the return to abundance of wild Atlantic salmon.

Conclusion

To conclude my opening remarks, I wish to thank everyone for joining us here in Drogheda. We look forward to this week's meetings and all of the associated discussions.

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 thank Ireland warmly for bringing us to beautiful Drogheda.

A number of years ago, the Faroe Islands and Greenland took the responsibility to stop the commercial fishery for salmon in our fishery zones. This was in order to contribute to the rebuilding of the North Atlantic salmon stocks. Greenland and the Faroe Islands have fulfilled our part of the responsibility.

Unfortunately, these measures according to ICES have not led to any significant recovery of the stocks. There are many different reasons for this, some are still unknown. One explanation is that some parties have continued their coastal fishery, even though it has been underlined, again and again, that mixed-stock fisheries present a particular threat to the salmon stocks.

A significant proportion of all salmon catches are still taken in coastal waters or estuaries. As we have stated before, our view is therefore, that homewater fisheries should also be regulated by NASCO. We firmly believe that this is the only way forward for this organization to fulfil its responsibility to promote the restoration, enhancement and rational management of salmon stocks in the North Atlantic Ocean. In this way we can create the best possible conditions for rebuilding the salmon stocks, and thereby improve the prospects for the Faroe Islands and Greenland to make full use of our right to a sustainable salmon fishery. As mentioned, ICES does not report on any significant improvement of the salmon stocks. This in spite of the sacrifices made by the Faroe Islands and Greenland. It is, therefore, becoming more difficult for us to regard NASCO as an organization of relevance as long as homewater fisheries are not regulated by NASCO.

It should, however, also be mentioned that although ICES does not report on any significant improvements, Greenlandic fishermen have for the last years been reporting about by-catches of salmon in other fisheries all year round. Even far to the north. According to the fishermen, there is simply an increased presence of salmon in West Greenland. This again has led to increased pressure on the Government of Greenland to re-open the commercial salmon fishery. This pressure is growing day by day.

NASCO is at a crossroad these years. Earlier in 2013, the Parties submitted new Implementation Plans covering the next five years, and these plans have undergone an evaluation. The result of the evaluation is going to be discussed during the following days. Furthermore we will be discussing the future of NASCO based on the External Performance and the 'Next Steps' Reviews. This Annual Meeting is in other words very important, and the Faroe Islands and Greenland, therefore, look very much forward to a productive and hopefully successful week.

Finally, Madame President, we would once again like to thank our hosts as well as the Secretariat for all their efforts in preparing this meeting.

Thank you

Opening Statement made by the European Union

Minister O' Dowd, Madame President, Mr. Secretary, Distinguished Delegates, Observers, Ladies and Gentlemen,

It is a pleasure for the European Union to be hosting the 30th NASCO Meeting here in Drogheda. Before anything else, I would like to warmly thank the Irish Government, currently holding the EU Presidency, for its generosity, and my Irish colleagues for their dedication in helping to organise this meeting. I hope that all of the participants will feel at home.

Apart from the excitement of being here, we are also happy at being back at NASCO. All these years, NASCO has made a very important contribution to the sustainable management and conservation of North-Atlantic salmon stocks, in particular by promoting principles such as the Precautionary Approach and science-based management.

To this extent, we welcome the ICES advice on the mixed-stock fisheries. Although it was not the kind of advice that we would have hoped for, we believe that Contracting Parties should take it into the biggest account and we stand ready to do so.

As you probably know, the EU Common Fisheries Policy is currently ongoing a deep and substantial reform to bring it abreast with the latest developments worldwide. From where we stand now, it seems that the CFP is taking difficult, yet important, policy decisions such as the progressive implementation of a discard ban and the rebuilding of stocks up to Maximum Sustainable Yield by 2015 in most cases.

Still, science and the Precautionary Approach have not been questioned at any time and they remain strong pillars of our action. We believe that NASCO should keep doing the same.

However, in the case of NASCO much remains to be understood on the biology of salmon and, in particular, concerning the causes of the high mortality at sea. We need more research. The EU has already contributed substantially to such research and we are currently exploring how we could do more. Still, we believe it is the responsibility of all NASCO Parties to help in this and we would welcome any intervention in this sense.

If research remains an urgent priority, we believe that at least some good progress has been achieved through the reporting requirements that NASCO Parties have accepted to subscribe. The first cycle is now completed and, having learnt from past experiences, we are eagerly beginning an improved second cycle. The EU welcomes the critical work and dedication of the Parties and the Review Group. We believe that this is the way that NASCO should follow to answer current and future challenges.

Last, but not least, the EU would like to congratulate Dr. Hutchinson for his appointment as Secretary of the Organization. We wish him all the best for this task and we hope that our good cooperation will continue also in the future.

Minister O' Dowd, Madame President, Mr. Secretary, Distinguished Delegates, Observers, Ladies and Gentlemen, me and my colleagues are looking forward to working with you this week and we wish every success for this Annual Meeting.

Thank you.

Opening Statement made by Norway

Minister, Madame President, Distinguished Delegates, Observers, Ladies and Gentlemen;

On behalf of Norway, I would like to thank Ireland for hosting the Thirtieth Annual Meeting of NASCO.

NASCO has gone through a somewhat turbulent, but also exciting, period, starting with the 'Next Steps' process, and culminating with the findings of the External Performance Review. I am content, both alike, will be important in shaping the future of NASCO, securing continuing improvements in effectiveness and relevance of the organization to Atlantic salmon management for many years to come.

According to the latest report from the Norwegian Scientific Advisory Committee for Atlantic Salmon Management, Pre-Fishery Abundance in Norway continued to be at a historically low level in 2012. Despite that fact, spawning targets have been met for an increasing number of stocks. The Committee states that implementing more strict fisheries regulations in recent years has been vital to those achievements.

Nevertheless, we still have severe concerns about the future of our stocks. The grilse component continues to decline at a disturbing rate and sea survival seems not to have improved in general. Adverse human impacts remain high and increasing in some areas. All this combined with climate change underlines the necessity for our continued common effort, and the need for NASCO to strengthen its role as a forum for fostering common understanding of challenges and management approaches.

In closing, it is my pleasure to bring to your attention that the Sámi Parliament of Norway attends the Annual Meeting of NASCO for the first time. The wild salmon is an important resource for the cultural and economic activities for the Sami People. The Sámi Parliament invests a great deal of effort in facilitating sustainable management and is also involved in the process of fisheries regulations in the northern part of Norway.

Madame President, I would like to thank our hosts and the Secretariat for excellent preparations for this meeting. The Norwegian delegation looks forward to a productive and successful meeting.

Opening Statement made by the Russian Federation

Madame President, Distinguished Delegates, Observers, Ladies and Gentlemen:

It gives me great pleasure to be attending the Annual Meeting of NASCO for the first time. On behalf of the delegation of the Russian Federation, I am pleased to greet all participants of the Annual Meeting here in the small but cosy city of Drogheda, Ireland.

To enhance implementation of existing NASCO Agreements, Contracting Parties have developed new Implementation Plans for the period 2013-2018, key documents in the work of the Parties of the Organization. It is obvious that certain difficulties may arise. In Russia, for instance, still lacking are important pieces of legislation, such as the Federal Law on Aquaculture, to support full implementation of the agreements, but we are aware of the need to fill in the existing gaps and are prepared to work hard in order to preserve the biological diversity of wild salmon populations.

Over the last three decades, NASCO has developed into an organisation with good relations between the Parties. This has become possible due to people being able to meet each other, to talk to each other and develop personal relations and trust. NASCO was very fortunate to evolve into a forum with such a spirit of cooperation that we have now. We believe that Parties need to continue to meet together on an annual basis, if we do not want to lose that unique spirit of cooperation, if we do not want to fall into mistrust and misunderstanding and eventually end up in a lack of will to work together to conserve wild Atlantic salmon. We also need to preserve the opportunity to meet at least once a year with wild salmon interests represented by NASCO's NGOs to exchange views and continue our dialogue.

Concluding this statement, I would like traditionally to thank our Irish hosts and commend the splendid arrangements for this meeting. On behalf of the Russian delegation I wish all of us success in working together during this week. I'm also glad to welcome a newly selected Secretary of NASCO and wish him a successful work in the Organization.

Thank you for attention!

Opening Statement made by the United States of America

Madame President, Distinguished Delegates, Members of the Secretariat, Observers, Ladies and Gentlemen:

On behalf of the United States, I would like to begin by thanking our Irish hosts for the warm welcome and hospitality, excellent accommodations, and meeting arrangements. It is truly a pleasure to be here with you. I would also like to thank the Secretariat for the support they have provided to me, a new Commissioner and Head of Delegation, as I have worked to learn about the myriad issues that face NASCO and the challenges we all face in conserving and restoring wild Atlantic salmon.

In the United States, those challenges are particularly acute as our stocks remain critically endangered. The obstacles to protecting and restoring salmon populations and their habitats to robust levels are made even more difficult due to changes in our climate, its effects on habitat, particularly for those stocks near the edge of the southern range of the species, and the added uncertainty that comes with climate change. Clearly the challenge of persistently low marine survival is daunting, and we have taken the lessons from the ‘Salmon Summit’ seriously. In that vein, although we have not yet discovered the actions that will markedly and permanently improve marine survival rates, we are taking significant steps in domestic waters to ensure that the smolts that leave our rivers have the best chance possible to transition successfully to life in the Northwest Atlantic so they can grow and return to their natal rivers to spawn and contribute to the continuation of this iconic species. Recent successes for us include significant improvements to fish passage throughout the salmon’s range in the United States, including dam removals, as well as new regulatory requirements to pass salmon and all sea-run fish safely and effectively at all remaining dams. Confronting these challenges squarely is our solemn responsibility, particularly in light of last year’s very disappointing adult returns in the United States.

We come to NASCO with a compelling need to ensure the future viability of our wild salmon populations and the desire to work cooperatively with all of you toward this end. We want and need to benefit from the expertise you have gained in addressing your domestic management challenges. ICES has recently begun an important effort to share information related to restoration successes and failures. This matter will be taken up this week and expanded upon thanks to our colleagues from the Atlantic Salmon Federation, who will host a workshop on this topic in September in New Brunswick, Canada. The United States supports this work, and we look forward to continued collaboration and cooperative learning. We consider NASCO’s role to serve as a forum for exchanging ideas and sharing expertise as increasingly important, and we look forward to discussing how to advance this aspect of NASCO’s work this week. The expertise in this room is immense, and we need to make the most of it.

We have come to this important meeting this week knowing that we have a great deal of work to do, and we remain committed to carrying out that work in a fair, balanced and transparent way. Substantial progress was made in developing and advancing a ‘Vision for the Future of NASCO’ at the inter-sessional meeting of the Parties this past February. To strengthen our organization and further advance our collective salmon conservation efforts, we must be committed to implementing the decisions from that meeting. In that regard, we look forward to a lively discussion as we consider the results of the review of the second round of Implementation Plans. The concise format of the new Implementation Plans ensures

that debate and discussion can be focused on substantive issues of importance to the resource. Given that these Plans set the management stage for each jurisdiction over the next five years, it is very important that they contain significant and meaningful actions addressing key threats.

Madame President, thanks again to you, our wonderful Irish hosts and the Secretariat for the tireless efforts that have gone into the excellent meeting preparations. The United States looks forward to a productive and successful meeting as we work together with our international partners to ensure the conservation and rational management of wild Atlantic salmon.