

Opening Statement made by the President of NASCO

Distinguished Delegates, Observers, Ladies and Gentlemen:

It is with great pleasure that I welcome you to the Thirtieth Annual Meeting of NASCO. Over the course of the last year the Parties met and reaffirmed their commitment to the conservation and rational management of wild Atlantic salmon. This commitment is essential to effectively address the threats to salmon and their habitat necessary to achieving the vision of restoration of abundant Atlantic salmon stocks throughout the species' range.

This year the Parties have developed and submitted their new five-year Implementation Plans that identify the actions that will implement the NASCO Agreements in their jurisdictions. We will hear from the Review Group and have an opportunity to discuss these Plans. It is critical that we get these Plans right as they establish the course of action over the next five years.

We will also consider the 'Action Plan' developed by the Parties in response to the External Performance Review and the 'Next Steps' process. The 'Action Plan' reinforces commitments to a number of ongoing actions in key areas, including conservation and management, reporting and evaluation. It also recommends a number of new actions addressing IUU fishing, the ecosystem approach, the rivers database and research on salmon at sea. The Parties were also invited to submit recommendations for changes in the meeting frequency, structure and location in order to explore options to ensure the most effective use of the time available and expertise present.

The Parties developed a comprehensive 'Action Plan' which holds great promise for furthering Atlantic salmon conservation and recovery. However, I recognize that Denmark (in respect of the Faroe Islands and Greenland) was prepared to discuss how NASCO could develop binding measures affecting all phases of the salmon's life cycle. We also heard from the NGOs that they are interested in Convention change. The Parties considered many options for moving forward and kept their focus on improvements and changes with the greatest possible benefit to wild Atlantic salmon conservation. Continued and enhanced commitment by the Parties is required in order to ensure that this path results in the necessary improvements in conservation and management of wild Atlantic salmon.

The Parties identified Fisheries Management as the priority area for special focus. They committed to critically review the new five-year Implementation Plans, including identifying fisheries that are permitted to operate on salmon stocks that are below their reference point, as well as identifying mixed-stock fisheries and providing an explanation of how they are managed to ensure that all contributing stocks are meeting their conservation objectives. Once again, ICES has reminded us that due to differences in the status of individual stocks within stock complexes, mixed-stock fisheries present particular threats.

Over the past year a Sub-Group of the International Atlantic Salmon Research Board's (IASRB) Scientific Advisory Group (SAG) met to evaluate recent scientific progress in studies of marine mortality of salmon and has advised, with the support of ICES, that analyzing the remaining samples from the SALSEA program should be a priority. The Sub-Group also proposed that the

IASRB should next focus on studies to partition marine mortality of salmon among the phases of the marine migration. It is critically important to the future of wild Atlantic salmon that these international scientific collaborations continue. In fact, ICES noted that the SAG provided an essential mechanism for scientists to collaboratively work with managers to develop scientific programs that support the conservation, protection, and enhancement of salmon stocks.

I would like to thank the Secretariat for the excellent preparations for this meeting and our Irish hosts for our wonderful accommodations. I look forward to working with you all over the course of the week. Despite the significant challenges facing Atlantic salmon, I am confident that we will make progress with the commitment and cooperative spirit among the parties, along with the support and involvement of our NGO partners.