

## ***Opening Statement submitted to the Council by the Non-Government Organizations***

The NGOs have appreciated the opportunity this year to participate in reviewing the Annual Progress Reports made by individual governments in fisheries management, habitat restoration and protection of wild Atlantic salmon from the impacts of salmon farming. The absence of the submission by Scotland of its Annual Progress Report is deeply regretted and, in fact, astonishing when you consider the magnitude of that Party's net fisheries and salmon aquaculture industries.

The NGOs are very concerned that the Parties that have major aquaculture production continue to expand with little, if any, progress to stop recurrent outbreaks of disease, spread of parasites and genetic pollution caused by interbreeding of escapees with wild salmon. We do appreciate those Parties that have provided realistic data on sea lice loads and escapes from sea cages in a conscientious attempt to track the success of various methods of mitigation. The lack of progress in reaching NASCO's goals of zero escapes and zero sea lice and the continuous outbreaks of disease reinforce the need for a Special Session on the impacts of aquaculture at the Annual Meeting in 2015. We take heart from the traction being gained by entrepreneurs who are utilising land-based, closed containment operations that are growing salmon completely separate from wild salmon and their environment. The NGOs urge NASCO to include presentations on closed containment in the line-up for this Special Session next year.

We are pleased to have participated in the inter-sessional meeting of the West Greenland Commission. The NGOs appreciate the effort that went into the proposals for action on this fishery that were to be subsequently considered within individual governments and will be further discussed at this Annual Meeting. We look forward to participating in the Theme-based Special Session on management of single and mixed stock fisheries, with particular focus on fisheries on stocks below their Conservation Limits and hope to hear transparent reports by all Parties followed by frank discussion and questions of individual Party representatives.

Once again, we urge the Parties to remember that NASCO is primarily concerned with the management and conservation of wild Atlantic salmon, and we ask that this principle be kept to the forefront of our discussions this week, especially during the Special Session. We must strive for agreements and resolutions that are fair and equitable to all countries which host salmon at any stage of their life cycle.

Meanwhile, we thank the Government of France for hosting us in Saint-Malo, and hope that our beautiful and historic surroundings lead to candid discussion and effective action to save our iconic wild Atlantic salmon.

***Opening Statement submitted to the North American Commission  
by the Non-Government Organizations***

New genetics information on salmon caught in the mixed-stock fishery at Labrador is confirming that there is significant harvest of mixed populations of salmon originating from within Labrador. There is also interception of salmon originating from the United States, where salmon populations are listed as endangered, and from populations in Newfoundland, Quebec, and New Brunswick, where at-risk populations have been identified.

The Labrador and Greenland mixed-population fisheries have a cumulative impact on North American salmon populations already under siege from habitat loss, interactions with farmed salmon, and changing environmental conditions. The harvest at Labrador in mixed-stock fisheries amounted to 37.5 tonnes in 2013 and the number of large salmon that were harvested rose to 6,495 last year from 4,220 in 2012. Management of these fisheries requires a more precautionary approach since there is inadequate assessment to gauge the health of salmon populations in Labrador.

The NGOs urge Canada to work with Aboriginals to implement management measures, such as later season opening and in-river and selective harvest, which would further reduce interception of salmon off Labrador. Increased in-river assessment is needed to better ensure that only those populations that exceed conservation targets are being harvested, as is recommended by ICES.

The NGOs commend Canada for further restricting the numbers of grilse that can be retained in Nova Scotia and New Brunswick, and in mandating live release only in the recreational salmon fishery on the Northwest Miramichi River. This river achieved only 40% of its conservation limit in 2013, yet the agreements between First Nations and Canada still allow a significant harvest of large spawners. ASF would like to acknowledge and commend the Metepenagiag First Nation on its recent decision to no longer use gill nets to harvest its salmon and grilse allocation on the Northwest and Little Southwest Miramichi rivers. This First Nation has committed to release all large females.

And the final salmon fishery of concern to NGOs is the one at St Pierre and Miquelon, which harvested 5.3 tonnes in 2013. This is the largest harvest since reporting began in 1970. A new genetics study confirms that this fishery harvests salmon from the Gaspé, Newfoundland, the Maritimes and the Quebec North Shore. The NGOs urge more decisive action by NASCO to get France (in respect of St Pierre and Miquelon) to the table to discuss ways to control this fishery, and we hope that, in this setting in France, headway can be made this week.

***Opening Statement submitted to the North-East Atlantic Commission  
by the Non-Government Organizations***

The NGOs welcome this opportunity to address the North-East Atlantic Commission.

Despite ICES reporting that the southern European salmon stock is meeting its overall Conservation Limit, many individual river stocks in Europe are not. Some populations, particularly in England and Wales, are in a perilous state, and the medium term assessment is for little, if any improvement. At the ‘Salmon Summit’ in La Rochelle in 2011, there was agreement that the most effective objective for fishery managers is to produce the maximum number of healthy smolts from river systems as possible. To that end, there are still common issues to overcome in the freshwater environment, including excessive water abstraction, diffuse pollution, hydropower schemes and other barriers to fish passage, both on inward and outward migration. However, these are matters best served by individual Parties.

The two most important dangers to the protection of European salmon are the impact of aquaculture on wild fish, and the exploitation of stocks failing to meet their conservation limits, especially those intercepted by coastal mixed-stock fisheries.

We are looking forward to taking part in Wednesday’s Theme-based Special Session on the management of single and mixed-stock fisheries, where we will be particularly looking for a commitment from all relevant Parties that commercial coastal fisheries will be phased-out in their home waters. We continue to be frustrated that the limitations placed on fisheries in Greenland and the Faroe Islands are not matched by similar controls on mixed-stock fisheries in other NASCO partners’ home waters, and we urge NASCO Parties to adopt management policies that are fair and equitable to all.

NGO frustration deepens even further over the continuing impact of aquaculture on wild salmon and sea trout. We are especially concerned by the continued denial by some jurisdictions that salmon farming has any detrimental impact, despite overwhelming scientific evidence of the dangers of sea lice and disease potentially causing significant mortality in wild fish, and escaped farmed salmon diluting gene pools by interbreeding with indigenous stocks. Once again we urge all Parties to face up to their responsibilities at NASCO. Remember that their primary objective in this forum is the conservation of wild Atlantic salmon, and that this should not be overridden by their support for commercial activities with a proven record of obstructing that protection. NASCO’s aquaculture objectives are zero lice and zero escapes, but there is little evidence that those objectives are taken seriously by Parties supporting salmon farming industries. To this end, the NGOs will be calling for a special aquaculture session next year.

Thank you again for this opportunity to address the Commission, and we look forward to a frank discussion over the issues surrounding the conservation of Atlantic salmon in the North-East Atlantic Region.

***Opening Statement submitted to the West Greenland Commission  
by the Non-Government Organizations***

The NGOs accredited to NASCO are very concerned over the escalation in the salmon harvest at Greenland to 47 tonnes in 2013, the largest harvest since 1997. This amounts to 14,200 large spawners, 11,500 of which are destined for North American rivers. In addition, an arbitrary estimate of ten tonnes is given for unreported catch, which amounts to the harvest of another 2,500 salmon.

The ICES advice is very clear – there should be no harvest at Greenland where salmon from North America and Southern Europe migrate to feed. The Greenland harvest is especially devastating to Canadian and US populations. Most of the salmon harvest at Greenland, 82% in 2013, is of North American origin, including those from the endangered populations of the southern range.

The Greenland salmon fishery is undermining the costly restoration programs being carried out by conservation organizations, governments and riverside volunteers in eastern Canada and northeastern United States. These projects are many and vary from removal of beaver dams, anti-poaching programs, large and small dam removal and liming to counteract acid rain. Just one example is dam removal costing \$62,000,000 on Maine's Penobscot River to open up 1,000 miles of fish habitat. In 2013, the Penobscot met only 5% of its Conservation Limit.

We appreciate the effort by all countries that are party to the West Greenland Commission in preparing the “strawman” proposal that will inform discussions and guide decisions on the Greenland salmon fishery for 2014 and beyond.

We urge Greenland to base the cap on its fishery on scientific advice rather than economic considerations. It is very concerning that the factory harvest can increase based on the year-round demand for wild salmon by consumers within Greenland.

In working with Greenland to improve regulation, management, monitoring and reporting, we urge Parties to consider approaches that will both protect Atlantic salmon at Greenland and within their own jurisdictions. The NGOs urge all NASCO Parties to adhere to ICES advice and the Precautionary Approach to ensure conservation of the resource and advance the principle of fairness in regulation between salmon fisheries in distant waters and those in homewaters.

## ***Opening Statement submitted to the Council by the Sami Parliament - Norway***

The Sámi Parliament in Norway welcomes you to this joint effort to protect the world's wild salmon for coming generations. Wild salmon are among the material natural resources that provide subsistence for the Sámi and many other indigenous communities. For the Sámi, wild salmon represent not only food on the table, but also a welcome addition to our business incomes. Salmon fishing is a cornerstone of Sámi culture.

The Sámi Parliament would like the Parties to NASCO to recognise that indigenous peoples have a precarious need for protection of our traditional way of life, precisely because the correlation between the practice of culture and traditional economic activities is especially strong.

There is a great deal of traditional knowledge associated with our fishing activities. We have long traditions related to how we fish and how we prepare and preserve this food. We know our traditional fishing grounds well and we know how to live as one with nature. Since time immemorial, several rituals have been used to bring good luck in connection with salmon fishing. Salmon have been, and continue to be, of great importance to our communities. We have been fortunate in the north. The salmon have visited our waters often. Regrettably, we see that the salmon stocks are not as viable today as they should be in some areas.

As we try to find out why this is the case, it is important for the Sámi Parliament to point out that management calls for a combination of biological knowledge and traditional knowledge. Only that will give us the best possible knowledge base and, fortunately, much of this knowledge is already firmly rooted in our local communities.

Many factors must be taken into account in connection with salmon management. The Sámi Parliament maintains that the indigenous perspective must be given more emphasis in the assessments made by NASCO and the member countries. The Sámi and other indigenous peoples have established rights in the light of historic fishing activities. The Sámi Parliament is therefore pleased that the theme of this year's Special Session at NASCO is open to considering the interests of indigenous peoples. This is especially important in areas where salmon are at risk and where fishing must therefore be regulated more strictly. The Sámi Parliament emphasises that indigenous fishing rights cannot be superseded by other entitlements.

Like many other indigenous peoples around the world, the Sámi see increasingly more pressure being applied to our natural resources. Not only do we find that fewer salmon are returning to our fishing grounds, but they are encountering increasingly more obstacles along the way. In the past year, the State of Norway adopted a 10 per cent increase in fish-farming intensity. Several of the new licences will be granted in our areas. This has taken place without consulting the Sámi Parliament in Norway or the fishermen among us who are affected. This has taken place without the consent of the Sámi.

The Sámi Parliament underscores strongly the State's responsibility for obtaining indigenous people's free, prior informed consent when taking decisions that impact our interests. The Sámi Parliament believes that NASCO can contribute to good processes by including the indigenous perspective in NASCO's guidelines.

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

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 31<sup>st</sup> 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, utilisation, 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. EIFAAC currently has active project groups looking at a number of prioritised research areas. One particular project on recreational angling may be of interest to NASCO Parties as it seeks to bring together all the 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 an EIFAAC Symposium which will be hosted by the Norwegian Government from 15 – 17 June in Lillehammer. 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 lifecycle.

I would like to take this opportunity to thank our hosts and facilitators for their wonderful welcome to beautiful Saint-Malo and for the facilities and hospitality provided. Finally, can I wish all of you a productive and enjoyable NASCO session.