

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

Distinguished Delegates, Observers, Ladies and Gentlemen:

It is my pleasure to welcome you to the Thirty-First Annual Meeting of NASCO in the beautiful, historic city of Saint-Malo.

As you know, at last year's Annual Meeting the Parties reviewed a report from the External Performance Review of NASCO's work and adopted an 'Action Plan' for taking forward these recommendations and those arising from the review of the 'Next Steps' process. The Parties expressed a desire to have more time during the Annual Meeting for information exchange on priority issues. As a result, we have devoted a full day of this meeting to a Theme-based Special Session on the topic of 'Management of single and mixed stock fisheries, with particular focus on fisheries on stocks below their Conservation Limits'. I would like to offer my sincere appreciation to the Steering Committee for putting together what looks to be a very informative session and I encourage you all to participate fully in that session.

Another key outcome of the internal and external performance reviews was the decision to require Parties and jurisdictions to develop five-year Implementation Plans and to then report annually on actions taken. The second cycle of Implementation Plans were developed last year and the first Annual Progress Reports were submitted this year. I would like to thank the Review Group for their evaluation of these reports. They have identified a number of questions on each report and I look forward to our Special Session on Thursday morning during which there is an opportunity for responses by the Parties and jurisdictions and questions from all delegates. Strong commitment to the development and implementation of these Plans is essential to furthering the goals of transparency and accountability identified as priorities by the Parties in response to the previously mentioned reviews.

Through the 'Next Steps' process the Parties also increased opportunities for input and engagement with NGOs in recognition of the strong role they have, and will continue to have, in the conservation and management of Atlantic salmon. I would like to particularly thank the NGOs for your involvement over the past year as part of the Annual Progress Report Review Group as well as your membership on the Steering Committee for our Theme-based Special Session. Your continued engagement, constructive criticism and challenging of the Parties is, I believe, essential to achieving our shared goals.

Due to the continued poor status of Atlantic salmon throughout the North Atlantic, our actions here and at home for the conservation and management of Atlantic salmon have never been more critical. ICES is providing us with some new genetic analysis that will warrant discussion within each of the Commissions. Adherence to scientific advice is essential in order to achieve our international commitment to the conservation, restoration, enhancement and rational management of salmon stocks, taking into account the best scientific evidence available to us.

In addition to the important work of the Council this week, the Commissions also have new information to consider and challenges to address. Of particular note, the West Greenland Commission had a productive inter-sessional meeting in April with excellent exchange of

information and sharing of perspectives. I am hopeful that foundation will allow for further progress this week.

I would like to thank the Secretariat for the excellent support for the inter-sessional work over the past year and for the preparations for this meeting. I would also like to thank our French hosts for the wonderful hospitality. Since this is my last meeting as President, and in fact my last NASCO meeting, I would also like to take this opportunity to thank you all for the opportunity to learn from you over the years and especially to serve as President over the past four years. It has been a great honor and privilege and I sincerely appreciate your support and guidance. I wish you all success in the challenging work this week.