

Opening Statement made by the Vice-President of NASCO

Distinguished Delegates, Observers, Ladies and Gentlemen:

I would like to thank our hosts for the very warm welcome to Happy Valley - Goose Bay for this Thirty-Second Annual Meeting of NASCO. I would like to add my welcome to you all.

One of the benefits of meeting close to the salmon is that we have an opportunity to learn more about the challenges and opportunities facing the resource in different parts of the North Atlantic and its importance to local communities. I am sure we will be very well briefed this week and leave with a clearer understanding of the issues facing the salmon here in Labrador.

Personal circumstances mean that our President, Steinar Hermansen, cannot be with us this week, but he sends his best wishes to you all for a productive meeting and an enjoyable stay in Happy Valley-Goose Bay. In Steinar's absence I very much look forward to working with you all.

We have a very full week ahead of us. As you know, there will be negotiations for regulatory measures in both the North-East Atlantic and West Greenland Commissions. Much preparatory work has been done inter-sessionally by the West Greenland Commission, in an excellent cooperative spirit, including agreement on a new plan for enhanced monitoring and management of the salmon fishery at West Greenland.

However, much remains to be resolved this week. In addition, in accordance with our 'Action Plan for taking forward the findings of the External Performance Review and the review of the 'Next Steps' process', we will have agenda items in each Commission to focus on Mixed-Stock Fisheries. You will recall this was important to Faroes and Greenland in ensuring fairness and balance in the management of distant-water fisheries.

We will also hold two Special Sessions: one to focus on the evaluations of the second cycle of APRs and another, Theme-based Special Session, to look at the issue of river connectivity with particular focus on hydroelectric developments. These sessions are intended to allow for an open exchange among Parties and the NGOs and I encourage you all to take advantage of this opportunity.

Last year, our International Atlantic Salmon Research Board agreed that its priority should be studies to partition marine mortality of migrating Atlantic salmon. The Board resolved to encourage the development of large international collaborative telemetry projects that together build upon and expand local efforts and, as a first step, organised a Telemetry Workshop that was held last December. The Workshop was charged, *inter alia*, with advising on where collaborative programmes are most likely to succeed in delivering the information the Board seeks and, in the light of the recommendations made, the Board will need to consider carefully the role it can play to support the development of an international programme, building on the success and identity of the SALSEA Programme to date.

All of our work this week takes place against a background of scientific advice from ICES that again highlights that the abundance of salmon remains low, critically low in some regions, linked to poor survival at sea. I personally believe that the need for international cooperation on this resource has never been higher. We are all here, this week, because we care about the Atlantic salmon and all contributions to our deliberations will be welcome.

I would like to thank our Canadian hosts for inviting us to Happy Valley-Goose Bay, for the arrangements made for the meeting and the hospitality and tours they have organised for us. Thanks also to our Secretariat for the preparations made not only for this meeting but for all the inter-sessional meetings held over the last year.

Despite the challenges facing the Atlantic salmon, I am confident that the excellent spirit of cooperation that exists within NASCO, including the valuable support of our NGO partners, will stand us in good stead during our deliberations this week to conserve this most remarkable and precious resource.

Thank you for your attention.