

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

Mr 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 33<sup>rd</sup> Annual Meeting of NASCO.

By way of background, EIFAAC is a statutory, advisory fishery body under the Constitution 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 the EIFAAC's network linking 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.

EIFAAC currently has active project groups looking at a number of prioritised research areas that may be of interest to NASCO Parties, these include:

- fish passage best practice;
- the management/threat of aquatic invasive species in Europe;
- the downstream passage of fish at hydropower dams.

The EIFAAC project on recreational angling which culminated in an EIFAAC Symposium hosted by the Norwegian Government in Lillehammer from 15 - 17 June 2015, may be of particular interest. This project supported in-depth discussions between stakeholders, including anglers, managers, scientists, commercial interests, equipment providers and legislators on the future of recreational fisheries. NASCO was actively involved in this important symposium and indeed jointly recognised the best paper with a joint EIFAAC/NASCO award. EIFAAC's 29<sup>th</sup> Session will take place in Poland from 26 – 30 June 2017, with the associated symposium entitled 'Adapting Inland Fisheries to Climate Change'.

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 life-cycle.

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

## ***Opening Statement submitted to the Council by NASCO's accredited Non-Government Organisations***

The NGOs welcome the opportunity to participate in the 33<sup>rd</sup> Annual Meeting of NASCO in Bad Neuenahr-Ahrweiler, Germany, and appreciate NASCO's inclusive approach to our involvement in the proceedings.

We call on the Parties to NASCO to be far less complacent in their actions to conserve and restore wild Atlantic salmon. Around the North Atlantic, 2014 was one of the poorest years for salmon runs ever and the situation scarcely improved in 2015, especially for the large salmon so important to seeding our rivers.

The NGOs have had an active year. We helped organise the Theme-based Special Session on aquaculture and we served on the Review Group that assesses the Annual Progress Reports by Parties in reaching the goals set out in their Implementation Plans. NGOs are leaders in at-sea mortality research that entails tracking salmon during their migration and we eagerly participate in ICES and NASCO to share what we have learned. We were represented on NASCO's Working Group on Monitoring and Control to encourage progress in not only the salmon fishery at Greenland, but also the salmon fisheries of all Parties to the West Greenland Commission and we participated in a Scoping Session for the International Year of the Salmon, proposed for 2018.

The Implementation Plan and Annual Review process was adopted by NASCO to provide more insight, transparency and accountability by Parties to NASCO. All Parties have signed agreements that would improve fisheries management, the protection of wild Atlantic salmon from the impacts of salmon aquaculture and result in the restoration and protection of salmon habitat. For the NGOs, the review process has become increasingly tedious, as some Parties, despite many polite requests, continually submit unclear reports and insufficient data and measurements to indicate whether progress is being made.

The NGOs can only hope that the presentations by Parties to this year's Theme-based Special Session are not just glowing reports on the implementation of policy and regulation, but on the actual results that are being achieved to protect wild Atlantic salmon from the impacts of salmon aquaculture, backed up by data. Let us keep in mind that the reason for which we are all gathered here is not to protect the aquaculture industry, but to protect wild Atlantic salmon from the impacts of that industry.

We would like to hear that Parties recognise the impacts on wild Atlantic salmon of their sea cage salmon farming operations. We want to know that they are taking steps with measurable outcomes to protect wild Atlantic salmon. We will be delighted to hear about their plans to move to closed containment facilities. It is commonly accepted that Norway has the most progressive standards and regulations to protect wild Atlantic salmon from the impacts of aquaculture, and yet salmon farming is having disastrous impacts on Norwegian wild salmon, with massive sea lice outbreaks and escapes and loss of genetic diversity in wild stocks because of inter-breeding. In Scotland, Canada and Ireland, where government control of the impacts are not as high as in Norway, salmon farming is wreaking havoc on wild salmon and sea trout. Closed containment facilities are the answer to this dire situation.

All salmon fisheries should be taking place in rivers where the populations of these specific rivers are known to be surpassing conservation limits, yet mixed-stock fisheries continue in Greenland, Norway, England and Canada. The NGOs acknowledge and appreciate that Scotland has announced the closure of coastal netting for three years, and that the Faroe Islands continue to keep their marine salmon fishery closed.

Our Atlantic salmon's only hope is to turn bureaucratic reports by Parties on their Implementation Plans into actual measurable actions to conserve and restore them. As an example, let us have Canada, Scotland, Denmark on behalf of the Faroes and the Russian Federation provide, in a transparent manner, actual baseline data to allow measurable action in reaching the international goals for sea lice and containment as set out in the NASCO Guidelines.

The NGOs hope that, at this meeting in Germany, a re-energised commitment to precautionary management on behalf of wild Atlantic salmon will be applied throughout the North Atlantic and all Parties commit to doing their part in at-sea research into salmon mortality to help guide management measures, such as controlling the impacts of predation. Restoration of the species depends on it.

***Opening Statement submitted to the North American Commission by NASCO's  
accredited Non-Government Organisations***

The NGOs welcome Canada's efforts to implement the recommendations of the Ministerial Advisory Committee and the plans by the United States to ramp up efforts to restore endangered wild Atlantic salmon through a new 'Species in the Spotlight' initiative that identifies dams, low marine survival and the Greenland fishery as issues to tackle in this 5-year recovery initiative.

We welcome the announcement by Canada in May of the investment of \$197.1 million across Canada in science and innovation that includes the hiring of 135 new scientists. With this new capacity, we look forward to expansion of research into mortality of Atlantic salmon at sea and investment in new technologies to contribute to better understanding of the salmon's migration and to enhanced salmon restoration in watersheds.

The NGOs call upon Canada to demonstrate continued leadership by making further progress to reduce its mixed-stock fisheries off Labrador. ICES advises that no fisheries should operate on mixed stocks. We urge Canada to increase the number of rivers that are monitored to assess the health of Atlantic salmon populations, especially in Labrador where only 4 of more than 100 rivers are assessed. ICES has recommended that additional monitoring be considered in Labrador to better estimate salmon returns in that region.

It is important now for Canada to pursue precautionary management measures that will further decrease its harvest, especially of the large salmon that migrate to Greenland. Based on ICES advice, the fisheries guidelines agreed by NASCO indicate that mixed-stock fisheries should only operate when the number of salmon contributed by individual salmon stocks can be determined and each of these stocks can withstand the exploitation to remain above minimum conservation limits. Canada allows harvest of salmon from populations that are not surpassing minimum conservation limits, such as those of the Miramichi River and tributaries of the Restigouche River in New Brunswick.

The NGOs commend the Province of Quebec for its new 10-year plan to manage its recreational salmon fishery by basing the abundance of salmon on current year runs. This is another progressive step in responsible river-specific management that Quebec has practiced for years and this management approach should be applied by Fisheries and Oceans Canada in the rest of eastern Canada.

The NGOs urge Fisheries and Oceans Canada to improve reporting of salmon catches by both the aboriginal and recreational salmon fisheries. Reporting by anglers, except in Quebec, is low. While log books provided by aboriginals are available in some instances, others do not report. Greenland is considering a system of mandatory reporting of catches that includes non-issuance of a license the following year for those who do not comply. Canada needs to improve its system of reporting in all fisheries to get better data on harvests and the health of wild Atlantic salmon to support effective management measures.

The NGOs urge Canada to hold the sea cage salmon aquaculture industry to consistent, high standards throughout eastern Canada. Varying provincial regulations means that the salmon aquaculture industry is held to higher standards in Nova Scotia than it is in New Brunswick and Newfoundland. Internationally, the same company that operates in both Canada and the United States is forced to operate at higher standards in the United States than in Canada. The

Monterey Bay Seafood Watch programme recently announced that farmed salmon from Maine had received the 'good alternative' choice to guide consumers when buying farmed salmon, while the farmed salmon of Atlantic Canada remains in the 'avoid' category.

And finally, the NGOs urge Canada to highlight and support expansion of the fledgling closed-containment salmon farming industry that has been established by Sustainable Blue and CanAqua in Nova Scotia and develop a plan for transitioning the industry from sea cage culture to land-based, closed containment facilities.

***Opening Statement submitted to the North-East Atlantic Commission by NASCO's  
accredited Non-Government Organisations***

The NGOs welcome this opportunity to address the North-East Atlantic Commission at this 33rd Annual Meeting of NASCO.

Wild Atlantic salmon runs in 2015 were scarcely better than 2014, one of the worst years on record in the NEAC region, and it continues to be a major frustration that we see little evidence of a reverse in the decline of wild salmon stocks. The NGOs state their alarm every year at NASCO at the steep decline in numbers of wild Atlantic salmon throughout the NEAC region, and we can only reiterate that statement this year.

We also remind NASCO Parties that this forum is concerned with the protection of wild Atlantic salmon and not the industries which either exploit these iconic fish or else have the potential to damage them in other ways. Yet despite all the warning signs in recent years, some NASCO Parties fail to abide by their agreed international management responsibilities, particularly with regards to mixed-stock coastal netting and open net marine salmon farming. It is extremely frustrating that every year we assemble at NASCO meetings and have to make the same reports over the difficulty of persuading Parties to protect their wild salmon stocks from these damaging activities.

However, at least this year we see some light at the end of the mixed-stock fishery tunnel, in that Scotland has acted responsibly by announcing the closure of Scottish coastal netting stations for three years, at which time the situation will be reviewed. At the same time, Scottish rivers have been classified into three levels of freshwater protection, with the most threatened being ordered to conduct compulsory catch and release on all rod-caught fish. The NGOs commend Scotland for this decisive action, and we also commend the Faroe Islands for continuing to keep their marine salmon fishery closed. These are hard political decisions which are an example to all NASCO Parties.

The NGOs also commend Greenland for adopting tighter regulatory measures to manage their marine salmon fishery. With Scotland and the Faroe Islands closing their marine fisheries, the NGOs believe that it is time for other Parties to close the remaining MSFs within the NEAC region, principally Norway and England. While the NGOs acknowledge that some progress is being made towards limiting the impact of MSFs in these countries, progress is painfully slow in turning plans and strategies into meaningful action.

The NGOs believe it is time that the Parties paid more attention to the potential for by-catches of salmon in the course of conducting other fisheries in the North Atlantic. Credible, if as yet unproven, suggestions have been made to one of our NGOs about a significant by-catch of salmon in the blue whiting fishery off the Faroes and concerns were also expressed by a number of scientists at the Salmon Summit in La Rochelle in 2011. The issue of by-catches is also one of the open items remaining from the External Performance Review.

As to marine salmon aquaculture, the NGOs can only repeat our statement from last year – and many years before – that the impact of the industry on wild salmon and sea trout continues to be a major concern, with Norway, Scotland and Ireland being the main focus of our scrutiny. The NGOs welcome NASCO's initiative to host a full day's Theme-based Special Session devoted to the aquaculture issue this year, and we hope that Wednesday's presentations and debates will bring into stark focus the Parties' responsibilities to protect wild salmonids in their

marine phase, rather than allowing them to be jeopardised by the incessant drive for ever larger aquaculture industries, regardless of their proven adverse impact on natural salmon and sea trout populations. The NGOs continue to be utterly frustrated that the aquaculture industry is heavily supported by home Governments desperate for economic growth, despite overwhelming evidence of the failure of regulations to adequately protect wild salmonids from the harmful impacts of sea lice and disease transfer, while allowing escapees to dilute wild gene pools.

We expect NASCO Parties to use the opportunity afforded by the Theme-based Special Session to announce meaningful measures that will drastically improve protection of wild fish from the industry. We also expect Parties to openly champion an end goal of marine salmon farming transferring from open net culture to closed containment, because we consider the only way of adequately protecting wild salmonids is to build a biological barrier to separate them from any contact with farmed salmon.

There are interim measures the NGOs feel should be immediately adopted. For instance, escaped farmed salmon are a major threat to wild salmon stocks. A recent study (of 104 salmon rivers, 2016), tabled by Norway CNL(16)19, found that two thirds of the wild salmon stocks were genetically changed due to inter-breeding with escaped farmed fish. Continuous growth in aquaculture production represents a great danger that the problems will worsen. All farmed salmon must be tagged so that they can be easily distinguished from wild salmon in rivers and fjords. Tagged farmed salmon must immediately be traced to the responsible company.

Mr Chairman, we can only repeat what the NGOs said in the statement to NEAC last year – that in view of the continuing crisis in survival of wild Atlantic salmon throughout the North Atlantic, we urge all Parties to develop genuine action plans that strictly follow the NASCO fisheries management and aquaculture guidelines to which all Parties here have agreed. We say yet again that NASCO works for the protection of wild Atlantic salmon, and that it is unacceptable for economic or any other considerations to result in a significant barrier to achieving that underlying objective.

***Opening Statement submitted to the West Greenland Commission by NASCO's accredited Non-Government Organisations***

The NGOs appreciate that Greenland intends to reduce its harvest of wild Atlantic salmon in 2016 by 13 tonnes to make up for the over harvest in 2015, and that progress has been made in monitoring, reporting and control. We recommend that Greenland take measures to prevent over harvest in 2016 and 2017 and that the harvests be subsistence, rather than factory.

The International Council for the Exploration of the Sea (ICES) indicates that there is no surplus of large North American salmon and advises NASCO that no fisheries should be operating on mixed stocks. Greenland's fishery is entirely mixed-stock and cannot differentiate between the harvest of salmon from healthy populations and those from endangered populations located in their southern range in North America and Europe.

The NGOs do recognise that Greenland decided to cap its salmon fishery (factory and subsistence) at 45 tonnes, despite strong opposition within Greenland and this was not an easy decision. However, the hard truth is that this fishery harvests salmon that are needed to seed North American and European rivers. There is certainly no scientific rationale for any fishery at Greenland; however, the NGOs could accept a subsistence fishery of no more than 20t.

The NGOs commend Greenland for the advances that they are making in catch reporting and in managing catches. We are following the development of Greenland's monitoring and control procedures with interest, and feel that its goals are worthy of emulation by other Parties as well.

***Closing Statement submitted to the Council by the  
North Pacific Anadromous Fish Commission (NPAFC)***

Mr President, Delegates, Ladies and Gentlemen,

At the risk of overstaying my welcome, I would like to say a few words. I thank NASCO for welcoming me as an observer for the North Pacific Anadromous Fish Commission for the second consecutive year. Thank you to Dr Peter Hutchinson and the Secretariat staff who did such an outstanding job of orchestrating this week of meetings. I take back to the NPAFC and Canada a wealth of new knowledge, ideas and connections to an impressive network of people.

Thank you to our German hosts who brought us to this remarkable valley that has, as we learned, provided outstanding culture and accommodation for several thousand years. The banquet and the reception were exceptional. I wish them well in their endeavours to return salmon to the Rhine and its tributaries.

Last year I arrived with a proposal from NPAFC for an International Year of the Salmon initiative to enhance our science and outreach efforts in a bid to meet the challenge that a rapidly changing environment poses to salmon and people. NASCO supported the concept and took the challenging step of developing a NASCO response inter-sessionally.

Dr Hutchinson and Mr Morris worked throughout the past year to develop the NASCO response and then actively participated in the Steering Committee for the IYS Scoping Meeting in Vancouver, Canada. I cannot over-emphasise enough the positive contribution that Peter and Dan have made in the form of leadership and ideas specifically regarding the governance model. We left Vancouver with a joint proposal to take to our respective organisations that was built in true collaborative fashion.

I know your deliberations on the IYS were a challenge this week. Regardless of the outcome of the week I was pleased that my role was truly that of an observer. NASCO took ownership of the IYS and has worked through issues related to timing and governance. The clarification that decision-making rests with the NASCO and NPAFC Steering Committees and not the Coordinating Committee is an excellent one.

I am more than pleased to be leaving here today with the news that the NASCO and NPAFC will move forward to implement the International Year of the Salmon. I would hope that the IYS is no longer referred to as an NPAFC proposal but rather a joint NASCO/NPAFC initiative.

Salmon are culturally iconic and, ecologically, a keystone species. The regional and municipal governments in the Cowichan Valley where I live have adopted the presence of salmon in the Cowichan as a key indicator of environmental and community health. The Rhine master plan for the re-introduction of Atlantic salmon does as well. I can envision through our IYS efforts that the presence of salmon across the entire salmosphere becomes a galvanising concept that inspires the advancement of science and cultural change.

Now our work begins and I look forward to what is going to be a very busy year with much to be done to meet aggressive timelines for a Symposium in 2018 and a focal year in 2019.

Thank you again to all of the participants for making me feel so welcome and I wish you well and safe travels.