

Opening Statements submitted by the Parties

Opening Statement submitted by Canada

Distinguished Delegates, Ladies and Gentlemen, it is a pleasure for the Canadian delegation to participate at this Annual Meeting in the wonderful city of Bad Neuenahr-Ahrweiler, Germany. I want to commend our hosts, the city of Bad Neuenahr-Ahrweiler, Germany, and the EU for selecting this venue and the excellent arrangements that have been made by the Secretariat.

The importance of this meeting and NASCO in general continues to be reinforced by the situation facing many of our salmon stocks. In 2014 some of the Canadian stocks had their worst years in recent memory. This trend continued for most of our salmon stocks in 2015. We are here to address this challenge, and to represent a great number of people and communities who depend on salmon in some way.

Last year, we had a challenging but productive meeting in Happy Valley - Goose Bay, Newfoundland and Labrador. We believe the difficult discussions and decisions made during that meeting marked an important turning point for NASCO. While we continue to be concerned with the level of Greenland's unilateral catch level, in particular their 'factory landings', we greatly appreciate the extensive work they have done, as outlined in their progress report. This was a challenging process for Greenland, but one that must continue. As Canada stated in 2015, we offer our support for continued implementation of the regulatory measure by Greenland throughout 2016 and 2017.

At the core of our discussions last year was the recognition that the effective management of a dynamic and complex stock like Atlantic salmon requires clear catch monitoring, control and surveillance, comprehensive scientific advice and fundamental co-operation at both the domestic and international levels. Co-operation last year led to progress, but there is more to be done.

We continue to encourage France (in respect of St Pierre and Miquelon) to join NASCO as a formal member, and to implement a comprehensive approach to the management of Atlantic salmon, in accordance with the objectives of NASCO, and in particular the six tenets for effective management.

Working together with conservation as our top priority will benefit all of our communities.

In Canada, the importance of Atlantic salmon and the need to strengthen our management measures have been the focus of a Ministerial appointed Advisory Committee. The Committee has been active over the last year and has produced a fulsome set of recommendations on Atlantic salmon, which we will speak to during this week.

I am pleased to note that the Canadian government has allocated a permanent augmentation to our ocean and fisheries science budgets of \$40 million Canadian dollars annually. For Atlantic salmon this will translate into six new biologists and researchers and the proposed establishment of a science partnership called the Atlantic Salmon Research Joint Venture. This will allow Canada to have more capacity to tackle the science questions of Atlantic salmon particularly the marine survival issue.

We also look forward to discussing a range of other issues with you, including the opportunities that we have regarding the International Year of the Salmon.

I look forward to working closely with all of you and to a productive meeting this week.

Thank you.

*Opening Statement submitted by
Denmark (in respect of the Faroe Islands and Greenland)*

Mr President, distinguished Delegates, Observers, Ladies and Gentlemen,

On behalf of Greenland and the Faroe Islands I would like to begin by thanking our German hosts for arranging this meeting in this beautiful location of Bad Neuenahr-Ahrweiler.

Commercial salmon fisheries at sea were once of utmost importance both to the Faroe Islands and to Greenland. It was therefore at great expense to our fishing industries that the Faroese and Greenlandic governments decided to take responsibility and refrain from all commercial fishing of wild salmon in our waters with a view to re-building the stocks. Still, even though we have stopped our commercial salmon fisheries, we retain our full rights to conduct fishing in accordance with NASCO's guidelines. It is not the limited fishery in Greenland that has prevented the recovery of the salmon.

Despite the sacrifices made by our commercial salmon fishing industries, we have not seen any significant recovery of the stocks and it must thus be concluded that we need to consider other factors and measures in order to improve the stocks. It is important to focus on all aspects of the life-cycle of the salmon. The river nations must step-up and keep their side of the bargain too and create the best possible conditions for re-building the salmon stocks.

Greenland and the Faroe Islands are of the opinion that it was a step in the right direction to establish a procedure where the Parties now submit a written Annual Progress Report. The reports show that there is progress in the management of wild salmon, even though we also see examples of different challenges in some jurisdictions. Although there is still room for improvement in the reporting, we want to emphasise the importance of ensuring full transparency on how the Parties manage wild salmon in their rivers and waters.

We would like to take this opportunity to reiterate what we have stated at a number of previous meetings, namely that the best and fairest solution would be if NASCO could regulate fisheries for wild salmon in the home waters of all Parties and jurisdictions of NASCO.

Salmon farming in the North Atlantic has increased significantly since NASCO was established. The industry has become a central part of the economies of several North Atlantic countries, including the Faroe Islands. The aquaculture industry can pose a threat to the wild salmon stocks, if the industry is not regulated carefully. This year's Theme-Based Special Session addressing the impacts of salmon farming on wild Atlantic salmon is therefore of great interest to all countries in the region with aquaculture industries, as it is important to implement and maintain high regulation standards in our industry in order to safeguard wild salmon stocks.

Mr President, the Faroe Islands and Greenland are looking forward to a productive week in this lovely Steigenberger Hotel and will assure you that we are prepared to work in a constructive way so that we collectively can contribute to a successful outcome of this 33rd Annual NASCO Meeting.

Thank you.

Opening Statement submitted by the European Union

Mr President, Mr Secretary, distinguished Delegates, Observers, Ladies and Gentlemen,

The European Union is honoured to host the 33rd Annual Meeting of NASCO in this enchanting corner of Germany. I would like to acknowledge the hospitality and generosity of the German authorities, as well as the relentless work of our German colleagues and of the Secretariat for the excellent organisation of this meeting in Bad Neuenahr-Ahrweiler.

There is certainly no more appropriate place for a NASCO meeting than here, at the heart of a region that several years ago was home to Atlantic salmon and that now is a symbol of unprecedented re-stocking efforts and ecological river restoration. None of these achievements could have been possible without the concerted action and the close co-operation among the States and Regions of the Rhine watershed.

It is exactly this spirit of co-operation that has shaped NASCO since its creation. And we need to strengthen this co-operation even further. Atlantic salmon stocks are under pressure. Some of these pressures know no borders. No single country or region can solve the resulting challenges alone, no matter how big they might be. In 2014 many southern European rivers hit historically low levels in salmon return rates. The returns in 2015 did not show significant signs of improvement. We all know that the path of recovery may take years, probably decades. But we also know that business as usual is not an option. So, we need to continue working together to see where and how the existing framework could be improved, what we can better achieve by strengthening our commitment and how we can mutually benefit from each other's experiences.

At the same time, Atlantic salmon stocks also face pressures requiring bold action and strong political commitment at a domestic level. The EU Member States and jurisdictions have several examples to offer. The most remarkable and recent one is the package of new conservation measures that took effect in Scotland from 31 March 2016 and that, among other things, prohibits any killing of salmon in coastal waters for a period of three years.

Even when pressures are better addressed at the domestic level, NASCO has an important role to play. It can raise awareness, catalyse discussions, draw up guidelines and facilitate knowledge-sharing and exchange of best practices. It is exactly this type of open and transparent dialogue that we expect from the Theme-based Special Session on aquaculture this year.

Last but not least, we should not forget that without sufficient knowledge, we are essentially acting in the dark. Only armed with knowledge and sound scientific results can we ensure a better management and conservation of Atlantic salmon stocks. This year the EU has earmarked 600,000 € as a voluntary contribution to NASCO to fund two projects. One intended to shed further light on the mortality at sea of Atlantic salmon and one to develop a sea lice model that would contribute to improved best management practices for sea lice control.

The EU is looking forward to a fruitful co-operation with all of you during this meeting and beyond, to collectively pave the way to the achievement of the long-term objectives of NASCO and ensure that Atlantic salmon remains an integral part of our ecological legacy to the future generations.

Opening Statement Submitted by Norway

Mr President, distinguished Delegates, Observers, Ladies and Gentlemen,

On behalf of Norway, I would like to thank the EU and Germany for hosting the Thirty-Third Annual Meeting of NASCO.

In Norway, the wild Atlantic salmon runs have reduced by more than half during the last three decades. One of the main reasons seems to be reduced survival at sea. But there are local and regional differences, most likely due to adverse human impacts on the stocks.

Revised fisheries regulations have been adopted this year. The regulations have to a large extent compensated for reduced salmon runs, and, with the exception of the Tana river, overharvesting is no longer a major threat.

The work on combating the salmon parasite *Gyrodactylus salaris* has given good results in recent years. The parasite has been eradicated from many large and important salmon rivers. After the parasite eradication, the local salmon stocks are quickly re-built from the gene bank.

One of the items we will discuss in depth this week is aquaculture. Aquaculture is a major Norwegian industry. There is a broad political will to facilitate increased aquaculture production in Norway, provided the environmental impact is within acceptable limits. Last year, the Norwegian Parliament decided, based on a White Paper presented by the Government, on the principles for further growth in Norwegian aquaculture. For NASCO, it is of particular interest that it is the impact of aquaculture on wild salmonids that in the short term will decide the growth rate in aquaculture production. My delegation will present this in more detail during the Theme-based Special Session later this week.

A Quality Norm for wild stocks of Atlantic salmon in Norway was adopted in 2013. This Norm is a classification tool that is used to assess the status of individual salmon stocks and guide the management authorities in their decisions that may have implications for wild salmon. The first classification was conducted in 2016 for 104 rivers. The classification includes nearly all of the most important Norwegian salmon rivers, representing 76% of the total combined Norwegian spawning target.

The results indicate that the stock situation in Norway is far from as good as a categorisation based on management target attainment alone would suggest. The experience of utilising the Quality Norm in Norway suggests that an approach based only on conservation limits will not adequately classify the status and well-being of salmon stocks, and that the approach being suggested by NASCO's Stock Classification Working Group will be more appropriate for use with the NASCO Rivers Database.

On this background, the Norwegian Parliament has asked the Government for a plan addressing the status of the stocks of anadromous salmonids, and how both management and dissemination of knowledge can be strengthened to secure sustainable development.

The Norwegian delegation would like to thank Germany and the Secretariat for the excellent preparations for this meeting. We look forward to a productive and successful meeting.

Opening Statement submitted by the Russian Federation

Mr President, distinguished Delegates, Observers, Ladies and Gentlemen,

On behalf of the Russian delegation I am delighted to greet all participants of the Thirty-Third Annual Meeting of NASCO in Bad Neuenahr-Ahrweiler, Germany.

I would like to thank Germany for hosting this meeting in the beautiful Ahr valley on the bank of the salmon spawning tributary of the River Rhine, renowned in the salmon world for its unique Atlantic salmon restoration programme.

This year the Theme-Based Special Session will focus on the theme of developments in relation to minimising the impacts of farmed salmon on wild salmon stocks. The threats of aquaculture to the wild salmon stocks such as sea lice, genetic interactions and spread of diseases are well known and NASCO has adopted a number of agreements and guidelines designed to minimise their impacts on the wild salmon stocks. However an exchange of information among Parties/jurisdictions is required and we believe that this Theme-based Special Session will provide a unique international forum for, and facilitate information exchange and collaboration relating to, protecting wild Atlantic salmon stocks from impacts of salmon farming and to promote sustainable salmon farming practices.

Another important issue for the Russian Federation concerns management of salmon mixed-stock fisheries in coastal areas. In autumn 2015 the Russian Federation and Norway signed the Memorandum of Understanding between the Ministry of Climate and Environment (Norway) and the Federal Agency for Fishery (the Russian Federation) on co-operation in management of, and monitoring and research on, wild Atlantic salmon in Finnmark County (Norway) and the Murmansk region (the Russian Federation). A joint Working Group was established under the Memorandum to deal with relevant issues. We do believe that the joint effort of the two NASCO Parties will lead to regulatory measures for mixed-stock fisheries which will help to minimise interceptory harvests in the area of fisheries jurisdiction of one Party of salmon originating in the rivers of another Party.

In conclusion I would like to thank Germany for hosting this Annual Meeting once again for their hospitality, and wish all of us success in working together during this week.

Thank you for your attention.

Opening Statement submitted by the United States

Mr President, Secretary Hutchinson, distinguished Delegates, Observers, Ladies and Gentlemen,

The U.S. Delegation to the 33rd Annual Meeting of NASCO is delighted to join our NASCO colleagues and friends here in beautiful Bad Neuenahr-Ahrweiler, Germany. These Annual Meetings are an opportunity for us to work together to achieve NASCO's goal of conserving, restoring, enhancing and rationally managing Atlantic salmon through international co-operation taking into account the best available scientific information.

On behalf of the United States, I offer my sincere thanks to our German hosts for their hospitality and for the excellent accommodations and also to the European Union for inviting us to such a beautiful meeting location. Being close to the Rhine River, which historically was the largest salmon river in Europe and is now undergoing extensive efforts to restore a salmon run, offers us inspiration for the work we will be doing here this week. I also wish to express our sincere appreciation to our Secretary and his staff, whose hard work each year sets the stage for our deliberations. Thank you for your tireless efforts in support of this body.

On Sunday, the West Greenland Commission held an important Inter-sessional Meeting that gave us an early opportunity to learn more about Greenland's efforts to improve the monitoring, control and catch accountability of their mixed-stock fishery. While it is clear that more work is needed, we greatly appreciate the management actions taken by Greenland over the past year. We look forward to continued progress and discussions on this important issue during this Annual Meeting.

As we have stated at past meetings, many Atlantic salmon stocks in North America continue to be at great risk. The United States has made significant progress on our 'Species in the Spotlight' initiative, which aims to turn the tide for this species from a declining trend toward recovery. In the context of this initiative, we are working with our other federal and non-federal partners to take specific action to address the threats to Atlantic salmon. One key area of U.S. focus, which was highlighted during last year's Theme-based Special Session, is restoring connectivity to important habitats by replacing culverts, removing dams and ensuring that fish passage meets very high standards for passage efficiency and survival at those barriers that cannot be removed.

Another important U.S. initiative, called NOAA's 'Habitat Blueprint', provides an important framework that has facilitated further progress in Atlantic salmon recovery. This has been accomplished by aligning the priorities of concerned U.S. federal agencies in a manner that gives special emphasis to the Penobscot River in support of protections, collaborative restoration efforts and education about the importance of healthy rivers. This is important for Atlantic salmon since approximately 75% of all U.S. returns come from this river.

Similar to Canada's recent convening of a Ministerial Advisory Committee on Atlantic Salmon, these two domestic programmes have brought welcomed and much needed visibility and support to Atlantic salmon in the United States. And we are excited about the prospect of further expanding attention to salmon conservation, science and recovery through adoption of the proposal for an International Year of the Salmon (IYS). The IYS would create forums for scientific collaboration between parties in the Atlantic and the Pacific, and it would provide vehicles for public engagement regarding the conservation and management of salmon, the

restoration and protection of rivers and the responsibilities of those of us who live within the 'salmosphere'.

During the Theme-based Special Session on aquaculture this week, we intend to share some of the lessons we have learned on actions to minimise to the greatest extent possible, impacts of salmon aquaculture on wild Atlantic salmon stocks in U.S. waters. Our aquaculture industry has made great strides in this regard and has been recognised as a leader in producing sustainable farmed Atlantic salmon. We look forward to sharing some details behind the success of this collaboration at the Theme-based Special Session on Wednesday and to learning from all of the Parties this week as we take a good look at the science, the status and trends in Atlantic salmon and consider possible ways to enhance the protection and restoration of salmon.

We also look forward to the Special Session on the Annual Progress Reports. Describing the efforts we all undertake to conserve and rationally manage Atlantic salmon in our home waters and our accountability relative to NASCO agreements is primarily driven by the Implementation Plan process. As such, we must continue to strive to make this process, including the development and review of Annual Progress Reports, as robust and effective as possible. We hope to have a rigorous discussion of the 2015 annual reports this year. We urge everyone to take full advantage of this Special Session.

In closing, I would like to reiterate that the United States remains very concerned about the global status of Atlantic salmon and, in particular, the critically endangered nature of salmon populations of U.S. origin. The risk of extinction of many of these populations is real, and our responsibility, individually and collectively, to avoid such an outcome cannot be overstated.

Thanks once again to our hosts and the Secretariat for the excellent preparations for this meeting. The United States looks forward to working with you all this week and to a successful meeting.

Thank you.