

	<p>Council</p> <p><i>Proposed Terms of Reference for a Working Group on the Future of NASCO</i></p>	<p>CNL(23)68</p> <p>Agenda item: 6b)</p>
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Proposed Terms of Reference for a Working Group on the Future of NASCO

Purpose

The purpose of this paper is to propose a process to respond to the recommendations of NASCO’s third performance review.

Background

In 2023, the Heads of Delegation met inter-sessionally, in February, at the end of April with the NGO Co-Chairs and just before the Annual Meeting, to discuss the findings of NASCO’s third performance review.

The President stressed that this performance review has occurred at a crucial time for wild Atlantic salmon (hereafter salmon) conservation, given the effects of climate change, in particular, being acutely felt across the species range and the risk of witnessing the extinction of dozens of populations in the next two decades. This performance review, which is a crucial process for the functioning of any RFMO, is therefore particularly important for NASCO, and offers an opportunity to take stock of the achievements of NASCO but also of its constraints and to try to refocus NASCO’s work to respond more effectively to the pressures salmon faces.

Heads of Delegation quickly concluded that, in order to effectively prioritise the performance review recommendations, they first needed to carry out a strategic planning process to identify where / how NASCO should focus its efforts in order to deliver most effectively for salmon. Consideration of NASCO’s unique added value was identified as being key to determining the way forward for NASCO, noting NASCO’s crucial role in raising the profile of salmon.

Heads of Delegation proposed establishing a Working Group on the Future of NASCO (WGFON), to carry out this strategic planning work and review all relevant recommendations in order to deliver a NASCO Strategy and NASCO Action Plan.

Heads of Delegation proposed that the WGFON would present the draft NASCO Strategy and related Action Plan during the 2024 NASCO Annual Meeting. The 40th anniversary of the signing of the Convention could then provide an opportunity to relaunch NASCO with a greater emphasis on conservation and to reinvigorate its commitment to ensuring the future of salmon.

WGFON would specifically consider the possibility to implement these actions in the context of a fourth reporting cycle and give consideration to a potential shift towards reporting on the quantitative outcomes of management actions to better describe the current status of salmon stocks and to track progress towards conserving, restoring, enhancing and rationally managing Atlantic salmon. This would require identifying new types of indicators, potentially different across the various jurisdictions to reflect the diversity of challenges they face, as well as baselines for these indicators. The evaluation of the progress by the Parties towards the NASCO objectives could potentially take place less frequently, therefore targeting the limited resources of the Parties, the Secretariat and NGOs towards action.

Feedback was received from NASCO delegates during a Special Session dedicated to NASCO’s third performance review during the 2023 Annual Meeting. The major takeaways from this Special Session were consistent with the preliminary conclusions of the Heads of Delegation. In particular, the following were highlighted: the need and urgency to act; the need to raise the profile of salmon conservation and to reach decision makers at the highest possible level; and the need to take climate change into consideration, through the implementation of the precautionary approach, when designing management measures or setting targets.

Proposed Terms of Reference for the Working Group on the Future of NASCO

1. The WGFON shall:
 - a. Be comprised of no more than three representatives from each Party, including Heads of Delegations, where possible, and two representatives of NASCO's accredited NGOs, as well as the Chair of the IP / APR Working Group.
 - b. Invite individuals with relevant expertise to attend its meetings, as it sees fit.
 - c. Be chaired by the President of NASCO.
 - d. Propose a succinct NASCO strategy, which will, among other things, describe:
 - the status of wild Atlantic salmon and the key pressures they face, in the context of the climate change emergency.
 - NASCO's unique added value to deliver NASCO's current vision / objectives / goals.
 - key focus areas for NASCO.

The Strategy is intended to be used by the Parties and to inform NGOs, decision-makers, administrations and the public of the plight of wild Atlantic salmon and NASCO's work.
 - e. Consider the recommendations of the External Performance Review Panel, including the considerations as laid out in document CNL(23)18, as well as the Tromsø Symposium, Theme-based Special Sessions (including the 2023 TBSS on climate change), and other relevant recommendations and information.
 - f. Consider the possibility of implementing these actions in the context of a fourth reporting cycle.
 - g. Develop a NASCO Action Plan which would identify specific actions to deliver the strategy.
 - h. Establish a process to monitor delivery of the NASCO Action Plan, on an annual basis.
 - i. Report back to the Council no later than 1 April 2024 with all of the items above.
2. The Secretariat shall co-ordinate the first meeting of the WGFON in consultation with the designated participants. The WGFON will then convene as required and as determined by its Chair, and under the format chosen by the Chair.
3. The Secretariat shall provide administrative and information support to WGFON, including the preparation of the documents specified, for delivery to the Contracting Parties as soon as possible after 1 April 2024.