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***Press Release***

Twentieth Annual Meeting  
Edinburgh, Scotland  
June 2 - 6, 2003

**NASCO Leads the Way**

**Salmon Conservation Organization Makes Historic Progress in  
Implementing the Precautionary Approach**

**“We must not allow anything to happen to wild Atlantic salmon that could prejudice the rights of our children and grandchildren. The steps we are taking to implement the Precautionary Approach in our work are therefore vital.”**

**- Jacque Robichaud, President of NASCO**

The North Atlantic Salmon Conservation Organization (NASCO), an intergovernmental organization formed in 1983 to promote the conservation, restoration, enhancement, and rational management of salmon stocks in the North Atlantic Ocean, met from 2-6 June 2003, in Edinburgh, Scotland. Its members are Canada, Denmark (in respect of the Faroe Islands and Greenland), the European Union, Iceland, Norway, the Russian Federation, and the United States of America.

Through its cooperative approach, real progress has been made in addressing the poor state of the wild Atlantic salmon stocks in the North Atlantic. Nevertheless, in these early years of the 21<sup>st</sup> Century, NASCO is still facing challenges.

In the area of fisheries management, NASCO is the leader among international fisheries organizations in applying the Precautionary Approach. At its 2003 meeting, NASCO adopted a new “umbrella” resolution, the Williamsburg Resolution, that consolidates and improves its existing strategy to minimize the potential threats associated with introductions, transfers, aquaculture, and transgenics. The resolution not only provides coherent guidance to the Parties concerning the application of the Precautionary Approach to these activities, it is sufficiently flexible to allow for its adaptation in the face of new developments. Moreover, the resolution includes more thorough and transparent reporting procedures that are critical to the implementation of the Precautionary Approach. NASCO has also made further progress on its fishery management decision structure and development of habitat protection and restoration plans as part of its implementation of the Precautionary Approach.

Recognizing that wild Atlantic salmon are subject to a wide range of influences that may have some adverse impacts, the NASCO Parties have been examining the application of the Precautionary Approach as broadly as possible. In this regard, NASCO adopted at this week’s meeting guidelines for developing stock rebuilding programs and a plan for creating a framework to consider social and economic factors. Additionally, NASCO agreed to further investigate and address by-catches of wild Atlantic salmon in pelagic fisheries.

The International Atlantic Salmon Research Board, a new cooperative effort for addressing marine mortality issues, reported on its progress. Significant financial commitments were made at this year’s Annual Meeting by NASCO members, which will assist the Board in fulfilling its mandate. The Board will continue to seek additional contributions from private companies and individuals with an interest in wild salmon conservation.

In agreeing to halt commercial fisheries at West Greenland for 2003, all NASCO Parties recognized the continuing sacrifices made by Greenland fishermen. It was acknowledged that there will be an ongoing requirement to meet subsistence needs. With respect to the Faroe Islands fishery, it was not possible to agree on specific management measures as per the Convention to control the fishery in 2004. Nevertheless, in the event of a fishery, the Faroe Islands has agreed to take internal management decisions on the basis of current ICES advice. Significantly, France (in respect of St. Pierre and Miquelon), the only harvester of Atlantic salmon that is not a member of NASCO, has recently committed to cooperate with the Organization by implementing a research program on the St. Pierre and Miquelon fishery.

There were representatives from 15 non-governmental organizations attending the meeting from North America and Europe. They continued to participate in the work of the Organization in a positive and active manner.

The next Annual Meeting of NASCO is scheduled for June 7-11, 2004.

The report of the NASCO Annual Meeting, including the annexed documents, as well as other essential information on the Organization, can be accessed at the NASCO website: [www.nasco.int](http://www.nasco.int).

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