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Canadian Proposal Regarding Conservation of Atlantic Salmon

The Canadian delegation wishes to advise the Commission of its continued grave concern regarding the wellbeing of Atlantic salmon stocks, particularly stocks of salmon of 2 sea-years and older.

In 1969 and again in 1970 the total salmon catch at West Greenland exceeded 2,000 metric tons. This catch consisted almost entirely of fish, a large proportion of which, had they not been caught at Greenland, would have returned to home waters to contribute to fisheries and spawning escapement. These large fish are the most valuable part of the salmon resource; both economically and for purposes of maintaining stocks.

The most recent scientific evidence indicates that Canadian rivers contribute almost one-half of the salmon stock present at West Greenland; and therefore about one-half of the catch consists of fish of Canadian origin. The catch at Greenland of 1+ sea-year salmon of Canadian origin is now about equal to the Canadian catch of the returning survivors in terms of weight. Since these fish are much smaller at West Greenland than in home waters the following year, it is obvious that the numbers taken at West Greenland are in excess of those subsequently taken in home waters.

The numbers of large salmon escaping all fisheries and surviving to spawn in Canadian rivers have declined severely in recent years, particularly in some of our largest river systems. Recent Canadian research has indicated a significant genetic effect in salmon production; thus the reduction in spawning stock of large salmon will be very serious because the remaining spawners, mainly grilse, will not be able to maintain the proportion of 2 sea-year and older individuals in the stock.

The Canadian Government views these developments with alarm. In order to protect the spawning runs of large salmon it has instituted substantial restriction

of commercial and angling effort in Canada; in some areas these are expected to reduce the catch of large salmon by more than 30%. Without speculating further on the reasons for the decline in large salmon, we believe that those countries which depend exclusively on this part of the stock for their fisheries at West Greenland ought to share in conservation measures to ensure future production of large salmon.

We accordingly make the following proposals, which we believe represent the minimum action necessary to maintain numbers of 2 sea-year and older fish in the future.

1. That each Contracting Government which has participated in the fishery for Atlantic salmon, Salmo salar L., take appropriate action to limit the aggregate tonnage of vessels employed and catch taken by its nationals in the fishery in the Convention Area to a level not exceeding 80% of the aggregate tonnage of vessels so employed and catch so taken in 1969.
2. That the overall length of nets fished at any one time by any one vessel be limited to 8 nautical miles.
3. That Contracting Governments which have not accepted the prohibition on fishing for Atlantic salmon outside national fishery limits take appropriate action to prohibit fishing for Atlantic salmon outside national fishery limits in the Convention Area before 31 July and after 30 November.
4. That the use for salmon fishing of any trawl net, any monofilament net or any troll be prohibited throughout the Convention Area provided that Contracting Governments may authorize the continued use of monofilament nets acquired before 1 July 1970.
5. That these measures be in force for the years 1972 and 1973 subject to review and possible amendment within that period, in the event of substantial changes in the catches of Atlantic salmon in the Convention Area or in home waters; or in the fish stocks, or in the event of increased participation in the fishery by non-member countries.