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Canadian Proposal  
Concerning Conservation Measures for Atlantic Salmon in the Convention Area

The Canadian Delegation continues to view with concern the development of new fisheries for Atlantic salmon both in inshore waters and on the high seas far from the rivers of origin. Although we appreciated the thoughtful consideration given to the Canadian proposal presented at the last Annual Meeting (Comm. Doc.67/17), we were disappointed that the Commission could not agree to recommend prohibition of fishing for Atlantic salmon on the High Seas in the Convention Area. Since that time we have reviewed the scientific data available on the distribution and composition of Atlantic salmon stocks in the North Atlantic area and have concluded once again that the risk of over-exploiting this valuable resource through intensification of existing fisheries or the development of new fisheries is too great to be ignored by the Commission while awaiting additional scientific data on which to base a final decision.

Many of the special features associated with management of anadromous species such as Atlantic salmon were outlined in Commissioners' Document 67/17 and these are generally recognized by fishery experts of all nations. In our view the most important special feature is the responsibility assumed by those nations having salmon spawning rivers within their territories to ensure that the freshwater habitat is maintained in a condition which will provide for maximum production of young salmon either by natural or artificial means. This is a costly responsibility essential to maintenance of the resource, and can only be assumed by such nations if concomitant benefits accrue to the national fisheries. The continued high level of production of Atlantic salmon from Canadian rivers shows very clearly that Canada has effectively accepted its responsibilities in this regard.

We realize that more scientific evidence must be gathered bearing on the distant migrations and high seas life of Atlantic salmon before the experts will be able to determine with reasonable accuracy the size and composition of the resource and the effects of the various fisheries on the spawning stocks in order to recommend appropriate conservation measures. It is obvious from the reports of the scientists that it will take some years to complete the necessary investigations and the analysis of data and we are concerned that if the fishing effort continues to increase during this period we may be faced with one more example of effective fisheries management coming too late to provide maximum long-term benefit to the fishermen of our nations.

It is our view that on the basis of the evidence available at this time the Commission should take a prudent approach to the problem immediately and prohibit the development of new fisheries or the extension of existing fisheries. We have taken such action in Canada where the number of commercial salmon licences is strictly limited. It is our firm intention to continue this policy and prohibit further development of the fishery until better scientific data are available.

The Canadian Delegation sincerely hopes that the other members of the Commission will agree that the amount of fishing effort applied to the limited Atlantic salmon resource should not be increased and will institute appropriate measures within their respective administrations to ensure that the Atlantic salmon fisheries in the North Atlantic area are stabilized at the 1967 level until new scientific evidence makes it possible to recommend specific conservation measures to the Contracting Governments.

Ottawa, Canada  
May 10, 1968