RESTRICTED

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Canadian Proposal to Prohibit Fishing for Atlantic Salmon on the High Seas in the Convention Area

The Canadian Delegation and Canadian salmon fishermen have viewed with concern the recent development of a major inshore fishery for Atlantic salmon along the southwest coast of Greenland and a minor high seas fishery in the same area. There is evidence that salmon spawned in Canadian rivers make a major contribution to the stocks fished in the Greenland area. For this reason we are particularly concerned about the possibility of the development of major high seas fisheries for salmon in the northwest Atlantic or, indeed, any intensification of the inshore Greenland fishery, developments which, in our opinion, would reduce the numbers of salmon available to Canadian Atlantic salmon fishing operations.

The final report of the First Meeting of the ICES/ICNAF Joint Working Party on North Atlantic Salmon (ICNAF Res. Doc. 67/5) provides data on the development of the Greenland fishery from a production of 115 tons in 1961 to a peak production of 1400 tons in 1964; summarizes evidence on growth of salmon between Greenland and home waters, natural mortality, exploitation rates and national contributions to Greenland catches; presents theoretical assessments of the effect of the Greenland fishery on the total salmon catch and the spawning stock; and recommends future projects which should be undertaken to provide additional data required to make more precise assessments of the situation. The Canadian Delegation commends the Working Party for the thorough analysis made of the limited amount of data available to it and for preparing such an informative and comprehensive report. We shall look forward with interest to receiving future reports based on additional data which will become

available from the cooperative scientific studies approved by the Commission.

Those nations having salmon spawning rivers within their territories alone can take measures to maintain these rivers in a condition which will provide for maximum production of a valuable resource. This can prove very costly. In Canada large expenditures are made each year to maintain and improve salmon spawning rivers and to augment natural reproduction through the operation of salmon hatcheries and rearing ponds. Maintenance of river spawning areas and water of the quantity and quality required for salmon production requires restricting the use of salmon rivers for power development, waste disposal, irrigation and other industrial uses at considerable cost to the national economy. In addition, Canadian fishermen have been subject each year to highly restrictive fishing regulations to provide adequate escapement of adult salmon to spawning areas.

In order that the oceans may play their essential role in the growth and maturation of anadromous species, such as the Atlantic salmon, it is necessary for those nations having spawning rivers to make the expenditures and efforts referred to above to provide maximum runs of smolts to the ocean. This gives such nations a special interest in the resource and in order to support continuation of such expenditures and efforts they must have the incentive of reaping the rewards. The value of the Atlantic salmon resource to Canadian commercial and sport fishing interests is considerable but the costs of maintaining the resource cannot be justified if other nations take a significant portion of the sustainable yield and thus reduce the Canadian share of the reward. Without regulation of the fisheries and preservation of the spawning rivers the Canadian Atlantic salmon would have been depleted many years ago.

Furthermore, experience gained through many years

of successful management of Pacific salmon stocks produced in Canadian rivers has shown that major exploitation in areas where salmon originating in a number of river systems are intermingled, makes it difficult to regulate the fishery to obtain the maximum yield from each river. Closely regulated small boat fisheries conducted in the vicinity of the mouths of salmon spawning rivers, where the returning spawners have become segregated to a considerable degree, can be operated in accordance with a management program soundly based on scientific knowledge but fisheries on mixed stocks are not as susceptible to such management. This is a further reason for limiting fisheries where salmon are intermingled far from the spawning rivers.

For these reasons the Canadian Delegation hopes that the Commission will give favourable consideration to its proposal that fishing for Atlantic salmon outside national fishery limits be prohibited in the Convention area.