



Heidi Sørensen, Statssekretær (Secretary of State)
Ministry of Environment - heidi.sorensen@md.dep.no
&
Marianne Balto Visepresident (Vice President)
Sami Parliament - marianne.balto@samediggi.no

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Dear Mesdames,

We have just received a copy of the Salmon Protocol signed on behalf of your organisations on November 24, 2010. We wish you to know that we are deeply concerned that the paper was signed in apparent ignorance of important international agreements. That is a very regrettable step backwards.

Your Protocol ignores the international agreements and the virtually unanimous scientific advice that should govern the treatment of the wild salmon that migrate in and around the Finnmark area. The United Nation Law of the Sea, article 66, is particularly explicit. It gives Russia the right to demand the closure of all mixed-stock salmon fisheries in Finnmark.

Instead the Protocol refers to the NASCO Treaty which is only a guideline direction with no legal obligation for any nation, even provides ... "that no recommendation shall be made concerning the management of salmon harvests within the area of fisheries jurisdiction of a Party." (NASCO Treaty Art.4.2.)

Your Protocol ignores the biological, cultural and historic rights of other nations, the goodwill of people of other countries who care about the future of international wild salmon stocks and is one of the reasons that some wild salmon still remain in your part of the world. I refer to the Samis in Russia, the native Faroese, the Icelanders and the Innuits in Greenland.

The salmon is an international resource and its migration takes it through the waters of many nations. Perhaps your legal advisors have failed to warn you of the fact that the Finnmark net fishery is a violation of Norway's international obligations. The Norwegian Foreign Office accepts that this is true but it begs unreasonably for yet more time to comply (see copies enclosed) on the grounds that the commercial fishery reduces rural poverty. Perhaps Norway is planning a withdrawal for the UN Law of the Sea Treaty?

It seems inconsistent with the character of the people of Finnmark that such a protocol should be drafted. It contains no grand sense of the region's purpose and no driving desire to use its stature, experience and resources— through diplomacy - to make a better world for the wild salmon.

There is no place for egocentric protocols that will only add insult to the injury that Finnmark's illegal fisheries have inflicted on salmon stocks native to Russia. This year we discovered that many more Russian salmon tags have been recovered from fish taken by nets in the Finnmark district and more and more net-damaged salmon and escapees from Norwegian fish farms have been found in Russian rivers this year. This presents a serious biological threat as well as a reduction in spawning numbers.

We send you every good wish. But it comes with the hope that you will see that restoring Norway's salmon stocks, reviving Norway's former glory as a world-class sport fishing destination and ending the interception of fish that should return to neighbouring countries would do very much more to reduce rural poverty than supporting a potentially self-destructive net fishery.

Yours sincerely,

Orri Vigfússon, Chairman, NASF