

## Kingdom of Norway - the first standpoint

At the very beginning, we, the delegation of the Kingdom of Norway, would like to make it crystal clear that not only in the recent years but in the years to come as well, the Arctic area, so called High North, is considered by our government to be of paramount importance in Norway's foreign policy. Therefore, we would like to express our gratitude towards the Forum for the 21st Century. It came as great news to us that an organization of such importance and relevance to global issues as the Forum, decided that the matter of geopolitical significance of the High North and its further development, which happens to be Norway's most important strategic priority area, will be the topic of the economic panel present at the Model Conference 2014. We feel honored to be given the chance to transparently discuss and negotiate on a global scale with the fellow members of the Arctic Council as well as possible observers the future of the Arctic. We believe our combined efforts to resolve the utilization of the region will be of peaceful nature and will through mutual understanding and reasonable, constructive compromise, result in a conclusion, from which we all will equally prosper, in accordance to realistic expectations and goals set by each negotiating delegation.

In order to approach the draft composed by the Forum for the 21<sup>st</sup> century in a way that is accessible, possibly self-explanatory and sufficiently informative, we feel the necessity to introduce what we consider to be the essence of our arctic policy, the Norwegian Government's High North Strategy. While the overall objective seems to be general and includes goals most likely shared by all members of the Arctic Council, such as creating sustainable growth and development in the High North, it is the more concrete political priorities that we would like to keep in focus throughout the negotiating process with the intention to utilize opportunities for more extensive international cooperation on the use of natural resources, environmental management and research through closer contact with our Russian, European and North American partners.

We find our authority in the High North to be of no question and we intend to exercise it in a credible, consistent and predictable way. Therefore, the presence of the armed forces, the police and the prosecuting authority continues to be of great importance. Our government wishes to make it unequivocal that Norway takes its international obligations solemnly.

Our contribution to the international efforts to develop knowledge in and about the High North is to be profound and closely linked to environmental management and utilization of resources. In accordance to the previous statement, Norway intends to be the most successful steward of the environment and natural resources in the Arctic. Through strict standards and establishment of an adequate framework we truly believe this, at first sight utopian sounding goal, to be achieved.

The oil and gas extraction activities in the Barents Sea play a crucial role, not only for Norway, but for our partners as well. Should our further activities in this area be of any concern, we would like to ensure that a suitable framework for any further development will be provided and will be of good use to both local and regional business, hence boosting the competence of Norway in general.

In Norway, it is a common opinion, that indigenous people are stewards of cultural values and have specialized knowledge of ways of making a living under difficult conditions which the Arctic offers. The indigenous dimension is an integral part of our policy. Integrated resource management in the High North includes the protection of natural resource base used by indigenous people for their economic activity as well as their traditions and even of reindeer herding areas.

People-to-people cooperation is an important part of Norway's High North policy. Health, education, culture, sport, child and youth work and volunteer activities are all key components with the idea behind it naturally being the will to foster mutual understanding, stability and development in the Arctic.

In the context of our High North policy it is vital to maintain close bilateral relations with Russian Federation which is both a neighbor and the country with which we share the Barents Sea. A number of the challenges in the High North in areas such as the environment and resource management can only be solved with Russia's engagement and Norwegian-Russian cooperation.

All the aforementioned issues form the core of our policy and we will be pleased to discuss any further details and steps-to-be-taken once the process of actual negotiation has begun. We sincerely hope our contributions will help decide the outcome in a matter acceptable by all parties and prosperous to the Arctic region itself. Once again, at the very end, we feel the need to express our gratitude for this opportunity to bring the Arctic into its next era and we are looking forward to being a part of the cooperation and finally wish the entire Forum for the 21<sup>st</sup> century best of luck with the Model Conference 2014 and with all the rest of their future endeavors.

20.10.2013, Delegation of Norway