

## **Standpoint of the Kingdom of Norway to the Third Draft Proposal of the Forum for the 21<sup>st</sup> century on the Arctic issues**

*The delegation of Kingdom of Norway would like to express its gratefulness to the Forum for the 21st Century for initiative in the negotiations on the economic and on other matters concerning the Arctic. The Forum for the 21st Century was created with the goal to provide the base to discuss and to settle the disputes between countries about the future utilization, division and organization of the Arctic area. We express our full support towards solving the challenges occurring in the new global scenario and reaching a common aspect for discussed issues and common understanding between all states present. We are very thankful for the possibility to express our standpoint on this global environmental issue and to help find the right solution of this emergent problem.*

*The Arctic (High North) is Norway's highest foreign policy priority. Unlike Antarctica, the Arctic ocean is surrounded by states in close distance. In the Arctic the human and commercial activity has been present since time long ago. As we declare in our charter, Norwegian interests in the High North will be safeguarded primarily by strengthening our presence and increasing the level of activity in a number of policy areas at both national and international level. These include education and research, environmental and resource management, safety and emergency response systems, energy, health, culture and gender equality, fisheries, tourism and other economic activities.*

*We will continue to exercise sovereignty in a consistent and predictable manner. We wish to continue to be a driving force for cooperation with other countries in a spirit of openness and trust. We believe that the cooperation between all states in the world will bring improvement in geopolitical significance of the High North and its further development, which happens to be Norway's most important strategic priority area. If we will reach this goal, it will be also the credit of the Forum for 21st century and all the collaborators. To raise the third draft into the highest level we recommend considering following proposals:*

- **Research, Climate and Environmental Change**

*Norway has already expressed its preparedness to cooperate on creation of a platform for international cooperation on researchers exploring Arctic and environmental change influencing it. Norway intends to be the best steward of the environment and natural resources in the High North. We plan to promote value creation through sustainable use of resources while maintaining the structure, functioning and productivity of the ecosystems of the area. Setting high environmental standards for all activities and establishing a framework for protection of particularly valuable and vulnerable areas as a measure against negative environmental pressures and impacts is vital. We seek to strengthen international cooperation to mitigate climate change and reduce environmental pressures and impacts in the High North.*

- i. Norway welcomes the discussion about the reinforcement of the current Arctic research capacities. Norway will seek to provide an integrated civilian monitoring and notification system for the most important environmental and resource indicators in the High North. The Government will take the initiative to improve coordination between the various monitoring and research actors with a view to

establishing an integrated monitoring and notification system for the High North for the most important environmental and resource indicators, and to ensure the collection of long time series of data for research purposes. Close cooperation with other Arctic nations will be essential. We cherish the idea to establish a long-term research group, consisting of the worldwide experts and research workers, which would systematically work on the exploration of the Arctic and would provide the information to all the governments of the world. We call upon international scientists from Arctic but also non Arctic states to participate in the mutual research. We take into consideration the idea that the research group should be working as a special organ of the Arctic Council, which would become the umbrella organization covering their work and should cooperate with the national research organizations.

- ii. We agree with the creation of a Research Fund, financed by all the Arctic states as well as non-arctic states, which have an observer status in the Arctic Council, to support the effective research activities in the Arctic. We would like to suggest even more organized cooperation in newly established international governmental organization coordinating researchers and information database. For more efficient work of researchers and prompt resolving of problems concerning climate change, Norway suggests financial contribution based on gross domestic product for all states with member or observer status in Arctic Council.

- **Population and indigenous people**

*Indigenous people possess an important body of knowledge on nature, the climate, the environment and traditional practices. They are stewards of cultural values and have specialised knowledge of ways of making a living under marginal conditions in subarctic conditions. These are resources that the Government wishes to utilise in its High North policy. While overall a larger part of the Norwegian population lives in the North, a smaller percentage of that population is Indigenous (Saami). The Saami people have a high average educational attainment and have their own Parliament. To keep their own language and culture have been important to the saamis in order to keep their identity.*

- i. Indigenous communities of the Arctic region are recipients of financial support from numerous funding programmes provided by Norway. We can have a positive impact on the development of the Arctic for the benefit of local communities and indigenous people. In the spirit of the The Norwegian Government's High North Strategy 2020, the Commission would be willing to discuss with relevant Member States on how the funding opportunities under the 2014-2020 multiannual financial framework could contribute to this objective. It will be important to ensure that the programs financed by Norway are effective, accessible, and meet the development of local populations. We support the vision of Forum for the 21st century of maintenance of the question of the indigenous people of the Arctic under

the policy of the individual Arctic states. We decided to keep the responsibility for the development and well-being of these people on our own standards. Norway wishes for indigenous peoples in the High North to have a strong position and to play a key role in their own development. It will therefore involve indigenous peoples in High North issues and will maintain regular contact with the Sámediggi (Sami Parliament). We seek to develop existing and new forms of economic activity as a basis for Sami settlement patterns and to safeguard the Sami culture. We have an ambition also promote capacity and competence building in Sami institutions, and these institutions will be encouraged to take active part in international cooperation.

- ii.** We welcome the idea to support the existing Sustainable Development Working Group of the Arctic Council, which is a special platform for negotiations about the changing conditions in their region and the adaptability of the indigenous people to this change. We will try to increase the efficiency of meetings ministers of environment, relevant experts and another legitimate participants from the Arctic states, that will meet regularly 2 times per year or as needed depending on the situation. We invite the representatives from the non-arctic states are welcomed as well to take part in the meetings in the case of their willingness to help in the issues. Concerning the Norwegian Governments's High North Strategy Document, the government is inviting representatives of indigenous peoples to take part in close cooperation on the development of a national adaptation strategy. The Government will seek to give high priority to the knowledge and observations of indigenous peoples in its efforts to follow up the ACIA recommendations. Indigenous peoples must have opportunities to build up their own capacity and competence so that they are able to exert real influence and participate fully in the general development of society, particularly in the High North. The Government will contribute to capacity building in research relating to indigenous people in Sami educational and research institutions. Cooperation on the situation of indigenous peoples is a natural and important part of Norway's cooperation with Russian Federation
- iii.** Norway supports the idea of broadening the educational opportunities of the indigenous people of the Arctic, by setting up educational institutions and sending qualified teachers and professors. We propose further develop people to-people cooperation in the High North. Opportunities for people to come together to take part in joint activities in these areas foster mutual understanding and trust which again foster stability and development in the High North. As we already mentioned, we recommend taking a long-term approach to knowledge generation. Norway must build a broad knowledge base. It is important that the population in the north has good educational opportunities at all levels. This means that we must focus on improving the quality of education from the first years of school and

upwards, and seek to prevent young people from discontinuing upper secondary education.

- **Geopolitical division and resource management**

*Despite the changing climate, economic activity in the Arctic region will continue to involve high exploitation and transportation costs and considerable environmental risks. Oil and gas extraction in the Arctic Ocean and transportation of the raw materials will continue to prove very difficult even in littoral areas due to both economic and technological obstacles. Mineral resources shall be exploited under the highest international standards of safety, health, environment, preparedness and response, and transparency with high returns for society. Norway's objectives in the Arctic are to maintain a stable and secure Arctic and to manage resources and the environment in a sustainable manner.*

- i. We consider, the development of international environmentally-friendly and sustainable standards for Arctic mineral resources exploitation, to be the most important issue to negotiate. Concerning geopolitical division, Norway recognizes no need to change current geopolitical division in Arctic. Changes may be possible, but in a period of 50 years, until the melt-down of ice, we would suggest maintaining current situation in Arctic area. We need more and deeper knowledge of the Arctic in order to fully understand the challenges ahead and enable us to make the right decisions. We have a solid political and legal framework for activity in the Arctic. All Arctic states have drawn up national plans or strategies for the region. To a large extent, these strategies outline similar views on the opportunities and challenges we are facing in the Arctic area. We are focused on filling knowledge gaps in the High North. We need to recognise differences within the Arctic region, and local conditions or concerns must be taken into account. But we also need to work together to develop standards and regulations as well as technological solutions to common or similar challenges. A good example can be our bilateral project with Russia on how to harmonise health, safety and environmental activity in the Barents Sea was concluded last year, and it proposed a risk-based approach and 130 international standards. The results are now being followed up in a wider group of Arctic countries as part of "Circumpolar knowledge sharing". The historic Search and Rescue Agreement signed by the Arctic nations in Nuuk last year signalled a strong commitment to joining forces to meet common challenges.
- ii. The delegation of Kingdom of Norway agree that the current division of the territory of the Arctic among the 5 Arctic-state according to the theory of spherical

triangles is the most acceptable for all parties and will be the best possibility for the conservation and enhancement of the Arctic region.

- **Law of the Sea and Arctic waterways**

- i. The crowding of non-Arctic players into this region is strengthening the incentives for cooperation among the Arctic coastal states. But there are also new causes for conflict, in particular regarding the lack of agreement on territorial sovereignty issues in certain regions. With the changes in the Arctic and its growing international importance, the coastal states also face new challenges in terms of national defence. The Kingdom of Norway will work to introduce binding global rules and standards for navigation in the Arctic and it is a high priority to reach agreement on a global regulation of shipping via the International Maritime Organization. Effective limitation of transportation in the region is required to sustain environmental security.
- ii. Finally we would like to propose that The UN International Maritime Organisation (IMO) is responsible for regulating shipping. There are clear risks from increased shipping to Arctic ecosystems and effective standards must be put in place as soon as possible in readiness for an inevitable increase in the volume of Arctic shipping. The Government should use its influence in the IMO and Arctic Council to speed up the development of the Polar Code by working with other members of the IMO to identify Chapters that could be agreed to a quicker timeframe than the rest of the Code and increase the protections afforded to the Arctic under existing IMO shipping regulations. We share the vision of the Forum on the Arctic issues to establish the monitoring body, which will oversee the navigation in the Arctic Sea to secure the safety of all Arctic states having direct borders with the Arctic region, as the free navigation can represent a threat to their security. But only in the case that each state have to act independently to suppress the security threat near to their borders and the monitoring body will closely cooperate with the International Maritime organization. Increasing economic activity in the High North is making reliable monitoring of maritime transport increasingly important. The Government will consider establishing a satellite-based AIS system as a supplement to the existing land-based AIS system along the entire coast of mainland Norway. A satellite-based system would not provide continuously updated traffic information, but would cover Norway's entire sea territory and other areas of interest in the north.
- iii. We have an ambition to be at the top of the league in key areas as tourism. We will try to develop a national tourism strategy, built on closeness to nature and culture. It will be in line with the efforts to promote green tourism and will seek to develop the role of the tourism sector as a regional industry. In this case

we recommend to the Forum to realize the vision of the Arctic tourism strategy that should support the development of the region and creation of the new working opportunities for indigenous people, with regard of the environment and wellbeing of the people.

We hope our recommendations to the second proposal will be taken into consideration.

20.12. 2013, Delegation of Norway