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Mr. Jan Petersen, Minister of Foreign Affairs of Norway

Opening speech at the Fifth Conference of Parliamentarians of the Arctic Region

Tromsø, 12 August 2002

Madame Chair,

Distinguished parliamentarians,

Ladies and gentlemen,

The focus of Arctic priorities has changed distinctively over the last decades. Cooperation has replaced confrontation, and contacts between all Arctic Countries are flourishing. East-West confrontation and military-strategic interests no longer has the upper hand in defining the priorities in the Arctic.

But still serious challenges remain. Our governance of the Arctic has - and will increasingly have - an impact on globally interrelated resource and environment challenges. The Arctic contains rich and valuable nature resources. At the same time it is among the most fragile areas in the World. What we do today will have an impact for years and years to come. The challenges we face are immense, as are the consequences if we fail to meet them. It is our common obligation to work together in a sustainable way in order to manage Arctic resources to the benefit of present and future generations. Cooperation is the key word. We need occasions like this conference to raise awareness about problems and discuss solutions. The insight and views of parliamentarians are highly appreciated and needed. The outcome of your discussions here in Tromsø will be highly valuable for the forthcoming ministerial meeting of the Arctic Council in Finland in October.

Madame Chair,

Important maritime areas, including essential spawning grounds for several fish stocks surround the Arctic Region. The marine ecosystems in the Barents Sea are among the most productive in the world. We have a long tradition of utilising these renewable resources. We are also becoming increasingly aware of the importance of deposits of oil and gas in the Arctic region.

The vision of my Government is to safeguard a clean and rich sea, from which future generations can harvest the wealth of resources it has to offer. In mid March we presented a White Paper to the Parliament on the marine environment, drawing up a coherent policy for all-Norwegian marine and coastal areas. A main goal is to establish a framework that makes it possible to balance commercial interests – fisheries, aquaculture, shipping and petroleum industries – while at the same safeguarding the fragile arctic environment.

No new permits for petroleum exploitation in the northern marine areas will be granted until an impact assessment has been completed. Furthermore, the Government is also considering the establishment of fishing zones where no petroleum activities are permitted. These measures will be included in the forthcoming Integrated management plan for the Barents Sea, reflecting a cornerstone of Norwegian priorities in the Northern areas: Sustainable development.

Maritime traffic along the Norwegian coast is expected to increase, resulting in a higher risk of accidents and associated pollution. We therefore wish to strengthen our control and surveillance of coastal traffic, particularly high-risk maritime transport, in part by extending the outer limit of Norway's territorial sea from 4 to 12 nautical miles.

Norway is a major producer of oil and gas being the world third largest oil exporter. Our petroleum activities are now moving north. The Norwegian Government recently approved the development of the Liquid Natural Gas project, "Snøhvit" in the Barents Sea. Snøhvit will be the largest industrial project ever in Finnmark, our northernmost county, and one that will provide a major boost to economy and employment in that area. Total investments are calculated to about 5 billion US dollars.

Snøhvit should set a standard for how petroleum activities in Arctic areas can - if properly managed - provide much needed jobs and income without unacceptable disturbance of the environment.

We are confident that our administration and our oil companies have the competence and experience needed to face the Arctic petroleum challenges. At the same time we firmly believe in international co-operation and we are always ready to co-operate and share our experience with others.

One measure that has proven extremely important for a sustainable development, is the early establishment of 200-mile maritime zones in the area. Outstanding issues of delimitation have not prevented this development. We should now move forward on resolving these remaining issues, The completion of the mandate of the Continental Shelf Commission in New York on the continental shelf beyond 200 miles is one important issue.

As Norway and other North Sea States have clearly experienced, the clarity and predictability provided by maritime boundaries is a precondition for investments, high cost exploration and exploitation. Banks, companies, governments and others need clarity as to which rules apply, in as diverse questions as licenses, workers' safety, taxation or environment. Maritime boundaries are also a precondition for agreeing on how to divide fields, co-operate in the exploitation of fields, and – no less important – considering practical and efficient transportation systems for oil and gas.

Madame Chair,

The value of clarity and predictability regarding applicable rules and regulations has been demonstrated on Svalbard for more than 80 years. The Spitsbergen Treaty of 1920 ended the status of Svalbard as no man's land. One important reason why Norway's sovereignty over Svalbard was recognised was the prevailing desire, following World War I, to keep the archipelago outside great power rivalry. The Treaty prohibits use of the territory for warlike

purposes. In a number of areas it ensures equal treatment of nationals and companies from the countries that have acceded. Norway's overriding objectives are the maintenance of peace and stability in the area and the orderly development of economic activities, while preserving the unique environment of the region.

Norway alone, by virtue of its sovereignty, is responsible for ensuring that foreigners are entitled to have equal, but not unlimited, liberty as regards access and entry, and freedom to engage in certain kinds of activities. But, these activities must be carried out in a manner that respects the aim of preserving the fragile environment of the Svalbard archipelago. To that end, the provisions of the Environmental Protection Act must be implemented. Norway not only has the right to exercise authority within the framework set by the Treaty, but also has an obligation to enforce its sovereignty in a proper and credible manner. Hence, dangerous ambiguity and unpredictability have been avoided. The Svalbard Treaty should be seen as vintage proof that there is no contradiction between national sovereignty and international co-operation where all participants benefit. The fruitful and pragmatic contacts we enjoy with the Russian community on Svalbard is a case in point.

Coal mining was previously the only main activity at Svalbard. However, in the last decade we have witnessed a steady increase by many nations in scientific research and education, tourism and space-related activities. The Svalbard archipelago is among the most accessible Arctic areas in the world, because of climate and geography. Svalbard therefore offers unique opportunities for research. Several nations have established research stations at Svalbard, and we welcome all our Arctic partners to become active in the international scientific community close to 80 degrees North.

The Svalbard archipelago is indeed of unique environmental value. Its 61 000 square kilometres – about twice the size of Belgium – represent a considerable part of the last remaining wilderness in Europe.

Our aim is that future generations shall have the same opportunities to enjoy the undivided wilderness of Svalbard as earlier generations and we have had. This was obviously also of great concern for the authors of the Spitsbergen Treaty since it explicitly envisages environmental protection measures, already fifty-two years before the Stockholm Conference in 1972.

Madame Chair,

"Go often to the house of thy friend, for weeds soon choke up the unused path", says an old proverb. Over the last ten years the "trail" between Norway and Russia has been "tidied" by a remarkable network of contacts and co-operation that has been established at the regional and local levels in the North, such as local government agencies, business enterprises, schools and NGOs. These are very much grassroots-level, people-to-people contacts. Some figures help illustrate the development. In a few years we have moved from a sealed border to a situation with more than 100.000 border crossings per year in the North alone. Our Consulate General in Murmansk has become our no. 1 foreign mission in terms of numbers of visas issued. Only ten years ago, this would have seemed unthinkable.

The very geography of our continent calls for close co-operation with Russia on a wide range of issues relating to common resources, problems and challenges in the North. Hence, Norway is committed to developing our bilateral relationship as much as the circumstances allow. We are

determined to make good use of the opportunities opened by the general *rapprochement* between Russia and western partners. President Putin's visit to Norway this fall will provide an opportunity to bring our relationship forward.

Security remains part of our common agenda in the High North. But it is a new and more comprehensive concept of security than that of the Cold-War era. This is not to say that military aspects of security have vanished. They have not. But today the importance of other aspects of security is increasingly acknowledged. Focus has shifted to issues such as environmental security, nuclear safety, and food safety— the kind of security that can only be built through co-operation.

A few kilometres away from Norway's border with Russia, there is a nickel melting plant with sulphur emissions five times larger than all the emissions from the whole of Norway. In an effort to drastically reduce these emissions - which seriously affect people on both sides of the border - Norway has pledged nearly 40 million US dollars for modernisation of the plant.

Nuclear safety has always been at the centre of Norwegian-Russian environmental co-operation. Over the last few years Norway has provided nearly 90 million US dollars for the promotion of nuclear safety in Russia. Among the measures that are being implemented are nuclear monitoring, emptying and decommissioning of nuclear vessels, special railway trucks for transporting radioactive waste and upgrading of storage tanks for liquid radioactive waste.

Clearly, one of the main challenges to Arctic environmental co-operation is to find viable solutions for the massive environmental problems facing Russia, problems that in many instances also have implications for neighbouring states. Although the Russian economy is gradually improving, many of these problems are of such a magnitude that extensive international assistance is required. It is my hope that all states and organisations with Arctic interests will join forces with the United States, the European Union and Norway in lining up with Russia to overcome its immense environmental challenges.

Since 1999, a number of western partners have been engaged in negotiations with Russia over a framework agreement called the Multilateral Nuclear Environmental Programme in the Russian Federation. This agreement would be essential in facilitating international participation in nuclear projects in Russia. It would be a major setback if it should prove impossible to bring this agreement to a successful conclusion.

I would also like to mention a trilateral project undertaken by Norway, the United States and Russia: the Arctic Military Environmental Co-operation. This initiative aims at eliminating environmental consequences of military activities in the Arctic region. It addresses nuclear as well as non-nuclear issues. Priority has been given to measures for treatment of used nuclear fuel and nuclear waste. It is my hope that the US can maintain its support and active involvement in the project.

The co-operation in the Barents Euro-Arctic Region has a significant role in the wider sense of security and confidence building. We are determined to carry on this undertaking, with a distinct and continuing emphasis on direct people-to-people contacts. I look forward to celebrating the 10-year anniversary of this important initiative in January next year.

Widening our geographical perspective, Norway attaches - as a Partner nation - great

importance to the EU Northern Dimension. We have recently pledged a contribution of 10 million Euro over the next 5 years to the Nuclear Safety Window of the Environmental Partnership Fund. The focus of the Danish EU Presidency on the "Arctic Window" of the Northern Dimension serves to remind us of its relevance in the context of your discussions here in Tromsø. Norway looks forward to take an active part in the upcoming Ministerial Conference in Greenland later this month.

The Arctic Council is today a key institution for dealing with Arctic issues. Norway is committed to strengthening the Arctic Council as the main body for circumpolar co-operation.

We should all be proud that a major feature of the Arctic Council is full integration of the indigenous peoples. This integration is of great benefit to the participating governments, and, I believe, also to the indigenous peoples. I am happy that so many indigenous representatives are taking part in this conference.

The second State of the Arctic Environment Report is expected to be presented at the Arctic Council ministerial meeting in Finland in October. We must now ensure that the knowledge we have gained is followed by practical action. Above all, we must reduce the pollution of Arctic areas. The "Arctic Council Action Plan to Eliminate Pollution of the Arctic" is a sound approach to this challenge.

However, as pointed out by scientists, Arctic pollution does to a large extent originate from areas South of the Arctic. Due to prevailing air and sea currents, residues of pesticides used in developing countries end up in the Arctic, causing severe health risks to people and animals. This demonstrates that measures to protect the fragile Arctic environment cannot be limited to the Arctic area. I would encourage you to discuss, as a matter of urgency, whether, and how, Arctic countries could act jointly in assisting developing countries in eliminating the use of harmful pesticides and substances.

Looking ahead, we should be aware that global warming might become the next topic to dominate Arctic agendas. Science has documented climate changes that are more pronounced in the Arctic than in other regions of the world. Warmer climate could have profound impacts on the environment and its living resources. We may also face new foreign and security policy challenges as a consequence of less ice and new navigable waters in the High North.

Global warming could lead to dramatic changes in the Arctic ecosystems and way of life. The Arctic Climate Impact Assessment initiated by the Arctic Council is due to deliver its conclusions and recommendation in 2004. Norway has given high priority to the programme and I have high expectations for the outcome.

The Kyoto Protocol on climate change - be it perfect or not - is the only international measure available addressing the problem with some effect. To me it seems obvious that we as Arctic countries, as a first step, should make use of this measure. Norway ratified the Kyoto Protocol on climate change in May. So have also many other of the Arctic countries. I strongly urge the remaining countries to join us and ratify the Protocol as soon as possible.

I would like to use this opportunity to commend the present Finnish chairmanship of the Council for its most active and excellent work, and I look forward to the upcoming Icelandic chairmanship with great expectations.



I would also like to share with you that I recently been informed that the Government of Russia is considering the possibility of chairing the Arctic Council after Iceland for the period 2004-2006. This would to my mind be a most welcome Russian contribution to Arctic co-operation.

Madame Chair,

The Arctic has the largest remaining wilderness areas in the Northern Hemisphere. In a world where areas undisturbed by man are rapidly decreasing, the Arctic wilderness and its ecosystems will - if properly managed – be an increasingly valuable asset for us all. The Arctic is also rich in natural resources. The local populations and especially the indigenous peoples are highly dependent on both the environment and the resources.

Two weeks from now the World Summit on Sustainable Development will start its deliberations in Johannesburg. Let me remind you that article 1 of the Rio declaration states that human beings are at the centre of concerns for sustainable development. They are entitled to a healthy and productive life in harmony with nature. Let us combine our efforts in making this the case for the Arctic, for the enjoyment of present and future generations.

Let us all keep in mind the words of Chief Seattle's speech from 1854: "*This we know; the earth does not belong to man; man belongs to the earth*".

Thank you for your attention.

